A JOURNAL FOR EDUCATORS AND PARENTS

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Sleuthing Family History

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CALENDAR OF CONFERENCES

2006

SEPTEMBER 7 - 8, 2006
Tennessee Association for the Gifted
Hilton Memphis, Memphis, TN
tag-tenn.org

SEPTEMBER 27 - 29, 2006
Australian Association for the Education of Gifted and Talented
Esplanade Hotel, Fremantle, Perth, Western AU
gifted2006.org.au

SEPTEMBER 28 - 29, 2006
Mississippi Association for Gifted Children
Regency Hotel, Jackson, MS
msms.k12.ms.us/MAGC

OCTOBER 5 - 6, 2006
Wisconsin Association for Talented and Gifted
Kalahari Resort, Wisconsin Dells, WI
focol.org/wat

OCTOBER 8 - 10, 2006
Kansas Association for the Gifted, Talented, & Creative
Holiday Inn, Lawrence, KS
kgtc.org

OCTOBER 13 - 14, 2006
Florida Association for the Gifted
Hilton Daytona Beach Oceanfront Resort, Daytona Beach, FL
flagifted.org

OCTOBER 15 - 16, 2006
Ohio Association for Gifted Children
Hilton Hotel Easton, Columbus, OH
oagc.com

OCTOBER 15 - 17, 2006
Missouri Conference on Gifted Education
Tan-Tar-A at Lake of the Ozarks, MO
http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/gifted/workcon2k2.html

OCTOBER 20 - 21, 2006
New England Conference on Gifted & Talented
Crowne Plaza, Warwick, RI
necgt.org

OCTOBER 20 - 21, 2006
West Virginia Association for the Gifted & Talented
Charleston House, Charleston, WV
wvgifted.org

OCTOBER 21, 2006
Minnesota Council for the Gifted & Talented
University of St. Thomas, St. Paul, MN
mcgt.net

OCTOBER 26 - 28, 2006
Advocacy for Gifted & Talented Education
Clarion Riverside Hotel, Rochester, NY
agateny.com

NOVEMBER 1 - 5, 2006
National Association for Gifted Children
Charlotte, NC
nagc.org

NOVEMBER 10 -11, 2006
Gifted & Talented Education Council
University of Calgary, Alberta, Canada
teachers.ab.ca

NOVEMBER 15 - 18, 2006
Texas Association for the Gifted & Talented
Austin Convention Center, Austin, TX
txgifted.org

2007

MARCH 2 - 4, 2007
California Association for the Gifted
Westin Hotel & Convention Center, Santa Clara, CA
CAGifted

March 16 - 17, 2007
New Jersey Association for Gifted Children
Hilton East Brunswick & Towers, New Jersey
njagc.org

April 19 - 21, 2007
Pennsylvania Association for Gifted Education
Marriot Pittsburgh Center, Pittsburgh, PA
penngifted.org

August 5 - 10, 2007
World Council for Gifted & Talented
University of Warwick, England, UK
worldgifted2007.com/

November 7 - 11, 2007
National Association for Gifted Children
Minneapolis, MN
nagc.org

If your organization has a state or national event planned, please contact
Ann MacDonald at: clannmacd@mac.com to list your information.
Our fall issue traditionally focuses on serving gifted learners in a specific subject matter area. Our premise is that educators still have most of the school year to explore and implement ideas and programs included in the issue. This year it seems particularly appropriate that we focus on social studies, because to our dismay, we find less and less time being allotted to social studies in our schools—especially at the elementary level.

As Sandra Kaplan puts it in our lead feature article, “Advocating for the Teaching of Social Studies,” [Social studies is] becoming the forgotten, superfluous, or frill subject….

Kaplan focuses on three means of advocating for social studies: demonstrating the relevance of social studies; finding time to teach social studies; and testing in social studies.

Carolyn Cooper sounds a similar warning as she initiates a new department for the journal: Administrator Talk. In this first column for principals, coordinators, and superintendents, Cooper suggests ways that we can get “More For Our Money: Differentiating Social Studies Instruction with Stunning Results.”

Cooper maintains that with its emphasis on authentic problem solving, social studies help students of all ages to construct meaningful contexts for their learning, with the result that they retain new learning by using it. Social studies thereby become important for the entire curriculum.

A third warning comes from Marshall Croddy, who asks, “Have We Forgotten Civic Education?” Croddy is director of programs at the Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF), and maintains that, “Two centuries after Jefferson, social studies are lacking at public schools.” The CRF is a non-profit organization that sponsors programs, publications, and online lessons to assist in providing civic education for our students. See page 15 to learn more about CRF.

However, it would be folly merely to lament the loss of time given to social studies. Again referring to the Kaplan article, “It is more important to find a way to teach social studies than to ignore it.” Therefore we offer four articles that provide educators with a variety of means to enrich and implement social studies instruction.

U.S. history teacher James McAleney teams with a language arts teacher in an interdisciplinary project that he describes in his article, “Think Like An Historian: Sleuthing Family History.” In this project, students learn history, geography, listening skills, interviewing, and writing skills, with the two teachers sharing the instruction and evaluating responsibilities.

Sharon Leon at George Mason University shares a new website in her article, “Historical Thinking Matters: Revolutionizing the Teaching and Learning of History with Online Sources.” The goal of Leon and her colleagues is to guide students in analyzing and evaluating historical documents through a series of “student investigations.” Lesson plans assist even novice teachers of social studies to provide quality instruction in several standard topics of historical study.

Kimberly Dodds, elementary teacher in Newport Mesa, CA demonstrates how she incorporates social studies into the curriculum in her article, “Social Studies in the Primary Grades: Using Learning Centers as a Vehicle.” She includes specific center tasks and correlates them to state content standards at several grade levels.

Finally, Kimberly Chandler, Curriculum Director at the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary, provides rubrics to use at both primary and upper levels to train students to examine primary source documents with a critical eye. She shows us how in her article, “Using Primary Sources in Social Studies with Gifted Learners.”

We also have a full slate of department articles in this issue. As stated above, Carolyn Cooper joins us with a new column entitled Administrator Talk. We believe this to be an important addition to our continuing departments of Teacher Talk and Parent Talk. It helps us meet our goal of providing practical information for teachers, parents, and administrators. Cooper is a recently retired administrator who served at a variety of levels including district gifted coordinator and head of the gifted program for the Maryland Department of Education.

Please note that we have a guest student author writing for the Hands-on Curriculum department. Evan Morikawa, who just graduated from High Tech High School in San Diego, shares the process he and his classmates used to develop and publish a field guide to the San Diego bay. His article is entitled, “Student-centered Environment: Interdisciplinary Perspectives Through Field Studies and Publishing.”

Another change in this issue concerns Internet addresses. We have adopted the newer practice of omitting the www or http:// as prefixes to most individual Internet addresses. Almost all Web addresses can now be accessed without this prefix, and it makes formatting much simpler for us.

Finally, we wish to thank our designers at Barbara Brown Marketing & Design, for creating the new look of our cover. We appreciate their professional and creative work.

As year-round schools are well into the new school year, and traditional schools have recently begun their fall term, we wish all our readers a successful, productive, and satisfying year. Our winter issue is due out on January 1, 2007 and will focus on serving middle school gifted learners.

—Margaret Gosfield, Editor
Meet Katy Parker

BY JENNIFER BEAVER

Meet 18-year-old Katy Parker, recently graduated from Marina High School in Orange County, California and about to embark on her freshman year at California State University at Long Beach; she is considering a major in journalism or writing. Thoughtful, charming, and funny, Katy has been honored by the National Association of Teachers of English and other groups for her writing. She is also an accomplished artist and photographer. We caught up with Katy just after she returned from visiting London and the Cotswold region of England.
Q: What did you like best about England?
A: I liked all of it, especially since I’d recently taken a British literature class. I really want to see new things.

Q: Tell us about your family.
A: My parents are Don and Kary Parker, and I have one brother, Steven, who is 17.

Q: What schools have you attended?
A: Page Private School in Garden Grove, Circle View Elementary School, Mesa View Middle School, and Marina High School in Huntington Beach.

Q: Were you always in a GATE (Gifted And Talented Education) program?
A: When I first moved to Huntington Beach, I was in a regular program.

Q: What differences did you notice when you shifted to GATE?
A: In the regular classroom, I wasn’t bored, but I was always done with my work quickly. The GATE class was more challenging. It felt different; I felt like I was really in the class.

Q: Did you have pull-out sessions or were you grouped with other gifted kids? How did you/do you feel about the “gifted” label—a blessing, a curse, or a combo?
A: My school had separate classes for the gifted program, so I spent the whole day with other students in the program. The label itself meant little to me, in terms of how I viewed myself nor in how others viewed me. The distinctions were already there, before I was enrolled in the program and before there was a packaged name for it.

Q: Please describe the teacher who has had the most impact on you.
A: The teacher that had the most impact on me would probably be Annie Wind, my eighth grade English teacher. I really admired her, and I loved how much emphasis she put on grammar, vocabulary and creative writing skills. I went home every week knowing 15 new vocabulary words. When I got into high school, I noticed that those who had this teacher had a noticeable advantage over other advanced students in the entire class. How much we knew about grammar. The best part was that the entire class learned not only how to write both academically, but also how to revise other students' writing. I loved being in her class.

Q: OK, a little role playing: You have a three-year-old who reads. Based on your own educational experiences, what do you look for in terms of a school/preschool for your child?
A: I would find a program that was challenging, but that also included other children in the same situation. The difference between regular and gifted programs was striking academically, but I was more astonished by the contrast in how easily I made friends in the gifted program.

Q: What was your “Aha!” moment when you realized that you wanted to become a journalist/writer?
A: Early in my junior year of high school, my English class was given our first in-class essay assignment of the year. We were to select one character from The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck and discuss how the character developed throughout the novel. This book left me bewildered. I had never been so moved by something I was asked to read for school, and I was excited about the essay because I had already spent several hours reading the literary commentary in the back and thinking about Tom Joad's transformation. The essay was really just a way for me to express what I felt and to organize my thoughts.

One morning I walked into class, and my teacher, Mr. Hohl, said, “Katy Parker. You are an excellent writer.” I said, “Oh?” and he said, “You are an excellent writer...up the Wazoo!” I was not only surprised that I was being recognized for something I had already found fulfilling to begin with, but I was extremely pleased that I could articulate what I felt about something... that my ideas weren’t limited to the insides of my skull. Up until then, I thought I would be a veterinarian, but that year of English made me reconsider my interests and values, and neutering cats was no longer the most appealing thing I could think of.

Q: Here’s another what-if question: You have two days to do whatever you want. Money is no object. What do you choose to do?
A: I would allow my family members and friends to each do one thing, but in return they would have to explain each of their motivations to me. I think it would help me learn more about all of them. Afterwards, we would all go to Denny’s. They have good French toast.

Q: If you could interview any historical figure, whom would you choose and why?
A: I have always admired Vincent Van Gogh. He never had any formal training in painting or sketching, but, from what I have read, he was hysterically passionate about it, even to the point of recklessness. The literal insanity behind how fully he immersed himself in his work is admirable, and I would like to see it in person.

Q: You’re at a job interview. They already know you’re an awesome writer and have racked up many accomplishments. What do you tell them about yourself that will make you leap to the top of the heap of equally talented job applicants?
A: I hope that I would be able to give the impression that I truly see writing, or simply creating, as one of the most sacred of human abilities. The ability to document ourselves, to express ourselves, is almost the only advantage we have over the constraints of time and size. It’s important to me, and I would willingly become enveloped in it. Of course, I would have to first find a job I felt that strongly about.

Q: What single event has had the most profound affect on your life so far?
A: I don’t think I know enough about life to decide on one moment that has defined mine. Things change every day, and the big changes are no more important than the little ones.

JENNIFER BEAVER is the Associate Editor for Parent Topics for Gifted Education Communicator. She lives in Long Beach with her husband and gifted son, where she runs her own communication service business.
What children learn in school is only a fraction of the knowledge they are acquiring. In no domain is this more true than social studies: history, sociology, economics, psychology, government, citizenship—and more. Basically, these subjects deal with people's experience, past and present; the ways they relate to one another as individuals, communities, and nations; and the rules—written and unwritten—by which they guide their behavior. Clearly, families play a tremendous role in helping children make sense of their social world and the responsibility they feel for making it better, so there is value to giving thought to this aspect of parenting.

We live in environments as big as the universe and as small as our houses. Children's consciousness of the scope of their world and their sense of time expand only gradually, so it makes sense to focus on what is meaningful to them in the here and now. My favorite college professor, a Shakespearean scholar told us, "You don't truly believe that what happened before you were born is anything more than a story," and to our chagrin, we realized that she was right. So don't be surprised when your children view "historical" events as "just a story."

Bringing Social Studies Home

What's learned at school remains at school, unless it becomes relevant to children's everyday lives. Here are some strategies you can try:

- Educate your eye to understand your children's own interactions with their world as examples of how the world works. Make your insights explicit to them.
- Keep track of what they are studying in school and learn something about those topics yourself so that you can draw links to everyday experience. (I once listened to a Seattle teacher describing the wisdom of the Emperor Octavius in switching from paying soldiers with bonuses and plunder to giving them salaries, never connecting it to the fact that Boeing workers had been striking for weeks for a pay raise to replace unpredictable Christmas bonuses.)
- Let your children in on your interactions with all kinds of social institutions. Depending on what they are prepared to understand, let them see how schools, municipal services, transportation systems, health care, and the IRS affect your life.

- In keeping with their maturity, expose your children to the actual workings of our institutions. Sit in with them on court proceedings, city council, and school board meetings. Take them along to renew your driver's license. Show them all the ads you get before elections and ask them for whom and for what bond issues they'd vote. If you vote by mail, show them how you go about it; if you go to the polls, take them along. Accompany them to your state representative's office and a hearing on a controversial bill. A political rally. A protest.
- Let your children experience more than one side of an issue. Try to be even-handed. Refrain from implying that anyone who disagrees with you must be mentally impaired!
- Take advantage of your job to illustrate how institutions are managed and financed and how people's jobs blend into a working whole. Who makes decisions? What limits the kinds of things that the firm can do and why?
- Be sure that, as your children grow older, they understand not only formal but informal procedures. How do you go about finding pathways through a bureaucracy? What about networking and "contacts"? This is especially important when your kids get ready to navigate the bureaucracy of college. College choices are much broader than high school choices. Children of parents who have not themselves traversed the system face a significant barrier; they lack so much implicit knowledge about priorities and opportunities: where to find fiscal, academic, and personal support; how to define a career pathway, including graduate/professional study; how to enlist mentors; and how to become not just somebody who goes to class but somebody who participates in college life.
- Look to your own roles as a parent, a worker, a volunteer, and a citizen, and model the behavior you hope your child will adopt. Speak respectfully of others, and act the part of the diplomat.
- Listen to all sides. Uncover unfairness and try to change things—but don't assume that anything that impinges on you is "unfair."
- Be optimistic about the extent to which your actions matter.
- Finally, be prepared for your children's discovery of events and threats that are quite disturbing to them. While their age peers remain blissfully ignorant, gifted children have a way of encountering news about famines, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, tsunamis, nuclear threats, and armed conflicts before they have the experience and "emotional calluses" to put them in con-
text, including assessing their own safety. Sometimes talking about it helps. Sometimes it helps to flood them with information to the point that they become bored with the topic. Sometimes they just have to live through the stress as a part of growing up.

**Developmental Progressions**

**Preschool years.** At first, the infant relates to each family member separately. After a while, “family” is everyone who lives in the house (including pets), and only later does it dawn on children that there are intricate human roles within a kinship. Concepts such as division of labor, work for pay, shared and delegated responsibilities, and so on make themselves known by the time bright children enter school. The young child sees one-to-one relationships; the older child sees systems.

**Elementary school years.** During elementary school, children begin to see themselves as part of a neighborhood, a city or town, a state, and a country. We can help make sense of these entities by talking at home about how they are established, modified, funded, and managed. Who decides what will be taught in the classroom? Where do we get the money to buy desks, pay teachers, and provide hot lunch? What about community services and roads? What if our family spends too much? What if our country does? And so on.

In the realm of human relations, the art of diplomacy begins at home. It is never too early to talk about the complexities of standing up for what one believes in, compromising so that everyone gets what they need and a part of what they want, and resolving conflicts with good will, including going out of your way to help someone else. How do we decide what time to have dinner, given everyone’s schedules? What about family outings and vacations? What if one family member has more time-consuming responsibilities than another? What if one child has special needs or passions? Seeing the world through the eyes of others (some-times called “theory of mind,” a basic deficit in autistic children) expands to appreciating that there not only exist diverse needs and rights but diverse belief systems.

“History” versus “story?” Let your children experience the recent past through your recollections and those of your elders. Watch your children’s eyes widen as they discover that you or their grandparents actually remember something “historic” seen on PBS’s *American Experience* or a movie from the Civil Rights era.

And then, make connections. Let’s suppose that your children are studying ancient Egypt. (They may not even realize that there is a modern Egypt!) Do we have more or less say about our lives today? Would the children go to school? What if our family and community were run pharaoh-style? What if we still used their number system? Would the loss of the Library of Congress be as catastrophic as the loss of the Library at Alexandria?

**Middle school and high school.** Preteens and teenagers are ready for a more active role. This is the time to expect them to volunteer in service organizations, to participate in student government, to join protests, and even organizations you wouldn’t join. Honor their social passions and have patience with the fact that they may not be able to handle competing arguments just yet. Be sure that they study our Constitution thoroughly. Take them to Washington, DC, if you have a chance, and let them see it for themselves. (The November/December, 2004 issue of *Imagine*, the magazine for gifted teens from Johns Hopkins Center for Talented Youth, is brimming with further ideas.)

As you contribute to philanthropic organizations, let your children in on this. Discuss your choices among the thousands of organizations that exist. We are a generous nation by and large, and we want our children to continue that tradition; but like us, they can make foolish decisions if uninformed.

You may discover, to your dismay, that the history and government being taught in your child’s high school is heavy on facts and light on complexity. The *whats* may be stressed, but not the *whys*. You may not be a history buff yourself, but you can ask questions. You want to know why countries went to war and what other choices they had; you want to know why some eras represented the flowering of reason, art, and exploration and others didn’t; you want to know what positive (and negative) lessons of leadership we can learn from rulers and tyrants. Encourage your children to care about the answers.

Finally, remember that your children will soon be voters. Fill your dinner table conversation with pros and cons of the issues of the day. Don’t feed anybody 18 or older dinner on Election Day until they vote (as you have done, of course).

And then hope that tomorrow’s citizens are effective, wise, and compassionate and that they conduct the affairs of the community, the nation, and the world with benevolence! To the extent that we teach social studies in our daily lives, we may yet create a future worth looking forward to.

**NANCY M. ROBINSON, Ph.D.** is Professor Emerita of Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at the University of Washington in Seattle, WA. She is the former director of the Halbert and Nancy Robinson Center for Young Scholars. Among her current research interests is behavioral and family adjustment of gifted children.
Preparing for High Achievement
The Role of Explanatory Style

BY MAUREEN NEIHART

Research clearly points to some factors as more influential than others in promoting optimal development and performance. One of these factors is explanatory style or an individual's perspective on success and failure experiences. Explanatory style influences motivation (remaining engaged in challenging tasks), perseverance (sustaining high effort over time), and risk taking (pursuing goals with uncertain outcomes). It is not difficult to shape explanatory style, and Seligman (1995) demonstrated that the positive effects of teaching optimism in school-aged children can last for years. Research tells us that optimists are more resilient, less depressed, and achieve more in their lifetimes.

Explanatory style has three dimensions that have to do with how we think about the causes of positive and negative events:
- permanence
- pervasiveness
- personalization

Permanence. Permanence refers to whether we view the causes of events as being temporary or enduring forever. When bad things happen, pessimists tend to think in terms of always and never. “I’ll never make the honor roll.” “I’m always going to be bad in math.” People give up when they believe that the causes of negative events are permanent. In contrast, optimists think in terms of sometimes and recently. They view setbacks as temporary and say things to themselves such as, “I’ve been really stressed lately,” or “Sometimes she can be difficult.” People are more likely to persever in the face of adversity when they believe that the causes of bad events are temporary because they feel hopeful.

When they succeed, however, optimists view the causes as permanent, saying to themselves things like, “I did well on that paper because I am good with words.” Pessimists view the causes as temporary saying to themselves things like, “I got a good grade on that paper because Mr. Sorenson graded easy.”

Pervasiveness. Pervasiveness, the second dimension, refers to projecting causes across many different situations. Pessimists tend to see the causes of bad events as global, and optimists tend to see them as local. Optimists can compartmentalize their problems easily. They say things like, “I don’t like the way Ms. Ankeny grades.” Or, “Tobias isn’t my friend any more.” Pessimists, on the other hand, tend to catastrophize and view their entire world as falling apart when one bad event occurs. They say things like, “Teachers are unfair,” or, “My parents never listen to me.” As a result, they tend to give up.

When they're successful, pessimists localize the causes and optimists generalize them. An optimist who does well on a math test may say to herself, “I’m a good student.” But a pessimist will say something like, “I know my multiplication tables.” People who limit the effects of negative events and generalize the effects of positive events are less likely to lose their motivation and more likely to persevere when they face challenges.

Personalization. Personalization is the last dimension of explanatory style and refers to one’s decision about who or what is responsible for events. Pessimists blame themselves when bad things happen, and they give other people the credit when good things happen. Optimists do just the reverse, taking credit for their successes and attributing responsibility for bad events to external causes.

The first step to helping students develop a more positive explanatory style is to pay attention to what we say about success and failure experiences ourselves. What are we modeling? Since children learn some of their explanatory style from adults, we should be careful to correct them and affirm them using an optimistic explanatory style. Use permanent or pervasive messages when they are successful, not when they are struggling or misbehave.

Use the three dimensions of explanatory style as focal points for teaching children how to play detective and improve their optimism. Explain that just as people have their own style of dress, talking, and music, people also have their own way of thinking about things. Listen to students when they are talking about their successes and their disappointments. Are they generalizing or limiting the effects of negative events? When outcomes are disappointing, do they tend to disparage themselves or identify factors they can do something about?

Read or act out skits, scenes, monologues that contrast optimists and pessimists. What do they notice? Ask them what it might feel like to view life like the more pessimistic characters. Analyze the perspectives on success and failure of characters in a story or film. Who would they rather spend time with? Invite students to share a time when their thoughts were particularly optimistic or pessimistic. What did they notice happened to their self-confidence? How much did they feel like working toward a solution? Emphasize the relationship between thoughts and feelings.

Optimistic thinking is associated with strong performance, as well as with better physical and emotional health. If we teach children how to find the evidence that supports or refutes their conclusions, they will become more accurate in their perspectives and be better prepared for high achievement.

Reference:

MAUREEN NEIHART, Psy.D. is a licensed clinical child psychologist in Laurel, Montana. She has worked as a secondary teacher, a school counselor, and a coordinator of gifted programs. Her special interests include children at risk and violent youth.
More for Our Money
Differentiating Social Studies Instruction with Stunning Results

BY CAROLYN COOPER

Every educator in America knows why social studies is the most comprehensive curriculum area students can experience; it is a composite of all the disciplines. Within a social studies framework, students can study topics from ecology to economics, arts, engineering, and elections: space exploration and spelunking as well as fractions, Freud, and feudalism. And that’s only a start! Effective social studies teaching incorporates the best instructional practices and encourages students to apply their learning to authentic, real-world situations.

Ideal? Often it is—where social studies is still taught. Yet today, given the mounting pressures of school reform’s No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, social studies has been preempted in many schools by reading and math whose test scores currently are the alpha and omega of educational administration. Social studies instruction is being nudge[d] out of the elementary school curriculum at an alarming rate according to National Council of Social Studies (NCSS) president-elect, Peggy Altroff. “Since NCLB mandates have been in effect,” she says, “only four states report the same amount of time being spent on teaching social studies as before NCLB.”

Understandably, administrators at every level are focused on meeting the stringent requirements NCLB imposes via high stakes testing in our schools, districts, and states. Never within recent memory have principals, superintendents, and state commissioners been invested as personally and professionally in their students’ scores. Rightly or wrongly, these scores make the difference between a school making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and being identified as a “failing” school.

Increasing test scores is a Herculean feat for teachers and students to accomplish. Fearing lower-than-anticipated results contributes to paranoia, which can lead administrators to take extreme measures. In the May 2006 issue of Education Update (journal of the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development), Jeff Passe, president of the National Council for Social Studies, is quoted as saying, “A lot of administrators are getting increasingly strict about when certain things should be taught” and when teachers “are held accountable for every minute . . . many are afraid” to teach anything but the prescribed content. This is especially true for beginning teachers.

The Escalating Cost of Our Myopia

One goal of NCLB is to nurture all students’ intellectual capabilities. Faced with a broadening range of student mental abilities, we administrators tend to weigh the relative importance of various learning needs. Do the needs of our struggling learners and of our gifted students have the same priority? They not only should but also must if the intellectual capabilities of all our students are to be developed.

How can we meet this challenge with diminishing resources and tighter budgets? The answer, relatively simple, lies within sound, defensible gifted education. Joseph S. Renzulli, Director of the National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented at the University of Connecticut, advises us to “accommodate the needs of students, whether they’re struggling, average, or above-average learners.” Renzulli, an historian in his own right, knows firsthand that social studies is the optimal curricular framework in which teachers can accommodate all students’ learning needs.

Currently, the nearly-exclusive attention to raising elementary students’ math and reading scores carries an exorbitant price tag. Many classroom teachers, hired originally to teach several disciplines throughout the school day, are now spending most of their instructional time stuffing students full of math and reading facts and skills in preparation for the tests. Then, as a form of insurance, the drill is repeated to the same students, some of whom don’t “get it” any better in the “rinse cycle” than they did during the “wash cycle.”

Facts and skills alone are isolated pieces of information. Not grounded in practical experience, many students need to find meaning for those pieces of information; those tidbits have little, if any, significance for our struggling learners. Meanwhile, our gifted students are being held back, marking time while their less able classmates are struggling to catch up! This practice flies in the face of the NCLB language stating that our gifted students “. . . need services or activities not ordinarily provided by the school in order to fully develop [their] capabilities.” (p. 1959). Neither the NCLB requirement to nurture the intellectual capabilities of all our students nor Renzulli’s recommendation to accommodate their needs is being heeded. Meanwhile, the cost of our myopia continues to escalate exponentially.

More for Our Money: Differentiating Instruction an Economical Solution

How can we get more for our money? The National Research Center on the Gifted and Talented is replete with research showing that the best practices of strong, defensible programs for gifted and talented students contribute significantly to increased test scores. As good teachers of these students know, differentiating instruction is one such practice that offers several strategies for accommodating a wide range of learning needs.

For decades, effective teachers have differentiated instruction to meet unique needs. The simplest strategy is one we all recognize: a teacher excuses the best spellers from the word exercises which are assigned to the rest of the class, requiring only that every student takes the final spelling test on Friday. This strategy, “curriculum compacting,” eliminates needless repetition through busy work which wastes time these students could use more productively in a learning experience commensurate with their intel-
A more enriching differentiation strategy is tiered learning, a method of grouping students by each one’s readiness to learn new content. The entire class is learning the same concept(s) or skill(s), but students work on assigned tasks in tiers matched to their individual readiness. Bright, average, and struggling students may be in the same tier, the common denominator being their familiarity with the new content.

By asking one or two key questions before introducing the new content, teachers with a solid grasp of their instructional objective(s) can determine immediately every student’s level of readiness. Pre-assessment is efficient, economical, and effective.

Students who understand the content already are given a learning task designed to meet their need to apply their knowledge. Their task is more abstract, complex, and multi-faceted than the tasks of other tiers. Students in this tier work more independently, also.

For the tier of students whose understanding of the new content is not as deep, the task is more structured. Their task includes both concrete and abstract elements. It provides guidelines, requires goal setting, and uses teacher modeling.

A third tier of students finds the content completely new. Grounded in events the students can relate to, the task is highly structured, concrete, and often hands-on. With fewer parts and only relevant data provided, the task engages the students through collaboration.

A “must” for differentiating instruction equitably: make every tier’s task respectful. This strategy is not traditional grouping—no “bluebirds and crows” here! Each task challenges students to think creatively and produce high-quality results but in different ways. The payoff? Gifted students are challenged and aren’t tread milling, and students not as familiar with the content learn it through various kinds of problem-based group activity.

**The Bottom Line: Students as Researchers of Authentic Problems**

Effective differentiated instruction engages students masterfully as they connect new concepts with ones they know. This strategy broadens a student’s frame of reference and, through inductive reasoning, helps him or her establish a context for new understandings.

Social studies offer an ideal environment for students to work productively on their learning tasks in the way that practicing professionals in their field of interest work. For example, in a class studying the American election process, students in one tier may be relating the election of congressional delegates to how their class elected officers. Aside from the number of individuals elected, how are the two elections similar? Different? When this analysis leads to issues that influence voters, the students express a desire to explore the issues that will likely play a key role in the 2006 congressional and 2008 presidential elections.

This teachable moment is critical. Does the teacher now stuff the students with more facts? Absolutely not! This is a golden opportunity for deepening learning qualitatively. For elections to be relevant for the students in this tier, the students themselves must now become researchers.

Over the following two to three weeks in this research-lab atmosphere, the researchers learn to develop a hypothesis, ask a researchable question, collect and analyze data, and publish their findings. Focused on finding how certain issues influence voters, they combine their intelligence and creativity with a special ingredient stronger than gorilla glue: task commitment. They will not be deterred from their research. How best to demonstrate their new knowledge takes experimenting with various forms of expression. Finally, students in this tier design an issues-based publicity campaign to increase voter participation in upcoming elections. They’ve investigated an authentic topic of their own interest and learned to solve problems as professionals do through research.

Differentiated instruction can work for us all. Its economical design accommodates shrinking budgets, equity issues, and test scores, too. More importantly, its emphasis on authentic problems helps students of all ages construct meaningful contexts for their learning which they retain by *using* it. And social studies seems the ideal place to start.

**CAROLYN R. COOPER, Ph.D.,** is a retired assistant superintendent and served as the specialist in gifted and talented education with the Maryland State Department of Education for several years. A seasoned district-level coordinator of gifted education, she is active in the National Association for Gifted Children and consults with school districts and other organizations on educating gifted and talented youngsters.
Advocating for the Teaching of Social Studies

BY SANDRA N. KAPLAN

It seems ironic to be living in an era where the topic of democracy is present on the news, and the same topic is absent from the formal educational curriculum.

It seems ironic to be confronted by discussions about national identity and immigration in social settings and note the void of such issues in the educational environment.

It seems ironic to promote concern about “character education” for our students with banners and signs hanging in the hallways of schools and on the walls of classrooms and realize that the famous characters of world history are not evidenced in the school curriculum.

Basically, it is ironic to realize that the emphasis on student achievement centers on language, math, and science without equal regard for social studies. Relegated to becoming the forgotten, superfluous, or frill subject, social studies has been pushed from the academic roster.

“After the dedicated hours of each day spent on reading and math, there is little or no time left to devote to social studies.”

“If a subject is not going to be tested, it is not going to be taught.”

“Students perceive social studies as a
The Relevance of Social Studies: A Means to Differentiate Curriculum for Gifted Students

Developing appreciation for potential and performance. The relationship between the attributes of gifted students and the significant concepts of social studies reinforces the relevance of the subject. Tenacity, curiosity, wide variety of interests, and creativity are recognized traditional exemplars of giftedness. The forging of new and different political, economic, geographic, and societal boundaries was a direct consequence of these attributes in noted figures of history. The study of potential and its manifestation into performance is considered by many teachers and parents as a necessary concomitant to appreciate giftedness. Differentiated curriculum is not just what teachers provide; it must also be what gifted students can and should learn for and about themselves.

Developing the art of argumentation. While the ability to argue is a natural derivative of the human condition, the development of arguing as an art form is taught. The ability to influence people based on the scrutiny of words and ideas, the skill of formulating a point of view predicated on researched evidence, and the presentation of the information in a manner and style that is cogent and receptive is a valued endeavor. The teaching and learning of social studies provide the forum to study and practice the art of argumentation. Our celebrations of the documents that ensure the democratic way of life are an outcome of the artistic arguments waged and won by individuals and groups. An integral feature of an appropriate curriculum for gifted students includes the articulation and mastery of the skills of argumentation: to assume a stance, gather information to support, verify, authenticate the selected perspective, and to present it with efficacy. Social studies defines the parameters to assess and emulate the effects of the art of argumentation.

Developing criticism. It has often been said that students are inherently critical, and gifted students can be even more critical. Criticism is the basic ingredient to promote change and stability. Criticism is an essential component of scholarship, the discipline that exemplifies the many and varied outcomes derived from criticism and is the subject area that enables students to observe and practice the skill of criticism.

Finding Time to Teach Social Studies

“I’m embarrassed to admit I haven’t taught social studies all semester,” stated a fifth grade teacher. “There just isn’t enough time.”

“I try to teach the explorers at least. But, we don’t make maps, perform the simulations, or build the ships. We just read the chapters,” stated a third grade teacher.

Currently, the teaching of social studies as a dedicated subject within the school day seems limited, especially at the elementary school level. However, there are options to include social studies within the academic schedule as an ancil-
The study of other disciplines. Extension understandings. of history and its connection to concept-embedded in the understanding graphs, and intricate algorithms are prerequisite to mathematics. Statistics, of an historical event equally acts as a problem, setting, and theme. The study of literary elements: character, of an historic event as an introduction to social studies providing the arena to achieve these goals.

Social Studies can also become a prerequisite to any discipline. In this role, social studies provides a preliminary orientation to another discipline, strengthening the elements of that discipline. For example, introducing students to an examination of American heroes and heroines in a given historical context can serve as a prerequisite to define the attributes of a protagonist or antagonist in a novel. A more sophisticated example of using social studies as a prerequisite to study another discipline (language arts) is in the implementation of critical analogies of an historic event as an introduction to the study of literary elements: character, problem, setting, and theme. The study of an historical event equally acts as a prerequisite to mathematics. Statistics, graphs, and intricate algorithms are embedded in the understanding of history and its connection to conceptual and computational mathematical understandings.

Social Studies can be an extension to the study of other disciplines. Extension refers to placement of social studies as the means to enrich another discipline. For example, after learning about parts of speech as the basis to communicate meaning, gifted students could examine the labor-intensive manner in which phrases were crafted to convey exact meaning by authors of important documents such as the U.S. Constitution, and the Gettysburg Address. After a study of measurement standards in mathematics, a social studies extension could be an investigation of the political and economic ramifications of the United States' metric system of measurement versus the European usage of the standard measurement.

However, how does a gifted student develop expertise in disciplines that are not taught or seldom taught? How does a gifted student develop a role model for leadership if role models for leadership are not studied in-depth? How does a gifted student practice critical thinking if controversial issues are not an integral feature of a curriculum? Social studies is the discipline providing the arena to achieve these goals.

Testing in Social Studies

There are grade levels where states and districts are required to test social studies. However, it is well recognized that formal testing and reporting of student achieve-
IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON OF JULY 4, 1776, church bells rang out in Philadelphia celebrating the official adoption of the Declaration of Independence by the Continental Congress.

Of course, the work of establishing the republic was not finished on that July day. Indeed, the nation “conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal” — to use Abraham Lincoln’s words—will always be a work in progress.

The founders knew this too. By the summer of 1818, their generation was passing away. The survivors fretted about the future of their legacy and whether the republic would endure. They believed that each new generation must be enlightened by the principles of liberty and prepared to fight for the rights that had been won.

For all of the founders—and especially for the author of the Declaration of Independence — education was the key.

As early as 1779, Thomas Jefferson had written a bill in Virginia proposing a system of public education and arguing that history should be studied by all citizens. In 1817, he again proposed a system of free public education for the state and the establishment of a public university.

His attempts met with failure—except the last. The Virginia Legislature deemed universal public education too costly and unnecessary, but it did authorize the creation of a university and appointed a commission made up of 24 prominent Virginians, including Jefferson, to propose a location for it. The commission’s members included two former presidents (Jefferson and James Madison) and then-President James Monroe. Jefferson spent the summer of 1818 promoting his vision for the university and for education in general.

To escape the sultry heat of the summer in central Virginia, the commission convened in the town of Rockfish Gap in the Blue Ridge Mountains. Jefferson came prepared and quickly persuaded the commission to site the new university in Charlottesville, near his home in Monticello, where he could keep an eye on its development. Before the commission adjourned, Jefferson agreed to write up its findings. This was soon published as the “Rockfish Gap Report.”

In the report, Jefferson again proposed a system of publicly funded elementary education that would ensure that all citizens knew their rights and their duties to community and country. He wanted students of higher education to be well versed in political theory, have a strong knowledge of law and government and have the skills to reason and debate the issues. Among other things, he wanted quality history and civic education.

Jefferson’s university was built, but the Virginia Legislature again ignored the recommendations for a universal education and curriculum. Only later was a system of public education put into place around the country.

So how is Jefferson’s vision for a sound history and civic education doing today? In California, we have a comprehensive, history-driven social studies framework and standards for all grade levels. Every high school student must take three years of social studies, including a U.S. government course, to graduate. On the surface, things look good.

But in truth, social studies is no longer a priority in schools and has not been for some time. Most recently, because of the national No Child Left Behind mandates and the school accountability system, language arts, math and science are emphasized. Resources for history/social science in terms of professional development, materials and even instructional time are scarce.

This is particularly true at low-scoring elementary schools serving underrepresented student populations, where instructional time for social studies has been greatly diminished. A cruel irony, really: those least empowered and most in need of the knowledge and skills of effective citizenship and advocacy are the least likely to be exposed to them.

Recent studies demonstrate that our nation and state are paying a price for this neglect. The California Survey of Civic

Have we forgotten Civic Education?
Two centuries after Jefferson, social studies are lacking at public schools.

BY MARSHALL CRODDY
Education conducted last year demonstrated that despite taking a course in U.S. government in the 12th grade, graduating seniors' knowledge of the structures and functions of government and of current political issues is very weak. Students averaged only a little over 60% correct on a test of their civics content knowledge, a low “D” on typical grading scales.

The survey also revealed that today’s graduates are not inclined toward participatory citizenship. Less than half of high school seniors surveyed believed that “being actively involved in state and local issues is my responsibility.”

Given these findings, it should be no surprise that young people’s trust in government is appallingly low. Only 33% of high school seniors said they trusted “the people in government to do what is right for the country,” and only 28% agreed with the statement: “I think that people in government care about what people like me and my family need.”

It is difficult to fault young people for these views and attitudes, and, in truth, a survey administered to adults might well bear similar results. Given the daily fare of political scandal, partisan nastiness and negative campaigning, why would young people be inclined to trust in government or become politically engaged?

Studies such as the California Survey have brought to light the need for a renewal of civic education in our nation’s schools. These days, there are groups — such as the Alliance for Representative Democracy and the Civic Mission of Schools — working in every state to improve civic education and preserve the social studies.

As you enjoy your Fourth of July activities, take a moment to reflect on Jefferson’s summer long ago in Rockfish Gap. Then do what you can do make the founders’ hopes a reality.

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Editor’s note* Mr. Croddy’s comments first appeared in the July 2, 2006 issue of the Los Angeles Times. They have been reprinted here with permission from the author.

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**Constitutional Rights Foundation: www.crf-usa.org**

**About CRF from its website:**

Constitutional Rights Foundation (CRF) is a non-profit, non-partisan, community-based organization dedicated to educating America’s young people about the importance of civic participation in a democratic society. Under the guidance of a Board of Directors chosen from the worlds of law, business, government, education, the media, and the community, CRF develops, produces, and distributes programs and materials to teachers, students, and public-minded citizens all across the nation.

**The CRF mission statement:**

Constitutional Rights Foundation seeks to instill in our nation’s youth a deeper understanding of citizenship through values expressed in our Constitution and its Bill of Rights and to educate young people to become active and responsible participants in our society. CRF is dedicated to assuring our country’s future by investing in our youth today.

**Services provided by CRF:**

- technical assistance and training for teachers
- coordination of civic participation projects in schools and communities
- organization of student conferences and competitions
- publications in law and government, and civic participation

**The three-pronged activity schedule of CRF:**

- programs
- publications
- online lessons

**Programs.** It currently sponsors 21 programs, many which are well known to those in education. Some of the familiar ones are: Mock Trial Program; Lawyer in the Classroom; Summer Law Institute; and History Day in California (part of the National History Day program).

**Publications.** Its publications focus on the following areas:

- Law and Government programs and materials focusing on how groups and individuals interact with the issues, institutions, people and processes that shape our laws and government.

- Civic Participation programs and materials that bring to life the rights and responsibilities of active citizenship by challenging young people to explore their community and plan and implement projects that address community needs.

Publications are categorized by topic and grade level with the majority appropriate for high school classes.

**Online lessons.** Online lessons are available free of charge to educators. They include historical background and case histories for students to analyze and apply to current social issues. Its most recent lesson development is entitled “Current Issues of Immigration” and focuses on:

- History of Immigration Through the 1850s
- History of Immigration From 1850 to the
- Issues of Illegal Immigration
- Federal Policy and Immigration
- Current Proposals on Illegal Immigration
- Options for Affecting Public

For more information, go to: www.crf-usa.org/information.
A dolescent teenagers!! Aren’t they wonderfully self-centered? The entire world revolves around them. So, how can language arts and social studies teachers tap into this egocentricity and create a meaningful assignment? The answer is simple. Have students research, write about, and produce final products dealing with their families!

Pedagogical Benefits

One of the hallmarks of effective differentiated curriculum is that of engaging students in authentic problem-solving activities and presenting their results to real audiences. This family history project does both in that students learn to use the tools that practicing historians use on a regular basis and then present results, when complete, to family and friends who have a direct interest in their findings. Family history research, of course, can be used with all students, but the open-endedness and the opportunity to dig as deep as they wish is particularly appropriate and appealing to gifted learners.

In this project, students learn history, geography, listening skills, and interviewing skills. They will improve their writing skills and produce a project that may become a family heirloom. The project brings generations together, asks students to improve their interviewing and writing skills, requires students to do some research, and taps into student creativity all at the same time. They come away with a better understanding of their families and make some important connections with members of their families.

The interdisciplinary approach validates both disciplines. It shows students the necessity of writing clearly in both language arts and social studies. It includes several California State Standards for both subject areas. Students can use technology to research family names and history. Writing standards, as well as listening and speaking standards, are addressed through the interview assignment. Social studies skills in geography, spatial thinking, and research, as well as content standards related to migration and immigration, are stressed with the Family History booklet and the Family History display assignments. And finally, the project allows students to use their creativity with two authentic assessment projects: a summary of an interview and a display of their choice.
General Guidelines

It is very important that families understand from the beginning of this assignment that their privacy will be respected. At no time should students feel obligated to include things in the project that make them or their families feel uncomfortable. Emphasize to students to share only those things they wish to share.

This assignment works best over winter break when families traditionally get together for holiday celebrations and older relatives are more easily available for interviews.

Begin the assignment by asking students questions such as: “Have you ever thought that you may be related to someone who fought with George Washington in the American Revolution? Maybe you are related to a pioneer who traveled across America to settle in the Old West.” It is my experience that many gifted students have some idea of their family history, and these questions will generate stories and interest in the project.

Students come to realize that every one of us is related to people who lived and worked and contributed in some manner to the history of our country. Some students may be fortunate enough to have available a family tree or a published family history that someone has already researched. Others may be literally starting from scratch in looking for ancestors. And for the ones who claim to be related to a famous person, I tell them that this is the time to find out just how.

Project Components

The project has four parts that are graded in the student’s U.S. history and language arts classes. Sharing the responsibility of the project between two subjects allows the teachers to focus on specific parts of the assignment without feeling overwhelmed.

Part 1: The Family History Booklet

The best place to begin family history research is with those family members closest to the student—their parents. We have created a booklet with questions to ask parents about their likes, dislikes, and stories of their childhood. Students also ask parents the same questions about their parents—the students’ grandparents. This gives them information about two generations of their family. The cover of the booklet must be decorated with a clever title and a picture of the student. We used ideas from several published booklets available at a local children’s bookstore to make up our booklet and had it printed at minimal cost by our district publications department. Family Fill-In Book: Discovering Your Roots written by Dian Buchman and published by Scholastic is a good guide. This assignment is introduced and graded in language arts.

Part 2: A Genealogy Chart

Students are asked to become genealogists and trace their family ancestry back as far as they can, using official genealogical charts and genealogical notations. Forms can be downloaded from Ancestry.com or the website of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. The requirements for this part of the assignment include neatness and accuracy in following genealogical notation. Length of lineage cannot be a criterion for scoring. One year a student turned in an ancestry chart that took up the entire front of the room, tracing his lineage all the way back to Adam and Eve. Quite amazing for a 13-year-old!! This assignment is introduced and graded in U.S. history class, and the final product is pasted into the back of the Family History Booklet.

Part 3: Family Interview

Students are to talk with and interview the two oldest relatives (at least 60 years old), one male and one female, that they will visit over winter break. One class period is spent generating three-to-five open-ended questions in each of the following topic areas.

- work
- family life
- houses
- politics
- events in U.S. history
- school
- clothing
- religion/holidays
- funniest moment

This exercise allows the teacher to explain the difference between open and closed questions—questions that generate lots of information versus questions that elicit one- or two-word answers. Students then select three or four topic areas to emphasize in their interviews. Students write out their chosen questions ahead of time, leaving space to take notes as they listen to the answers.

Students need to be taught how to conduct a good interview—an interview that will elicit the information necessary to write a good summary report of their ancestor. Items that should be included are shown in Figure 1.

Once you have established the “rules,” you can now stage a practice interview in class. By working with another teacher, you can combine two classes, and one teacher can interview the other. Be sure to ask closed questions, and have the interviewee be reluctant to answer something. The interviewee may go on and on about a particular topic that doesn’t interest the class which forces the interviewer to refocus the conversation. All of this is good

CALIFORNIA ASSOCIATION FOR THE GIFTED 17

STUDENT COMMENTS

Something I took for granted was actually my grandparents. I have been around them my whole life and I didn’t realize all of the stuff that they had experienced.

The best thing was getting the pumpkin recipe from my great grandma written in her own handwriting.
practice. Evaluate the interview process at the end of the period.

The final interview product can be a neat transcript of the questions and answers, usually a minimum of four pages long (two pages on each person). It might also be a three-to-four page written summary of the interview, including student comments about what was learned. A third option would be a three-to-four page compare and contrast essay about both people. In each case, the emphasis should be on the history these people have witnessed. It should be well written and is graded in language arts class.

Guidelines for Good Interviews

- Make an appointment for the interview. If done properly, the interview will take more time than students imagine, and setting aside a specific amount of time is critical for the student and the interviewee.
- Write questions down ahead of time.
- Prepare follow-up questions to use if a particular question renders little response.
- Allow for spontaneity. If people want to share things not on the list of questions, let them. It might be particularly interesting to ask grandparents about the student’s parents when they were in middle school.
- Pace the interview. If the interview goes long and the person is getting tired, stop and ask to talk to them another time. Also, don’t rush the interview.
- Show appreciation. Thank the interviewee for the time given to talk to you and promise to give them a copy of your written report.

Figure 1. Interview Preparations

Part 4: Family History Night Display

Now that students have done all their research and interviewed relatives, it is time to put the information together in a creative way to share the information. Students have a choice of display projects including:

- a family artifact display, sharing stories about things important to their family
- a family mobility map showing where ancestors lived and how they moved to their present location
- an illustrated timeline with important family dates on one side of the line and major U.S. historical events on the other side
- a family recipe album.

The displays are presented and graded at the Family History Night event and given credit in their U.S. history class.

Artifact display. The artifact display consists of a “science fair” set up on a three-foot section of a cafeteria table. Students drape the board with fabric, lace, old clothing (something to cover up the cardboard), and then label 15-to-20 family heirlooms stating the source for each, what it was used for and by whom, the student’s relationship to that person, the date the item was made or used, how the family acquired it, and why it is important to the family today. This assignment allows students to learn a variety of information about their families’ history.

Mobility map. The mobility map display consists of a student-created map of the United States, the western hemisphere, Europe and the United States, Asia and the United States, or Africa and the United States—whatever is appropriate to show migration patterns of both sides of the family. Using clear and distinct symbols, students show the movement of their father’s family as contrasted with the movement of their mother’s family, as far back in time as possible. A legend explaining the symbols must accompany the map. Each place listed should have a brief explanation of what the family did there. Old family pictures, especially scanned photographs, can be used to add flavor to the map. By completing this assignment, students will appreciate the immigration and migration paths of their family.

Illustrated timeline. The illustrated timeline display uses a large piece of chart paper, divided in half vertically; it shows family dates and explanations on one side and important U.S. history dates and explanations on the other side. It should include illustrations or pictures for all the dates and events listed. The family side should explain how the historical event impacted the student’s family. I always use the JFK assassination as an example in class, but with the age of parents these days, you may have to use the Challenger disaster or the bombings on 9/11. By completing this assignment, students see a correlation between their family’s history and U.S. history.

Family recipe album. The family recipe album requires a one-inch binder in which students put the following items:

- title page with their name and class periods
- table of contents page
- dedication page
- family genealogy chart (yes, a second copy!)
- at least five family recipes that have special meaning written out completely
- an explanation paragraph of why each recipe is important to the family

STUDENT COMMENTS

I think the best thing about my recipe book was having to talk to my grandmother and how she gave me a lot of information about my great grandmother.

The best part of the project for me was learning how much of an impact my dad had on Vietnamese kids.

The best thing about my project is that it let me learn more about my family.
Family History Internet Resources

The websites listed below will give you some information about genealogy and tips on how to trace a family tree. Some of these sites are free and some ask you to join and pay a fee. Have fun with your search.

- familysearch.org
  (Mormon Church genealogical website)
- familytreemaker.genealogy.com
  (part free and part pay)
- cyndislist.com
  (with links to over 1,000 genealogical sites)
- ancestry.com
  (a pay website that allows 2-week-free trial at times)
- buybroadcasting.org/ancestors
  (advice on “how-to” research)
- ellisislandrecords.org
  (offers information about immigrant families, “how-to” research information, and links to other genealogical sites)

Evaluation

During the school day after Family History Night, students write an evaluation that includes a variety of questions, from knowledge and comprehension questions to analysis and reflection questions. Some suggestions are shown in Figure 2.

One student’s response from last year’s evaluation summed up the value of the project when she wrote, “The only piece of advice I really have is to really appreciate your family. Looking back through my ancestors, I found no famous singers, no famous football players, no presidents, no witches, no actors or models, no big-shot CEOs, no inventors. I didn’t find anyone that was famous. I just found ordinary people. Just people living through the hardships, nothing special. So my advice is to appreciate who you have, not what you wish you have.”

Students come away from this project with a better sense of who they are and how they and their family fit into U.S. history. It is amazing what they learn about their heritage and what you as a teacher learn about your students.

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Historical Thinking Matters
Revolutionizing the Teaching and Learning of History with Online Sources

BY SHARON M. LEON

The typical student with an assignment to write an essay explaining the reasons why the United States invaded Cuba in 1898, will make a couple of stops to gather material for that essay. First, she will look in her textbook to see what that authoritative voice has to say about the Spanish American War, and if she is lucky, she will locate two or three pages. Second, she might consult her notes from class to see if her teacher has given her any clues during lecture. Finally, she will turn to the Internet.

A Google search on the term “Spanish American War” yields over 60 million hits! The first is a link to an exhibit from the Hispanic Division of the Library of Congress that provides a narrative about the conflict, but that is surprisingly thin on primary sources. The rest of the top 20 results includes a number of private sites, a Wikipedia entry, a PBS site created to accompany a documentary on the war, a site from the U.S. Navy, and numerous sites focusing on volunteers from particular states.

These results might seem diffuse and overwhelming, and a student who has had some training in locating historical materials on the Web might next turn to the Library of Congress’ American Memory Collection. But, she might face a similar sense of dread when she discovers that a search of that collection using the same term yields close to 4,000 items. Even a student who manages to navigate the complicated search engine at the National Archives and Records Administration comes up with more than 1,200 records to wade through. This wealth of resources is enough to deter even the most dedicated student before she even begins the activity of collecting, reading, and analyzing the primary sources necessary to write a nuanced essay on the causes of the U.S. invasion of Cuba.

The Need
Students today are faced with an overwhelming wealth of resources when they consult the Internet for help with history homework. In addition to background information provided by the communally edited Wikipedia, students encounter an ever-expanding number of primary sources. The online collections from the Library of Congress and the National Archives and Records Administration present a stunning selection of sources from America’s past. But these are only a small portion of the materials available. University libraries, state and local historical societies, and private foundations have all joined in the rush to digitize substantial portions of their materials and present them to the public. Google and Yahoo’s efforts promise to exponentially increase the progress of the digitization movement. This increase in freely available resources is a boon for both academic historians and history buffs in the general public. But what of the novice in the electronic archive? How do we prepare students to cope with this avalanche of sources?

Teachers and librarians have expended much energy in preparing students to navigate this sea of information. Many instructional hours have been devoted to teaching students effective searching strategies and how to critically evaluate the authenticity of their sources. Unfortunately much less time has been devoted to teaching even the best students how to effectively read and analyze these electronic sources as the historical materials that they are.

In part, this oversight stems from a general lack of preparation on the part of secondary history teachers. The majority of middle and high school history teachers have no training in analyzing and interpreting historical documents: almost two-thirds of those currently teaching history in public schools have not majored in history and more than one-sixth of those are not even certified to teach history (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2004).

Teachers themselves recognize that they need assistance in helping students closely examine and analyze historical documents and other primary sources; they realize how difficult it is to teach historical thinking to students when they themselves have not had the necessary training.

A variety of opportunities exist to remedy the lack of content knowledge among teachers; the most significant is the U.S. Department of Education’s Teaching American History (TAH) grants. Established in 2001 to increase the effectiveness and content knowledge of the nation’s American History teachers, these grants include funding of almost $600 million. They call for the cooperation of local school systems and universities or museums to provide professional development opportunities that bring teachers into contact with history practitioners.

However, the Department of Education’s own evaluations of the program’s effectiveness seem to suggest that it reaches only limited numbers of teachers and that its long-term impact is almost impossible to determine. Although that program is currently funding many laudable professional development efforts, its narrow guidelines limit where and how federal funds may be spent. As a result, TAH supports neither the development of sophisticated teaching and curriculum materials nor research into
how students learn. At the same time, the professional development activities do help to improve teachers’ historical content knowledge and, hence, make them more eager for the kinds of sophisticated teaching materials necessary for communicating that knowledge to their students.

**Historical Thinking Matters Answers the Need**

The website, *Historical Thinking Matters*, (HTM), historical-thinkingmatters.org/, has the power to reach both students and teachers and to ultimately improve history instruction in the schools; it does so by providing teaching materials that facilitate the development of the habits of mind historians exhibit when they engage in authentic investigations. With funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and development by a unique team of teacher educators from the Stanford University School of Education and historians from George Mason University, HTM takes advantage of all the things we know about the psychology of teaching and learning history and all the things we know about using new media to facilitate the teaching and learning of history.

Sam Wineburg and his group of educators and researchers at Stanford have led the charge to transform the way teachers approach history content with their students. A former history teacher who completed a Ph.D. in educational psychology at Stanford in 1990, Wineburg’s *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* won the Frederic W. Ness Award for the most “significant contribution to the understanding of the liberal arts” from the Association of American Colleges and Universities in 2002. HTM mobilizes this work to produce teaching resources easily accessible for students and teachers around the country through the Internet.

The team from Stanford worked closely with Roy Rosenzweig, Professor of History & New Media at George Mason University. Rosenzweig’s Center for History and New Media (CHNM) is internationally known for combining cutting edge digital media with high quality historical scholarship to promote an inclusive and democratic understanding of the past as well as broad historical literacy. CHNM maintains a wide range of online history projects directed at diverse topics and audiences, making them available at no cost through its website: chnm.gmu.edu/. In the first half of 2006, CHNM’s websites had 138 million hits and more than 4.8 million visitors, making it the busiest non-com-
mmercial history education site on the entire World Wide Web.

Historical Thinking Matters brings the expertise of these two teams together into one instructional website. The site contains three main sections. The first section, entitled “Why Historical Thinking Matters” provides a multimedia introduction to the principles that make up the site’s approach to teaching and learning history. The second section contains five “Student Investigations” centered on important twentieth century topics from standard U.S. history curriculum where young learners encounter a variety of primary sources as they work to develop an answer to an inquiry question. Finally, the third section contains “Teacher Materials & Strategies” that provide support for the student activities. Together these three sections help students and teachers develop historical thinking skills that they can then apply to their work on other historical topics.

Why Historical Thinking Matters

“Why Historical Thinking Matters” asks students and teachers to consider the fact that the judgments they make every day about conflicting accounts in newspapers and on television are not so different from the types of judgments they have to make when evaluating historical evidence. Thus the skills that coincide with those conclusions bring us closer to a nuanced understanding of the circumstances.

At the same time, this discussion of the documents introduces the main historical thinking skills that the site is designed to teach as shown below:

- **Sourcing**: considering the creation of the source and the implications that has for its meaning;
- **Close reading**: considering the genre, tone, and word choice of a source;
- **Contextualizing**: considering the larger historical picture, and situating the source within a framework of events and perspectives;
- **Corroboration**: considering the sources in relationship to one another and wrestling with disjuncture and contradiction.

This section does more than present students with new skills to memorize; instead it presents historians actually using these techniques to arrive at sophisticated readings of the accounts. This second element, presenting historians actually articulating the cognitive moves they make when they encounter historical sources for the first time, is another key feature in Historical Thinking Matters. By showing historians “thinking aloud” the site models a number of important things for students.

First, students see that historians struggle to determine the meaning and importance of historical sources. They ask questions, and they are acutely aware of things they may not be able to know from a particular source. This is essential for students to grasp since often they experience history only as a static set of facts and dates to be memorized and repeated in a testing situation. Nothing about the real craft of history is static. Seeing historians wrestle with a source and question its meaning should show students that uncertainty and partiality is central to historical cognitive processes and that they can engage historical sources in a similar way, embracing those processes.

Second, students see historians compare pieces of evidence and readjust their conclusions. This modeling of interactive practice reinforces the need to read texts in conjunction with one another, testing their reliability and taking context into account. Historians read, question, interpret, and re-question historical sources in their attempt to arrive at conclusions about the past. Those conclusions are always open for revision as new evidence and perspectives become available.

Student Investigations:

The “Student Investigations” section is the heart of Historical Thinking Matters. In this part of the site, students get a chance to make use of all of the benefits of electronic technologies while they practice the historical thinking skills introduced in the “Why Historical Thinking Matters” multimedia piece. Five investigations centered on topics prominent in the standard U.S. history curriculum serve as the vehicle for this practice. Thus, students have the opportunity to work with material on the Spanish American War, the Scopes Trial, the Social Security Act, Women in the 1950s, and Rosa Parks’ role in the Montgomery Bus Boycott. Rather than providing exercises that deal with obscure topics, the investigations address issues that students will encounter as they take state standards tests and the Advanced Placement examinations. Through these standard topics, HTM takes a unique approach to the content that helps guide students through a sophisticated analysis of primary sources.

Because high school students are just starting to develop their store of contextual information on historical topics, each student investigation begins with a collection of introductory materials that set the scene for the work. First, students watch a two-minute
of the U.S.S. Maine, one of the perspectives and interpretations of each historical event.

If need be, students can review their textbooks to refresh their memories about the investigation’s general time period. The site offers the relevant page numbers and sections for four of the most popular U.S. history textbooks, but it also cautions students to read these texts with a critical eye to unearth the hidden perspective of the authors. Finally, students have access to a timeline they can use to situate the investigation in a larger chain of events about which they may have preexisting knowledge. All of these contextual pieces work to prepare students for the inquiries that follow.

The main activities for the investigation are centered on a question that historians actually have debated through the years. For example, the Spanish American War investigation asks students to answer the question “Why did the United States invade Cuba?” and the Rosa Parks and the Montgomery Bus Boycott investigation asks students to consider “Why did the Montgomery Bus Boycott succeed?” Such questions allow students to pursue authentic historical investigations and push them to consider issues of perspective, evidence, interpretation, and multiple causality.

Warm-up and main inquiry. Each investigation includes a warm-up activity and a main inquiry. The warm-up is closely centered on two sources. By focusing on two accounts of the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine, one from the New York Times and one from the New York Journal, the warm-up for the Spanish American War investigation allows students to grapple with the trustworthiness of the two perspectives, deciding which one provides the most reliable evidence. The main inquiry provides six-to-eight sources for students to examine carefully while they try to answer the main inquiry question.

Notebook format. Both the warm-up activity and the main inquiry materials are presented in a specially designed notebook format. Taking advantage of the technical capabilities of the Internet, this notebook provides a space in which students can read the primary sources, review additional resource materials, and answer guided questions. After having logged in, students can type and save their answers to the guiding questions for easy access later when they compose their essay answer in the assignment portion of the investigation. The notebook setup displays the primary sources on the left and supplemental material on the right with tabbed navigation at the top.

Thus, in completing their review of the sources for an inquiry, students select a source and read it carefully on their own. They can then review the supporting resource material on the right. For each source, students have access to vocabulary, additional contextual material provided in audio format from an historian, images of primary documents, and occasionally a video of an historian “thinking aloud” about a source. The think-aloud technique calls for an individual to read a source and articulate his or her thought process while trying to make sense of that evidence. These think-aloud clips provide students with models of sophisticated thinking and analysis. The think-alouds are accompanied by commentary that points out to students the analytical moves that the historian is making as she examines the source.

Guiding questions. After reviewing these supporting materials, students are ready to answer the guiding questions that can be accessed under the “Questions” tab. Each source is accompanied by three guiding questions that are labeled with the historical thinking skill they emphasize. For example, when students read Bayard Rustin’s diary entry from the Montgomery Bus Boycott, they respond to a sourcing question, a close reading question, and a contextualization question. In each case, students have the opportunity to answer the question on their own; however, in some cases they can click on the “Give Me a Hint” button for additional help. This help comes in the form of highlighted portions of text and additional annotations. Working their way through the questions for each of the six-to-eight sources in the main inquiry, students will experience a thorough and sophisticated engagement with the sources that prepares them to complete the essay assignment.

The assignment portion of the “Student Investigations” also uses the notebook format. In this case, students have an assignment prompt to which they must respond. This prompt is a slightly more developed articulation of the main inquiry question and asks students to compose well-organized essays that cite evidence from primary sources to support their answers.

Students compose their essays on the left side of their notebooks while on the right side they have access to the primary sources, the supporting resources, and the guiding questions with their answers from the inquiry portion of the investigation. Upon completing their essays, students can e-mail both their compositions and their guiding question answers to their teachers for review. By requiring students to recall their careful analysis of the sources and to mobilize the historical thinking skills that they have learned, the assignment portion of the student investigation goes well beyond the scope of a traditional document-based question.

Webquest extensions. In addition to the assignment, investigations include webquest extension activities. The activities pro-

Illustration by Ken Vinton

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provide a framework in which students can explore issues related to the main topic of the investigation. These guided explorations of other electronic collections of primary sources—History Matters, historymatters.gmu.edu, for example or the Library of Congress’ American Memory, allow students to apply their historical thinking skills to the archival sources available on the Web. Thus, the investigations work to prepare students to navigate the vast archival resources of the Internet with the “habits of mind” used by historians.

**Teacher Materials & Strategies:**

Supporting teachers in their work to teach historical thinking skills is one of HTM’s primary goals. Thus, the site provides a full set of teaching materials to accompany each “Student Investigation.” These materials recognize the strictures placed on teachers by the demands of standardized testing and limited resources. Each “Student Investigation” is listed with its corresponding line items in the standards of learning for seven representative states: California, Kansas, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, and Texas. Also, the site provides an extensive webography (an annotated listing of Internet resources) and summaries of prominent historical perspectives on the topic. Together these materials provide teachers with some historical background and framing for teaching the investigations.

In addition to this background material, the site provides materials and strategies directly related to teaching the investigations. Given the scheduling constraints involved with teaching, the site includes a variety of lesson plans, depending on the amount of time a teacher might want to spend on the investigation. The lessons range from one day, to three days, or five days. A lesson on “opening up the textbook” provides teachers with guidance in asking students to critically examine the narratives provided by their text by comparing it to primary sources from the investigation. The site also includes a variety of worksheets that supplement the notebook materials from the investigations. Finally, several versions—full-text, Spanish, and “modified for struggling readers”—of each source are available for teachers to use in the classroom.

**Student work section.** Perhaps the most important part of the “Teaching Materials & Strategies” is the student work section for each investigation. This portion of the site provides teachers with examples of student thinking and writing. Just as the think-aloud technique was important to model historical thinking for students in their encounters with the documents, teachers have two videos of students doing think-alouds with sources from the student investigation. These think-alouds are accompanied by commentary from experienced educators who point out the common mistakes students make when dealing with primary sources. This modeling of student reading is invaluable for teachers who want to help guide students—even their best students—through the pitfalls of analyzing historical sources. Similarly, the site includes excerpts from two student papers for each investigation. Again, in each case, the work is accompanied by commentary from experienced educators who guide teachers in evaluating student responses and in fostering strong historical thinking and writing.

**The Benefits**

The method employed by Historical Thinking Matters has significant benefits for both students and teachers. Students who gain a command of historical thinking skills approach their work with a conceptual framework that allows them to truly engage with the material and to develop sophisticated answers to authentic historical questions. These skills will serve them well as they enter the college environment where critical thinking, reasoned argument, and sophisticated analysis hold much more sway than a command of random names and dates. That is not to say that names and dates are not important, but rather that students who develop historical thinking skills also develop an increasingly complex store of contextual knowledge, including names and dates, that support their work. Establishing these skills with students early in their classroom experience will immeasurably ease the rush to cover material for standards tests by giving them a strong conceptual framework for ordering and approaching history. Teachers will benefit from this shift immensely. Even those not trained in history will begin to help their students approach the material in an authentic way, supported by a site that models the habits of mind that historians actually use when they engage sources.

**References:**

Center for History and New Media and Stanford University School of Education. Historical Thinking Matters, historical-thinkingmatters.org/.


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Choice in learning is appealing to all. If you had a choice to learn about people, which learning center would you choose? People, People Everywhere? Where in the World? Farm to Market? The Power of a Hero? Think Like a Geographer? Tribal Ground? Eye-catching titles, advanced and challenging content, varied resources, and creative products have proven to be motivating factors when facilitating social studies instruction in the classroom.

A differentiated classroom environment is made of several components. To create such an environment, I utilize various instructional strategies, one of which is learning centers. I access curriculum through the use of depth and complexity, content imperatives, universal concepts, and disciplinarians (Kaplan). I believe in classroom conversation and self-evaluation. Additionally, in creating a balanced learning environment, I provide students with the opportunity to work independently, with a partner, or in a group. With clearly stated expectations and a respect for independence, it has been my experience that even the youngest students can prove to be responsible for their own learning.

Consistent use of learning centers is also an integral component to my classroom structure. They allow me to differentiate the core curriculum for my students while meeting the time restraints associated with a busy school day schedule. In my classroom, learning centers enable students to access and understand grade level curriculum at a differentiated level while also allowing gifted students learn to become self-directed, independent learners.

The standards-based tasks (California Department of Education) in a learning center are differentiated to address the various abilities and interests of my students. Each task card I write includes one of each of the following components:
• thinking skill
• depth/complexity, content imperatives, universal concept, or disciplinarian
• standards-based content
• research skill
• product

When combined properly, students have access to a complete teaching objective. This formula allows for a differentiated learning opportunity that can be modified based on student readiness or interest.

For example, a learning center about culture that differentiates the thinking skill may include the following task cards:
1. Identify the details in the clothing of the ___________ culture. Read the books found at the center and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.
2. Compare the details in clothing between ___________ and ___________ cultures. Read the books found at the center, and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.
3. Prove with evidence that clothing reflects culture. Read the books found at the center and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.

Similarly, depth and complexity can also be a means to differentiate a learning center about culture.
[Learning centers] allow me to differentiate the core curriculum for my students while meeting the time restraints associated with a busy school day schedule.

1. Identify the details in the clothing of the _________ culture. Read the books found at the center and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.

2. Identify the rules of government in _________ culture. Read the books found at the center and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.

3. Identify the change over time that has occurred in _________ culture. Read the books found at the center and make a diagram using pictures and words to share your findings.

These tasks exemplify how the concept of culture can be differentiated based on thinking skill or depth and complexity.

Many people ask how I manage learning centers in my classroom. In my classroom, learning centers are a part of our reading group rotations. While reading in small groups, each of my students participates in three, twenty-five-minute rotations. The rotations include reading with the teacher, working at seatwork, and learning centers. During learning center time, each student has a choice. They are able to choose from four different learning centers. To prepare my students for the center rotation, I explain in detail the objective of each task. To insure student understanding, I introduce one center at a time in a whole-group setting. Over time, all four centers are introduced to the students. Once all centers have been introduced, they remain part of the rotation during the units being studied, though they are replaced as necessary.

Upon completion of a learning center task card, each student completes a simple self-evaluation. Once five tasks are complete, students turn in their finished products along with their self-evaluation sheets. As a means of assessment, the self-evaluation sheet fosters reflection and pride in their work. I provide feedback related to the products included, but I do not assign a grade for each task. Instead, I include this work as part of their effort grade for reading. If, however, there is a product that is incomplete or incorrect, I will meet with the student to clarify the objective of the task.

At the beginning of this article I asked you a question. Which learning center title was interesting to you? Read below to see the learning objectives that were written for each of the eye-catching titles. Listed are California standard-specific tasks for grades K-3.

**People, People Everywhere**
(1st grade California standards 1.2-1,3,4)

Task 1: Think like a cartographer, a person who makes maps, and make a map of the world. Choose a cut-and-color sheet and one oceans map found at the center. Cut out each continent and glue them on to the map. Be sure to glue each continent in the correct place by using the laminated map at the center as your guide.

Task 2: Identify the details of a compass rose by creating your own compass rose. Use the atlas found at the center to label a blank compass rose with the following cardinal directions: North, South, East, West. You may neatly color your compass rose when you are finished.

Task 3: Describe how weather affects people by adding to the class collage chart found at the center. Use pictures found in magazines or draw your own to show how weather affects people in different climates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Weather</th>
<th>Clothing</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Recreation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cold and Raining (Washington)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cold and Snowing (Alaska)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warm (California)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hot (Arizona)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Farm to Market
(2nd grade California standards 2.4-2.3)

Task 1: Sequence the pattern of travel necessary to ship produce from a plantation to a store by reading pages _________-_______ in your social studies book. Make a timeline of events using pictures and words.

Task 2: Define the following words by using the glossary found at the back of the social studies book. Use the paper books found at the center to make your own dictionary. After you neatly write the definitions, you may add a colored picture.
1. producer
2. consumer
3. interdependence
4. route
5. farmer
6. weather

The Power of a Hero
(2nd/3rd grade standards 3.4-6)

Task 1: Choose a biography from the bags hanging on the board: Jackie Robinson, Sally Ride, Sitting Bull, Louis Pasteur, Martin Luther King, Jr., Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin. Identify details about the hero’s life by reading the biography. Complete a biography report found at the center to share your findings. Be sure to use proper capitalization and punctuation and your neatest printing while completing your report.

Task 2: Read the biographies about Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin found at the center. Use facts (details) from the stories to tell about their similarities and differences. Make a Venn Diagram to share your findings.

Task 3: Identify how different points of view can lead to change by reading the story Mr. Lincoln’s Whiskers. Complete the learning frame found at the center to share your findings.

Tribal Ground
(3rd grade standards 3.2-1.2.3)

Task 1. Folklore is an integral part of Native American life. Choose a legend from the basket in order to identify the origin and big idea of a legend. Make a new book cover that clearly states the origin and big idea(s) found in the story. Use complete sentences and colored pictures to complete this task.

Task 2: Select a tribe of your choice from the list provided. Identify the details of Native American life by learning the following: home, food, weapons used, and most valued natural resource(s). Make a flip-book of pictures and complete sentences to share your findings.

Task 3: Compare and contrast the rules of a tribal government and the U.S. Government by reading the information found at the center. Make a Venn Diagram to share your findings.

Think Like a Geographer
(3rd grade California standards 3.1-1, 3.4-3)

Task 1: Think like a geographer. Use an atlas to identify the following geographical features found in California: deserts, mountains, valleys, hills, coastal areas, oceans, and lakes. Label and color the map found at the center to share your understanding.

Task 2: Think like a geographer. Create an advertisement for a national landmark (Mount Rushmore, The U.S. Capitol, The Statue of Liberty, The Liberty Bell) by identifying the following facts: where it is located, when it was created, what materials were used to create the landmark, why it was created, and why it is valued as a national landmark. Use the Internet, encyclopedias or books found at the center to help you make an advertisement for the landmark.

Task 3: Think like a geographer. Create a “Geography Glossary” by using a dictionary or the glossary found in the back of your social studies book to define the following terms: desert, mountain, valley, lake, river, ocean, continent, longitude, latitude, equator.

Reflections
I recently asked several students in a fifth grade classroom to share their perspective with me about social studies. Many quickly responded that it was boring.
“Boring?”
I asked, “Why?”
Their opinions were similar. They expressed dislike of reading solely from the social studies textbook as the means of instruction. Listening to their peers while reading whole group was also mentioned and not well received either. They expressed dismay in their lack of choice with regard to this content area. They commented that they were not able to work with their peers, access different resources, or have the opportunity to complete interesting projects. This caused me to reflect on my use of learning centers. Learning centers provide the opportunity for each of the desired requests of these 5th graders. Despite trends related to the focus of education, good pedagogy remains constant; therefore, learning centers with a goal of teaching or reinforcing the social studies standards will continue to be a norm in my classroom.

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Using Primary Sources in Social Studies with Gifted Learners

BY KIMBERLEY L. CHANDLER

It is essential that a social science curriculum for gifted students offers more than a textbook approach. To enable students to conduct the type of research that undergirds the social science disciplines, they must develop habits of inquiry and critical analysis. The use of primary source documents allows students to participate in the active investigation of course materials and to develop analytical skills through critical interpretation of the sources.

Scaffolding the Process

The social studies curricula developed at the Center for Gifted Education at the College of William and Mary include units spanning grades 2–10. (One unit, titled Primary Sources and Historical Analysis, is designed for students in grades 9 – 10 and is intended to support students in their development of the skills of the historian, particularly in the area of document analysis.) Included in each unit is a teaching model chart designed to provide scaffolding for the analysis of primary source documents. (See Figure 1, the version intended for older students. Figure 2 is a modified version with simpler language for younger students.) The purpose of the chart is to teach students how to approach an historical document, how to ask questions about it, and how to examine critically the information they receive from it. It is divided into three parts that represent important emphases for understanding the document. (The information is briefly summarized here. For more detailed information, see the curriculum units noted in the reference list.)

Part 1: Establishing a context and intent for the source. As students complete this portion of the analysis, the purpose is to develop an awareness of the various factors affecting and shaping the document’s contents. In this section, the student examines the context in which the document was written; considerations include the beliefs, norms, and values of the historical period. Establishing the intent for the source involves determining the purpose of the document with regard to the specific audience for whom it was written.

Part 2: Understanding the source. The purpose of this part of the chart is to assist the student in understanding the document by analyzing specific components. Main ideas are addressed in the first two questions, while a linkage to the document’s context is made with the third question. The final question asks the student to consider the author’s expected outcomes for the document.

Part 3: Evaluating and interpreting the source. In completing this section of the chart, the intent is for the student to identify the effectiveness of the document. When considering the authenticity and reliability of the source, the student must...
examine both the qualifications of the author and whether the source is authentic. The focus on whether a source is representative forces the student to identify the prevalence of the document’s ideas in the given historical period. As the student examines consequences, there is an analysis of the potential and actual outcomes of the document. The final element of this portion of the chart asks the student to consider the interpretation of the document with respect to the time period and subsequent studies of history.

Implementation Issues

When planning to use primary source documents, there are several implementation issues that a teacher should consider:

- In all cases, the teacher should plan to spend a significant amount of time discussing the elements of the chart and modeling its use. Prior to assigning students to use the chart to explore a document on their own, the teacher should make sure that they understand the purposes of all the questions.
- Certain documents may present a challenge to students in terms of the vocabulary used. Several “read-alouds” of the document and related discussion of vocabulary may be necessary prior to beginning the actual document analysis.
- The Analyzing Primary Sources chart may be used in its entirety or with a focus on a specific aspect. If only a portion of the chart is used, it is important to spend some time on establishing the context for the source; student understanding will be limited if the context is not clear prior to reviewing the document.
- Primary source document analysis should be included in the social studies curriculum for all students. For gifted learners, the differentiation of the process component provided by such analyses allows the student to practice the skills of the discipline and develop habits of inquiry. The plethora of documents available electronically (see resource list) and the use of a scaffold such as the chart explained in this article enables the teacher to incorporate this type of activity easily into the instructional program.

Primary Source Document Resources:

- 100 primary source documents from the National Archives: ourdocuments.gov.
- Digital Classroom, the National Archives’ gateway for resources about primary sources: archives.gov/education.
- Primary source and archival materials relating to American culture and history: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/index.html.
- Primary source historical documents from Western Europe: http://eudocs.lib.byu.edu/index.php/MainPage.
- Primary sources from voyages of discovery: http://www.win.tue.nl/~engels/discovery/primary.html.

References:


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Figure 1: Analyzing Primary Sources Chart

Document Title: ______________________________________________

**Establishing a Context and Intent for the Source:**

- **Author:**
- **Time/When was it written?**
- Briefly describe the culture of the time and list related events of the time.
- **Purpose (Why was the document created?)**
- **Audience (For whom was the document created?)**

**Understanding the Source:**

- What problems/issues/events does the source address?
- What are the main points/ideas/arguments?
- What assumptions/values/feelings does the author reflect?
- What actions/outcomes does the author expect? From whom?

**Evaluating/Interpreting the Source:**

- **Authenticity/Reliability (Could the source be invented, edited, or mistranslated? What corroborating evidence do you have about the source? Does the author know enough about the topic to discuss it?)**
- **Representative. (How typical is the source of others of the same period? What other information might you need to find this out?)**
- What could the consequences of this document be? (What would happen if the author’s plans were carried out? What could happen to the author when people read this? How might this document affect or change public opinions?)
- What were the actual consequences? What really happened as a result of this document?
  - Short-term
  - Long-term
- What new or different interpretation does this source provide about the historical period?
**Figure 2: Analyzing Primary Sources Chart (Simpler Language)**

**Document Title:** ______________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who, Where, When, Why?</th>
<th>Understanding the Source:</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td>What event does the document talk about?</td>
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<tr>
<td>When was it written?</td>
<td>What are the main ideas?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose (Why was the document created?)</td>
<td>What feelings does the author seem to have?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Audience (For whom was the document created?)</td>
<td>What outcomes does the author expect? From whom?</td>
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Editor’s Note* Evan invited his former elementary seminar teachers, Ann MacDonald and Jim Riley, to a formal public presentation of Perspective on San Diego Bay, A Field Guide. The professionalism of the student-centered project and the insight Evan gained provided a well-rounded student perspective and an invitation from the co-editors for a Hands-on Curriculum article. The book is available at Amazon.com.

Being able to excel in a single aspect of the curriculum is one thing. Being able to combine multiple disciplines into a cohesive, sophisticated, and extremely presentable project is quite another.

Fifty-six 11th grade students at High Tech High School in San Diego, California, as a semester-long interdisciplinary project, authored, designed, and edited a field guide: Perspective on San Diego Bay (2006). The purpose was to incorporate science, history, creative writing, art, math, technology, and numerous other skills in creating a useful and educational field guide. This hands-on lesson will provide a road map for guidance in a similar endeavor.

Scope of the Project

One of the most striking features of this project is the opportunity to effectively combine many different disciplines. As a result, the more teachers and subject areas that are involved, the more comprehensive the project becomes. There will always be the artist, the scientist, the technology wizard who, through their combined efforts, add portions to the project. This leads to development of team building and group organization skills.

Our field guide was presented in book form and is comprised of original literary and scientific writing pieces, as well as original photography, artwork, and graphic design. Your eventual findings and studies can also be effectively portrayed in less resource-intensive products such as slide presentations, speeches, pamphlets, brochures, reports, posters, or any combination of these.

The subject matter and the time and resource demands are variable and are dependent upon the local capacity. Presented here are the major steps that you can use as a guide to the implementa-
tion of a large-scale interdisciplinary project of personal, ecological importance.

Choose the Subject

We chose the San Diego Bay as the subject matter of the field guide because of its accessibility and the large social and ecological impacts that it has on the community. One of the goals should be the selection of a locale that the students and the community care about. An effective way to gain support for the project and instill an early sense of stewardship and sustainability in the students is to focus the subject matter on an environmentally conscious topic. In our project, biology was used as a scientific indicator of bay health, while the historic and creative writings focused on stewardship and human exploitation.

Inevitably, the subject must be one that can utilize multiple disciplines effectively and provide an interesting basis for an entire project. Our choice to study nearby environmental and cultural locales ensured a strong connection to the community, as well as a firm grounding for scientific and humanities-oriented studies.

Find the Perspectives

The true uniqueness of interdisciplinary projects lies within the many avenues from which a subject can be viewed. It is the students’ responsibility to discover as many of the avenues as possible and incorporate them into the final product. In the case of our project, we compiled our perspectives through the accompanying Venn Diagram.

Through the humanities portion, we looked at the history of the bay; had students write nature reflections and original literary works, such as poetry; and observed it visually through artwork and photography.

The biology portion involved a study of the abundance of creatures at various locations, a look at the biodiversity, and a categorized guide of local animals along the bay.

The math and technology section introduced geographic information systems (GIS) as a sophisticated way to add spatial data to the scientific studies.

As you can see, the goal was to involve aspects that both develop skills in a particular field and bridge multiple disciplines. Regardless of whether biodiversity studies and GIS technology are your media of learning, the perspectives from which you explore your subject should be a healthy combination of localized and mixed topics.

With your various topics in mind, start thinking about the product as a whole. If the final product is a book of some kind, take the areas you wish to explore and categorize them into literary chapters that provide a logical flow for the reader. The chapters do not necessarily have to be divided by subject matter. In fact, in our book on San Diego Bay, some of the chapters focused on one subject, while others were interdisciplinary. One chapter was a categorization of creatures we found along the bay—a purely biology-oriented section. Another had information on a particular location in the bay that included history, nature reflections, a biodiversity study, and GIS spatial data.

Divide and Conquer

Once you and your students decide upon the general outline of the project, the next step is to determine how to divide the workload among your students most effectively. Many pieces can be assigned evenly throughout the entire student group and later screened for final inclusion. In our case, we had to have descriptions written for each of the creatures we found along the bay. Each student was assigned to write at least two of the descriptions. By first asking for volunteers, we could better match common interests of students with subject matter.

Once the volunteer pool was exhausted, the remaining pieces had to be randomly assigned. In this portion of our book, everyone’s pieces on the animals would be included. Since we could not screen out poorly written pieces, great care had to be taken in the editing process to make sure these entries met our standards.

Some types of pieces must simply be assigned to see what the students create. In our humanities sections, students were asked to write poetry and nature reflections relating to various aspects or locations within San Diego Bay. Since there was no quota to fill as there was in the case with the bay creatures, only the best reflections and poems were selected for inclusion in the book. In the screening process, we made a point of encouraging students to overcome the belief that they could never be good enough to contribute; otherwise they might not even try.

Other more specialized pieces in the book can be distributed based upon student strengths and interests. With the needed chapters in mind, ask for volunteers to lead the development of those chapters. Those who step up will usually have a passion for
the particular subject matter. With a few students to lead each section of the book, assemble a team around them to accomplish whatever studies or writing needs to be done. This encourages growth in teambuilding skills, as well as leadership management. Make sure to track these subsidiary groups to ensure that the pitfalls of irresponsible leadership or degrading group dynamics do not present themselves.

**Get Out and Explore**

One of the most outstanding attributes of a large-scale interdisciplinary project such as this, is the opportunity to engage students in real field studies and move beyond the classroom to accomplish a project. Since our subject area was the San Diego Bay, we periodically took field trips to six different locations throughout the bay—each of which had its own subchapter in our book. At each location we performed a scientific survey of the abundance of creatures within the inter-tidal regions of that location. This survey involved students walking right out into the sometimes sub-solid shorelines and measuring speciation distributions at various tidal heights. Presenting students with real, digging-through-the-mud science provides a far more engaging experience than a textbook or an in-class lab.

Each location also offers the opportunity for creative writing assignments. Divide your students so that none of them are near each other; ask them to sit in one place for a while and simply reflect on their surroundings. Let them decide whether they will draw illustrations, compose poetry, or write a prose reflection on their experience. Provide only minimal prompts to set a general direction for creative expression. The experience of solitary reflection can yield some very thoughtful literary pieces that remaining in a classroom cannot duplicate.

**Coalesce and Compile**

Once you collect all of the pieces that will eventually go into the book, it is extremely important that everything be organized so that the final editing process can proceed efficiently. Ask students to follow naming conventions when saving files on the computer to aid in clarity. Set up shared folders and hard drives that students can consolidate data to. Since the final book will be edited on a computer, scan any physical documents, such as artwork or photos, into the computer. There will be more technologically savvy individuals within your student group—now is the time to utilize their skills. With a large number of authors—over 60 in our case—organization becomes an extremely important and difficult task. Subdivide chapters to different student groups and coordinate those groups to create a singular, cohesive repository of all the work.

**Refine and Edit**

Your book will still be a diamond in the rough and will need to be polished until the essence of your message shines through. If your goals for the book are to seek formal publication, it is extremely important that your editing standards be set very high. You must organize many editing teams to go through each piece and check for everything from grammar, spelling, cohesion, plagiarism, and especially thorough citations for borrowed information. Any images that are being used must be properly cited and have the proper permissions for use. In our case, we took all of the photographs ourselves and were not faced with many image permission problems. Places like Google Images should be pretty much banned due to an inability to acquire proper publishing permissions.

Fact checking becomes important at this stage, and there is only so much that can be checked within your classroom. Instruct students to seek out experts in the appropriate fields and to send their pieces out to be expertly reviewed. This process not only ensures the quality of your writings, but also teaches students the importance of accuracy and the process of real-world peer reviewing.

**Spread the Message**

The best attribute of presenting your findings through a book is the ease with which you can distribute your findings to others. In our case, we were able to locate an educational publishing company that was willing to help front the money necessary to send the book to a professional publisher. The final product was one that could hold up in bookstores and online. This resulted in being able to spread our findings of the San Diego Bay to many people throughout the San Diego community and elsewhere, including presentations on the local Natural History Museum’s IMAX theater and at the local Birch Aquarium. While you do not have to fully publish a book, the final product can be one that you can formally present or simply give to anyone who asks what you accomplished with your problem-based curriculum. In fact, places such as local libraries, other schools, service clubs, and local community interest groups are usually very interested in what local schools can accomplish. This is the perfect type of project to showcase to such audiences. What they will see is a comprehensive, interdisciplinary presentation showing what students can achieve.

**Reference:**


**Evan Morikawa**

Evan Morikawa has just graduated from High Tech High School in San Diego, and will be a pioneer at the new Franklin Olin College of Engineering in Needham, MA. Through one of his engineering projects to create a novel way to input text into peripheral devices, Evan has won numerous local, and state awards as well as a 2nd place at the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair in 2006. Evan was one of the two main editors who designed, compiled, and edited the 245 page field guide about the San Diego Bay.
“School takes up all my time!”

Those words were spoken by a child who liked school. They were spoken by a child who was in an exemplary gifted program. And they were spoken by a child who had no learning difficulties.

Nevertheless, school still took up all her time.

She wanted to follow her bliss and just read…with no questions asked.

At dinner, her father engaged her in a discussion about the founding fathers and their beliefs. The conversation was easy and happy because opinions and connections were simple for a bright mind. But when pressed for some facts as evidence for those opinions, the pleasure went out of the conversation.

Understanding was easy; remembering was tedious.

This was a lucky child because she had a father who knew how to tell a story that motivated research…that unearthed facts…that could be remembered because there was a compelling story upon which to plant the facts. She was doubly fortunate because she also had an engaging teacher who ran her classroom in the same manner.

But where was the ability to be responsible for her own motivation as school was taking up all her time? Could it be that her parents and teachers were creating a child—a whole generation of students— who were incessantly other directed because with all that wonderful curriculum, motivating oneself was not easily accomplished?

Notice that often it is we teachers and parents who are doing the motivating or coping or managing. Just when will we teach our students to be responsible for some of this educating? Students can do this by learning how to initiate the process of learning after a beginning motivation—or after no motivation, if that’s the reality—and parents, for example, can help by not indulging their children’s procrastination as they run to the library at the last minute.

With this in mind, we are—again—in 2006, looking at social science curriculum to sparkle up the day at school with exciting facts and higher level thinking. We read about how ignorant our college students are regarding the history of our country. We know that publishers water down history textbooks to deal with today’s uninspired students and to cope with divisive political groups who want their own perspective represented in textbooks. These are all old—very old—observations, though still true.

Yet while many of our gifted students perpetuate this lack of inner drive, children in those very same accelerated classes, nevertheless, enjoy the effortless gathering in little groups to discuss ideas. Discussion always attracts gifted students, and it is an easy way to involve them. If teachers are adept, the discussions involve facts so that accurate learning does occur. If not, our students spew out empty rhetoric and spout off opinions without evidence.

When we are fortunate, we find a teacher who knows how to guide students to become responsible for their own scholarship and their own enthusiasm. Being responsible for one’s own scholarship is the underlying secret. It furnishes the intrinsic drive needed to collect information that provides the fodder for those facile discussions which gifted children so adore. Are we adults not exactly like that in our own habits? We all love the easy way out: just look at how we pontificate in our own political discussions and how our favorite political commentators over generalize, thus avoiding pertinent details.

And so, here we are—once more—at the old observation that we preach but often fail to practice: the answer is in the balance, in the blend, in the equilibrium of facts and connections—in clear thinking based upon accurate data.

ELAINE S. WIENER is Associate Editor for Book Reviews for the Gifted Education Communicator. She is retired from the Garden Grove Unified School District GATE program and can be reached at: esw.ca@worldnet.att.net.
I was recently sharing stories with a good friend who told me a story from her childhood. Long past the conversation, the story has stuck with me because it is more than a story. It is a symbol.

My friend is one of the happiest and most positive people I have ever known. She grew up in a “children’s home.”
because her parents were simply not adult enough to take care of their children. That would be an experience from which some people would never recover, but she always saw the children's home as a gift. It was a place where there were things to do, people who cared, and predictability in a young life that had lacked it. That attitude is typical of her optimism.

Her story revolved around a time one Christmas when people in the community invited young residents from the children's home to come to their houses for holiday meals and gifts. My friend's take on it was that the practice was a good deal all around. It made people in the community feel good to help out, and she thought the attention was just fine.

The home to which she was invited this particular year was the home of wealthy people. She didn't so much know that at the outset, but she did know the house was nice, and the meal was extra good. Her sense that the family was “well off” came when they handed her a shoebox with special wrappings and beautiful tissue paper inside. When she opened it, nestled in the crisp paper was a beautiful Thumbelina doll. My friend knew from advertisements she had seen that the doll was very expensive. More to the point, however, she knew it was the most beautiful doll in the world—a very special present!

She couldn't wait to get back to the children's home with the doll. In her mind, it was good that she had received the gift because it would now be available to everyone in her cottage. The benefits of the gift she had been given would spill over to her peers and make them happy too, she was sure.

It didn't work that way, however. The children were jealous. The negative feeling they extended to her when she showed them the doll was so potent that she instantly understood that the doll—the gift she had been given—carried a far higher price tag than the monetary one from the tag at the store.

The solution to the problem was instantly clear to her. She simply never took the doll out of the box again.

Years later, she gave the doll to her daughter at Christmas one year. Knowing the story of the beautiful doll and the jealousy and hurt associated with it, her daughter also never took the doll out of the box.

The Story that Repeats Itself

One of my professional heroes is Steven Levy, an educator from Massachusetts. The long-time public school teacher makes music with kids when he teaches. I don't mean he's a music teacher. I mean that what he teaches and how he teaches are so beautiful and their impact on students' lives so profound, that it is like watching a symphony play out. I am sad that I didn't know him 20 years ago. I would never have been able to teach like he does—but I would have been so enriched as a teacher had I known teaching could look like that! My students would have been so much better served had I known what he has since taught me. I have never known a person with deeper humility, a more generous spirit, or a kinder heart.

Steven was named a Disney Outstanding Teacher at one point in his career. A bit later, he was named Massachusetts Teacher of the Year. In both instances, he felt that the honors that came to him were a reflection of the excellence of the colleagues with whom he worked. The recognitions were good because they honored teachers and teaching.

Many of his colleagues, however, reacted quite differently. So great was the jealousy that many of his fellow teachers never even spoke to him about the award. Already a quiet and self-effacing person, he learned quickly never to take the doll out of the box.

And Yet Again

Several years ago, one of our doctoral students accepted a job as a principal in a school in the town where she lived. She had a strong background in curriculum and instruction and a great enthusiasm for teaching. She worked insistently but positively with teachers in the school to create classrooms that were positive, engaging, student-centered, and that lifted students to a better place than when they entered the classrooms.
The young principal was particularly proud of one veteran teacher who had radically changed her approach to teaching and who was as excited with the results as her students were. My student told me about her progress over a period of months.

Then as the year ended, my principal friend came into my office with a handwritten note and gave it to me with eyes that brimmed with tears. She said nothing. The note said everything.

The teacher who wrote the note said that she wanted to tell the principal two things. First, she wanted the principal to know how much she appreciated her leadership. “You taught me to take risks. You supported me in taking them. In the end, you taught me a better way to teach.” She went on to say that she had never loved her profession as much at she had that year and that she had never really been proud of her teaching until that year.

Then she shared the second message. “I want you to know,” she said, “that I will largely return to my old ways of teaching next year.” I was stunned, as the principal had been. The teacher explained that her husband had died a couple of years earlier. He had been her best friend and had left a huge chasm in her life. What she had left in the way of friends were fellow teachers in the school. “They are angry with me because of what I have done in my classroom this year,” she explained. “Perhaps they are jealous. Perhaps they are just afraid. I don’t know.” What she did know, however, was that she could not lose them in her life. “I am not proud of the decision,” she said. “I just know that I am not strong enough right now to make any other decision.”

She had brought the doll home. She had shown it to people she believed would celebrate with her. They did not. The cost of their jealousy was so great that the doll would have to stay in the box.

**In Search of a New Story**

I’ve heard the story too many times, in too many places. It came from the young teacher of primary grade students in Michigan who said, “I feel the disdain of the teachers in my building even when I walk down the hall. Some of them have even told me that it’s not fair to have to compete with me. I’m not competing,” she said. I’m just trying to teach in a way that seems right to me.”

It came from an exceptional high school teacher in New York who persistently insisted in public that all the teachers on his faculty taught as he did. It couldn’t have been further from the truth. “You do know,” I said privately to him once, “that you are a master teacher and that few other teachers anywhere teach as you do?” He bowed his head and said after a silence, “I can’t admit that even to myself because it is already so hard for them to accept me.”

I’ve heard the story many times in schools. I’ve heard it in many versions. I’ve heard it in many locations.

Sad as the original story of the Thumbelina doll is, I understand it. It happened to children—and to children who had every reason to be insecure at that.

The story is more tragic to me in schools—and less understandable. Are we still insecure children? Do we not have the generosity of spirit to say to the best among us, “I’m proud that we share a profession”? Do we somehow think that we’d be doing a better job if no one were recognized as excellent? What dreadful thing would befall us if we said to our colleagues, “Teach me what you know about teaching”?

Shortly after Levy was named Teacher of the Year and realized the loneliness in the award, he watched a championship baseball game. He later shared the story with a conference of Massachusetts administrators where he was a featured speaker. It was a close game, he recalled for his audience, but in the final inning, one batter hit a home run that won the game for his team. Instantly, his teammates ran from the dugout, lifted him to their shoulders, and carried him around the diamond. He hit the home run, but he made them all winners. They understood and celebrated it.

“What is it that makes that act so natural on the ball field and what makes it so impossible in our schools?” Levy asked the group.

I wish I knew the answer.

I’m ready for a new story.

CAROL ANN TOMLINSON, Ph.D., teaches at the University of Virginia in the Curry School of Education where she is Professor of Educational Leadership. She is a past president of the National Association for Gifted Children and author of numerous leading books on differentiating curriculum.
Inspiration: An Invaluable Classroom Resource

BY MARGE HOCTOR

The California Recommended Standards for Programs for Gifted and Talented Students, approved October 2001 and revised in July 2005, clearly state that gifted students must not only meet but exceed the state content standards. They must have the opportunity to think critically and creatively, develop research skills, and explore advanced content in depth supported by appropriate materials and technology. To download the complete Standards document, go to the website of the California Department of Education, cde.ca.gov/sp/gt/gt/.

An excellent list of necessary lifelong skills can be found in the SCANS report, a federal government study that was released by the Secretary's Commission on Achieving Necessary Skills in 1991. Although published 15 years ago, the findings of this report, What Work Requires from Schools, are just as relevant today.

Among the competencies required are:

* resource management
* acquisition and use of information
* understanding of systems, relationships, and skills with a variety of technologies

The full report can be downloaded from the following website: wdr.dole-ta.gov/SCANS/.

Many of the technology resources on the market today support acquisition of content with the purpose of meeting the state standards and doing well on standardized tests. Acquisition of content is important, but it is only the beginning. We have the responsibility to ensure that gifted students (actually all students) develop the skills to acquire, organize, analyze, create, and present content.

Inspiration software is an incredible tool to assist students and teachers in the quest to meet the GATE standards and to acquire the SCANS skills. It allows students to organize information in graphic or outline form to plan projects, organize research, make connections, see relationships, and to communicate information in writing or as a multimedia presentation.

The opening screen in Inspiration allows the user to start a project by choosing to use a ready-made template, an open-ended screen complete with tools to create and modify personal graphic organizers, or a mode to create a traditional outline. The templates are valuable, but one of the advantages of this program is that it allows students to develop their own ideas, create their own outlines for organization, make their own connections, and communicate their research in unique and meaningful ways.

The program is easy to use; the opening screen in the diagram view displays one main idea symbol and a set of tools at the top that are easy to understand. Using these tools, a graphic organizer with links, sub links, categorization, attached notes, graphic symbols, video and audio files can be created. Information entered into a diagram will transform to the outline form with the categories and subcategories intact with the click of a button. Since the diagram and outline views are integrated, any information entered in the traditional outline form will automatically be added to the diagram form with the links already created.

Information entered into Inspiration can be used in a variety of ways. It can be a final product that provides a visual representation of information and concepts, allowing students to make connections and see relationships. It can be used in the information gathering and organization process or as a graphic organizer for a multimedia project; it can also be transferred to another application such as Microsoft Word, AppleWorks, or PowerPoint.

Inspiration software has been an asset to classrooms for many years. There is a new version, Version 8, but the older versions of Inspiration are still valuable tools. They do what they always did and remain highly effective even though Version 8
adds many new and exciting features. Note that documents created in Version 8 can be saved as Version 7 so that they can be used with the older software.

**New or Improved Features in Inspiration 8**

**Symbol library.** There is a symbol library in older versions; however, Version 8 includes improvements. The symbols in the library can now be easily found using a keyword search function.

In addition to the extensive symbol library, Inspiration now has more than 1,000,000 symbols available via Inspiration Software’s complimentary Web Resources. The symbols can be seamlessly accessed with the keyword search and an Internet connection.

It is easier to create custom libraries and save them with templates, eliminating the need to load every custom library on every computer.

**Video and audio.** Video and audio files can now be easily inserted into Inspiration documents and played directly from them to create more engaging and informative projects.

**Templates.** Templates are not new to Version 8 but there are more of them. Now, 65 templates come with the program and an additional 60 are available on the Web via Inspiration Web Resources.

**Drag and drop.** Multimedia files, images, documents, and URLs can be added by dragging and dropping directly into the document.

**Enhanced export and transfer.** Inspiration documents can easily be transferred to other applications such as word processors, PowerPoint, and Web pages.

**Word guide.** The word guide provides an integrated dictionary and thesaurus, which links synonyms to their specific definitions. Audio pronunciation of words may also be heard.

**Auto Spell Checker.** The spell checker automatically identifies misspelled words in both diagram and outline views.

**Curriculum Packages.** Curriculum packages contain unit plans, multiple templates and exemplars. These are good starting points for lessons. Some do incorporate high level content, elements of depth and complexity, and require critical thinking skills. Others require modification to ensure that they meet the needs of gifted learners. The units are designed for high school students; however many of the units could be modified for gifted upper elementary and middle school students.

The Curriculum Packages, available via Inspiration Web Resources, can be found by going to the Starter screen, then clicking on “Learn to Use.”

**Training videos.** A series of videos accompany the program. They are divided into skills or activities and provide a step-by-step guide to the use of the program. The videos, available in high resolution are also available in low resolution to shorten the download time.

**Checklist.** Keeping track of progress on a long-term project is a skill that is necessary for students of all ages. When using Inspiration, students can access a checklist from the Tools Menu to track progress. When a symbol is checked in Diagram View, the corresponding topic in Outline View is also checked.

The Inspiration Program is an excellent resource that has been upgraded to add features that make it even easier and more powerful to use. It is an open-ended tool that provides a guideline for students to organize their thinking and their information and to use the advantages of the visual diagram to see relationships, make connections, and analyze information.

The company recommends the program for students from grades 6 to 12; however it could be used very effectively with elementary students as well.

Inspiration is available on its website at: inspiration.com.

Single user $69.00
Upgrade to Inspiration 8 $39.95
License for five computers $310.00
License for ten computers $550.00
License for twenty computers $895.00

Versions created specifically for handheld devices are available for the Palm OS and the Pocket PC.

MARGE HOCTOR is a former Gifted And Talented Education (GATE) teacher, District Technology Supervisor, and Coordinator of K-12 Programs and Services (GATE, Technology, School Libraries, and the Media Center) for a large urban school district in California.
Before I tell you where to find social studies resources for students, I have a confession to make: I **hated** social studies in school. What year did each of the explorers sail and to which destinations? What are the countries of South America, in proper placement? No one ever asked the question I wanted answered: Why? Yes, we all learned that the Puritans left England for religious freedom and that Columbus was looking for a shorter route to the East Indies for spice trade. And I enjoyed learning about the economics of the stock market during senior year in high school. But why did all that memorization of dates and places in history matter to me?

As an adult, I began to appreciate social studies when I started investigating my kids’ genealogy. Suddenly it was important when the Revolutionary War ended compared to when these immigrants arrived; where Sutter’s Mill was; and exactly where the Mason Dixon line divided the “North” and the “South”…right through my ancestors’ families! Wow—social studies isn’t just dates and places—it’s people and their actions—and it’s important!

I was the disengaged social studies student, forced to memorize isolated facts and spit them back on tests, only to be forgotten moments later, without depth or meaning. Barbara Clark sums it up perfectly:

Gifted students have the interest and the ability to use the language, the information, and the structures of social...
sciences to solve old problems and envision new possibilities. However, they must be challenged by parents and teachers who also find inquiry and mystery impelling. Too often, in today's schools gifted students are placed in educational structures that only repeat information that they already know, with concepts already explored, in settings that stifle excited inquiry. How much more could be learned, how many more could be entranced, and how important to all of us would their contributions be if such children were fostered and appropriately taught.

—Barbara Clark, Social Studies Review, Spring 2002

There is so much more to social studies!

Teachers and homeschooling parents have resources available today as never before…free and easy, on the Internet. But where to find the “good stuff” among the tons of material available…that is always the question. Here are a few good starting points:

Annenberg Media Learner, learner.org/, offers resources in many disciplines, including social studies and history and for all grades, from K-12 and beyond. Some of the resources are units including movies, labs, printable materials, and curriculum guides. Other resources are for teachers themselves, including Social Studies in Action: A Methodology Workshop for K-5, learner.org/resources/series176.html. This program is broadcast throughout the school year on Video on Demand (VoD). The program is available free just by signing up (requires high-speed Internet connection, available in most schools). Graduate credit is available. With topics beginning with “Teaching for Understanding,” to “Exploring Unity and Diversity,” to “Engaging Students in Active Learning,” and finally to “Assessing Students’ Learning and Making Connections,” this course may be valuable to any K-5 social studies teacher.

Not looking for K-5? Teaching Geography, learner.org/resources/series161.html, is for those with students in grades 7-12. Teaching Geography “combines case studies that profile locations around the globe, engaging classroom segments, and commentary from geography and pedagogy experts.” Check out the whole Annenberg Media Learner site!

Parents and teachers can both find social studies resources on EdSITEment Marco Polo, edsitement.neh.gov/; supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, it offers a great selection of lessons and more on topics including history and social studies. There is a dramatic range of topics including:

- Aesop and Ananse: Animal Fables and Trickster Tales
- The 1828 Campaign of Andrew Jackson and the Growth of Party Politics
- Haven't I Seen You Somewhere Before? samsara and karma in the Jataka Tales
- Life on the Great Plains
- Not Everyone Lived in Castles During the Middle Ages

Check out the whole site, where you can search by topic, grade level, type of resource, and more. Also look for “Grants for Teaching and Learning Resources” and “Curriculum Development”; if you miss this year's deadline, make a note for next year.

Microsoft Education: Lesson Plans, microsoft.com/education/lessonplans.mspx, offers more lesson plans, searchable by grade or age level, and a wide range of themes and learning areas.

The Global Schoolhouse, gsh.org/, takes a different approach. It is a virtual meeting place where educators, students, parents, and community members can collaborate, interact, develop, publish, and discover. Included are international Collaborations, contests, games, and more. In Friends and Flags, globalschoolnet.org/programs/friendsandflags, kids from around the world introduce themselves to other kids by creating and mailing cultural introduction packages to similar groups of children in far-away places. In CyberFair, globalschoolnet.org/gsh/cf/, schools and youth organizations from around the world create projects to share via the Internet. Visit this site for many more Global ideas!

National Geographic, nationalgeographic.com/education/, offers maps and photos and current events, in addition to lesson plans and professional development. Don't miss their Xpeditions, nationalgeographic.com/xpeditions/, to amazing and interesting places!

Scholastic Internet Field Trips, teacher.scholastic.com/fieldtrp/, offers learning trips in U.S. history, social studies skills, civics and government.

ThinkQuest Library, thinkquest.org/library/, offers a variety
of internet-based projects on topics including: geography, travel, history, government, social sciences, and culture.

And then there’s Google Maps, maps.google.com/. At first glance, it’s just another site for maps and directions. But type in your address, or your grandmother’s address, or Brooklyn, NY, and you’ll get a map of the neighborhood or town. In the upper right, select Satellite or Hybrid for an even more interesting view and use the range hash marks in the upper left to zoom in and out. Did you know that lake was there? Is there any open space left in your area? What else can you learn? It’s a great way to put the world into perspective!

If you’re fascinated with satellite images, explore Google Earth, earth.google.com/. This free, downloadable program lets you tilt and rotate the view to see 3D terrain and buildings, visit exotic locales, tourist spots around the world, as well as search for schools, restaurants, hospitals, and hotels. You can even make your own annotations to search and save.

With these great resources at their fingertips, teachers and homeschooling parents have a great variety of lessons to bring social studies to life for their children and students!

**Kids Korner**

The growth of the Internet has become a boon for more and more subjects besides science and math… and social studies is no exception. Check out these great sites, for kids of all ages, and enjoy the best the Internet has to offer!

Journey of Mankind, bradshawfoundation.com/, offers an animated look at the timeline of mankind as our ancestors moved across the globe. A fascinating look at where lines of mankind started, grew, died off, survived, and blossomed in the future—our past.

Ben’s Guide to U.S. Government for Kids, bensguide.gpo.gov/, includes items from the symbols of U.S. Government, to the election process, to the separation of national and state government, to an annual national high school debate topic. Ben has something for everyone!

History of Money from Ancient Times to the Present Day, ex.ac.uk/~RDavies/arian/llyfr.html, investigates the world’s money through history. Back in 9000 BC cattle and crops were being used as the earliest form of money. Then move forward in time to the first quality-guaranteed silver used as currency in 2250 BC. Between 1200 and 500 BC, find where cowrie shells and tools were used as currency throughout early China. And much more….

Viewing U.S. history through our coins can be seen at: h.i.p. Pocket Change, usmint.gov/Kids. Interactive games and stories lighten the journey through history.

While we’re looking at U.S. history, check out AnimatedAtlas, animatedatlases.com/movie.html, for a 10-minute presentation of the growth of the U.S. from the original 13 colonies in 1789 to the addition of the 49th and 50th states in the 1950s.

For our youngest kids (and fun for all ages!), The Lemonade Game, lemonadegame.com/, offers great insight into the supply and demand side of economics. Adjust your raw materials and price, watch the weather forecast, and sell as much lemonade as you can—without running out. But watch out for those bugs! (Java applet required.)

Some of my favorite sites on the Web are part of Nova, pbs.org/wgbh/nova/, the companion websites to the Public Broadcasting Service Nova episodes. Even without the programs (often available by podcast right to your iPod), there are videos, interactive activities, and lots of interesting information on a variety of social studies topics; they include these and many others:

- America’s Stone Age Explorers, pbs.org/wgbh/nova/stoneage
- Lost King of the Maya, pbs.org/wgbh/nova/maya/
- Secrets of Lost Empires II: Medieval Siege, pbs.org/wgbh/nova/lostempires/trebuchet/

If you visit only one link from this article, Nova is the one to visit!

NationStates, nationstates.net, is a great role-playing game for all ages. Set up a country with your own political ideals, laws, and government; then watch, learn, and mature as your country interacts with other countries in the “world” of NationStates. It’s an amazing journey!


Kids, don’t miss Google Maps and Google Earth, above!

And whatever you do, don’t do as I did when I was a kid—check out all there is to love about social studies!

**CAROLYN KOTTMEYER** is the director of Hoagies’ Gifted Education Page, hoagiesgifted.org and Hoagies’ Kids and Teens Page, hoagieskids.org, and the 2005 winner of the NAGC Community Service Award. She is also the 2006 winner of the PAGE Neuber-Pregler Award, for her work.
Recently we heard an interview on National Public Radio with past Poet Laureate of the United States, Billy Collins. He talked about “boredom” as a precursor to his creativity. He looked forward to his “times of boredom” as a necessary component of his writing. About the same time that I heard his interview, I also read Douglas Wood’s picture book celebration of Nothing To Do. Once in a while, in our wildly overscheduled existence, comes a day where there is no plan, no class to attend, homework, practice, camp, appointment—a day with nothing on the calendar. So how do you enjoy such a luxurious day? Wood suggests activities mostly experiential, sensory, and day dreamy like taking off shoes and walking in green grass or mud, watching clouds or ants, flying paper airplanes. Or rereading a favorite book. The inspired choice to illustrate Wood’s text was Wendy Anderson Halperin whose watercolors are always a gift to the reader with the luxury of unstructured leisure time to browse her myriad of details.

I begin this article with thinking about the luxury of unscheduled time and wonder how often we give that gift to ourselves and our children or in the classroom lesson plan (an oxymoron perhaps—scheduling unscheduled time) or at home. Keeping too busy may really impact a child’s creativity.

Creativity and intuition are two of the factors at play in Blue Balliett’s The Wright 3. Two years ago, Balliett wowed young mystery readers with a sophisticated story, Chasing Vermeer (reviewed in this journal in Summer, 2004, Vol. 35, No. 2), about two classmates who get involved in the theft of a Vermeer painting. Now the young detectives add a third member to their team, Calder’s old friend, Tommy, who has just moved back to Chicago. Tommy’s apartment has a rare view of Frank Lloyd Wright’s famous Robie House that is in danger of being torn down. They call themselves “The Wright 3,” and their mission is to save the wonderful old house from the wrecking ball. With Calder’s 3D pentominoes and secret code, Petra’s sleuthing and intuition, and the addition of Tommy’s uncanny skills at excavation and his propinquity to the famous landmark, they are able to capture some would-be thieves and to rescue the building. Along the way the author builds some historical details about architect Wright and sprinkles a bit of magical realism into the plot. There are also relationship issues of three classmates working out a friendship. The Wright 3, with Brett Helquist’s illustrations, is a satisfying and jolly read.

Another recent novel with a mystery begins when Ted Hammond sees someone in the window of an abandoned house one early October morning while delivering the local newspaper. Ted lives in a small town in Nebraska with a population so diminished, there are only nine remaining students in his school. While his teacher divides her time between the four fourth graders and four eighth graders in Room One, Ted, the lone sixth grader, is happy to retreat into his favorite pastime of reading mysteries. The real life mystery of “The Case of the Face in the Window” turns out to be a girl about his age, who, along with her brother and mother, is hiding out after their car broke down. The father of the family was killed in Iraq, and they are en route to relatives in Colorado from Texas. At first Ted offers to bring them food, but then realizes they need more help than he alone can provide. Ted enlists the townspeople whose kindness to a bereaved military family attracts national publicity, giving people a chance to rebuild their lives and a town to revitalize. This is another winner by Andrew Clements, author of thought-provoking novels like Frindle and The Report Card.

Clements, in Room One, really explores what makes a town, a town. When a community can no longer even support a local school, so many other services are at risk. It is a valuable study of
community and could be used in any social studies curriculum that looks at the institutions and attitudes that are required to maintain “community.”

Readers who like interesting words and intriguing travel adventures are the perfect audience for Lesley M. M. Blume’s tale of Cornelia and the Audacious Escapades of the Somerset Sisters. Cornelia is a lonely youngster living in Greenwich Village. Her mother, a world famous concert pianist, is either touring or recovering from touring or practicing for the next tour, leaving Cornelia in the care of a chatterbox French nanny. To ward off most adults and schoolmates, Cornelia hides behind a prodigious vocabulary she memorizes from her collection of dictionaries and thesauruses. But one day she meets new neighbors who have moved into the adjacent apartment and discovers a world far more interesting than the narrow confines of her predictable and sheltered life.

The new residents are an aging writer named Virginia Somerset, her companion and servant Patel, and a French bulldog named Mister Kinyetta. Each room in the apartment has been decorated to commemorate a place in the world Virginia and her three madcap sisters toured, beginning in Morocco in 1949. Virginia is Cornelia’s kindred spirit with her love of words but she uses them to connect, not hide behind. She is a storyteller in the tradition of Scheherazade, spinning tales of the four adventurous Somerset sisters. Cornelia blossoms under the lovely attention in that exotic household, keeping her visits there a secret from her mother and the housekeeper. Cornelia is furious when she discovers her mother in Virginia’s apartment. However, it is through the older woman’s intervention between mother and daughter that the two begin to reconnect. Blume’s story of a unique friendship between a young girl and a wise old woman is a pleasure to read alone or to share as a classroom or family read-aloud.

Egyptian author and illustrator, Mohieddin Ellabbad, brings his Arabic sensibilities and artistic eye to the reader through The Illustrator’s Notebook. We have had few materials translated and published that give North American children insights into Arabic thinking. Along with the cultural experience the book provides, the reader gets an appreciation of the creative artist’s point of view. For example, he explains that because the Arabic language is written and read from right to left, readers from his part of the world also look at pictures the same way. He shows an example then, of Superman flying in from the left of the page in the Western tradition of moving from left to right, while below him is pictured a knight (perhaps the twelfth century Muslim warrior Saladin) arriving on the page from the right and traveling to the left. Within the “notebook” are many other illustrations with commentaries that have been translated. The original Arabic writing remains as a part of each illustration so that the book is, in effect, bi-lingual.

The twelfth century brought Englishmen in direct contact with Arabic culture when they accompanied their King Richard on his Crusade to the Holy Land. K. M. Grant presents an unflinching graphic depiction of the harsh realities of that campaign in Blood Red Horse, Book One of The De Granville Trilogy. Book Two of the trilogy, Green Jasper, brings Will and his older brother, Gavin back to England having survived (barely) a defeat at the hands of the Saracens in The Holy Land. What we discover in the second installment is how tenuous Richard’s hold on the throne became during his absence, with the development of an enormous political struggle raging in England.

The brothers have come home to rebuild what was destroyed in their absence. A second thread of the story follows the young Saracen, Kamil, who fought with Saladin and loves Will’s horse, Hosanna, as much as Will does. He travels to England to reclaim the Blood Red Horse for himself. While there is a good deal about life in the very early Middle Ages, Grant’s drama will give kids who love to read about horses another memorable horse story.

Perhaps our most astonishing reading experience so far this year is Markus Zusak’s The Book Thief. Set in the outskirts of Munich through the period building up to and during World War II, Death is the narrator. Although he does his task of gathering souls with efficiency and compassion, he admits he
has a problem dealing with survivors whom he usually avoids. But in the case of Liesel Meminger, her theft of a book, “The Grave Digger’s Handbook” intrigues him. At nine-years old, she is a child who cannot read, and therefore does not even know the name of the book she has discovered in the snow where her younger brother has just been buried. She doesn’t understand why her mother has abandoned her to strangers, the Hubermanns, who will become her Mama and Papa. Describing her arrival at their house on Himmel Street, Zusak writes, “...you could still see the bite marks of snow on her hands...the frosty blood on her fingers. Everything about her was undernourished. Wire-like shins. Coat-hanger arms. She did not produce it easily, but when it came, she had a starving smile.” The book is filled with Zusak’s exquisitely written portraits of the people who are part of Liesel’s world. Curiously, The Book Thief was published originally as an adult book in Zusak’s native Australia, but in the United States, it was released for the young adult market. For high school students who are reading novels and memoirs of the Holocaust, including Elie Weisel’s Night, The Book Thief will provide another view of life in Germany during World War II. Adults who have read many of the other fine novels on this topic, including Ursula Hegi’s Stones from the River, will find this compelling and unforgettable.

Have you ever wondered why there are often two or three fast food restaurants within a block of our local high schools? Are you concerned about the problems of obesity in our population? Wouldn’t you like kids to be making more informed choices about what they are eating and why? OK. This may sound preachy, and perhaps this review would be more appropriate in a family activity could even become a leisurely and creative pastime.

JODY FICKES SHAPIRO is a former school librarian and has recently sold her award-winning bookstore, Adventures for Kids, in Ventura, CA, in order to devote more time to writing children’s books and talking about them. Her first picture book, Up, Up, Up! It’s Apple Picking Time, was published by Holiday House in 2003. Greenwillow Books will be publishing Family Lullaby in 2007. She can be contacted at jphs2@adelphia.net. For information on the books listed below and for Jody’s newsletter with more reviews, please contact: adventuresforkids@sbcglobal.net.

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Social studies educators teach students the content knowledge, intellectual skills, and civic values necessary for fulfilling the duties of citizenship in a participatory democracy. The mission of National Council for the Social Studies is to provide leadership, service, and support for all social studies educators.

Founded in 1921, National Council for the Social Studies has grown to be the largest association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 69 foreign countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, geography, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. Organized into a network of more than 110 affiliated state, local, and regional councils and associated groups, the NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies.

NCSS defines social studies as “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. In essence, social studies promotes knowledge of and involvement in civic affairs. And because civic issues—such as health care, crime, and foreign policy—are multidisciplinary in nature, understanding these issues and developing resolutions to them require multidisciplinary education. These characteristics are the key defining aspects of social studies.

The Council published *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* which provides an articulated K-12 social studies program that serves as a framework for the integration of other national standards in social studies, including U.S. and world history, civics and government, geography, global education, and economics. NCSS standards ensure that an integrated social science, behavioral science, and humanities approach for achieving academic and civic competence is available to guide social studies decision makers in K-12 schools.

The NCSS framework consists of ten themes incorporating fields of study that correspond with one or more relevant disciplines. The organization believes that effective social studies programs include experiences that provide for the study of:

* Culture
* Time, Continuity, and Change
* People, Places, and Environment
* Individual Development and Identity
* Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
* Power, Authority, and Governance
* Production, Distribution, and Consumption
* Science, Technology, and Society
* Global Connections
* Civic Ideals and Practices

Membership in National Council for the Social Studies is open to any person or institution interested in the social studies. For more information go to its website at ncss.org or call 800-296-7840.
Curriculum Guidelines For Social Studies Teaching and Learning
National Council for the Social Studies

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 culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.

1. Meaningful
The social studies program should relate to the age, maturity, and concerns of students. The social studies program should help students connect social studies content to their lives.

1.1 The program should provide students with a social studies experience at all grade levels, K-12.
1.2 The program should involve students in the formulation of goals, the selection of activities and instructional strategies, and the assessment of curricular outcomes.
1.3 The program should be based on the developmental and psychological needs of the students.
1.4 The program should focus on the social world as it is: its flaws, its strengths, its dangers, and its promise.
1.5 The program should include the study not only of human achievements, but also of human failures.
1.6 The program should emphasize pervasive and enduring social issues and connect them to the lives of students.
1.7 The program should demonstrate the relationships among local, regional, national, and global issues.
1.8 The program should include analysis of and attempts to formulate potential resolutions of present and controversial global problems.
1.9 The program should provide intensive and recurring cross-cultural study of groups.
1.10 The program should offer opportunities for students to interact with members of other racial, ethnic, and cultural groups.
1.11 The program should provide opportunities for students to examine potential future conditions and problems.
1.12 The program should provide a connection to the world of work through the exploration of careers and the application of essential social studies skills.

2. Integrated
The social studies program should
draw from currently valid knowledge representative of human experience, culture, and beliefs in all areas of the social studies. Strategies of instruction and learning activities should rely on a broad range of learning resources.

2.1 The program should integrate current valid social studies concepts, principles, and theories in anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology.

2.2 The program should develop proficiency in methods of inquiry and analyzing, organizing and using data.

2.3 The program should balance the immediate social environment of students and the larger social world, examining multiple viewpoints.

2.4 The program should use a variety of primary and secondary sources that accommodate a wide range of reading abilities and interests.

2.5 The program should promote critical, creative, and ethical thinking on problems faced by citizens and leaders.

2.6 The program should use the expertise and experiences of a variety of community resource people.

2.7 The program should foster life-long learning.

3. Value-based

The social studies program should consider the ethical dimensions of topics and address controversial issues while providing an arena for reflective development of concern for the common good and the application of democratic values.

3.1 The program should help students understand the role that values play in decision making.

3.2 The program should give students the opportunity to think critically and make value-based decisions.

3.3 The program should support different points of view, respect for well-supported positions, and sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences.

3.4 The program should encourage students to develop a commitment to social responsibility, justice, and action.

3.5 The program should encourage students to examine and evaluate policy and its implications.

3.6 The program should give students the opportunity to think critically and make value-based decisions about related social issues.

4. Challenging

The social studies program should provide students with challenging content, activities, and assessments.

4.1 The program should provide students with the opportunity to engage in reflective discussion as they listen carefully and respond thoughtfully to one another’s ideas.

4.2 The program should expose students to sources of information that include conflicting perspectives on controversial issues.

4.3 The program should provide students with the opportunity to formulate oral and written responses to content-based questions and issues.

4.4 The program should promote critical, creative, and ethical thinking on problems faced by citizens and leaders.

4.5 The program should include in the evaluation process an assessment of progress not only in knowledge, but also in skills, and abilities, including thinking, valuing, and social participation.

4.6 The program should use evaluation data for planning curricular improvements and ensure a challenging curriculum.

4.7 The program should be evaluated using data from traditional and alternative assessments.

5. Active

The social studies program should engage the student directly and actively in the learning process.

5.1 The program should provide a wide and rich range of learning activities.

5.2 The program should offer students opportunities to formulate hypotheses and test them by gathering and analyzing data.

5.3 The program should encourage students to be involved in service-learning projects.

5.4 The program should be sufficiently varied and flexible to engage all types of learners.

5.5 The program should include activities that contribute to the students, perception of teachers as fellow inquirers.

5.6 The program should create a climate that supports students, self respect and respect for others.

5.7 The program should stimulate students to investigate and respond to the human condition in the contemporary world.

5.8 The program should encourage students to participate in a variety of individual, small group, and whole class activities.

5.9 The program should utilize many kinds of workspace to facilitate variation in the size of groups, the use of several kinds of media technology, and a diversity of tasks.

5.10 The program should encourage students to function as a learning community.

Responsibilities of Social Studies Teachers

Teachers should participate in active social studies curriculum committees with decision-making as well as advisory responsibilities. Teachers should participate regularly in activities that foster professional competence in social studies education, such as professional development, higher education, professional organizations, community affairs, reading, study, and travel.

Social Studies as an Integral Part of the School Program

Social studies education should receive vigorous support as a vital and responsible part of the school program. Appropriate instructional materials, time, and physical facilities must be provided for social studies education. A specific block of time should be allocated for social studies instruction each week for all grades K-12. Social studies education should receive active support and funding for professional development from administrators, teachers, boards of education, and the community. Teachers and schools should have and be able to rely upon a district-wide policy statement on academic freedom and professional responsibility.

Approved by the NCSS board of directors, May 2002.
A Different Kind of Boy: A Father's Memoir about Raising a Gifted Child with Autism
By Daniel Mont

paperback, $21.95, 248 pp. 
ISBN: 1843107155

REVIEWED BY JUDY WIENER

A Different Kind of Boy: A Father's Memoir about Raising a Gifted Child with Autism is Daniel Mont's first-hand account of his family's struggle to understand and cope with the bewildering, exhausting, awe-inspiring, funny, and sometimes agonizing behavior of his twice-exceptional son, Alex. In sharing their experiences, he not only offers support and information to families in similar situations, but gives us all a glimpse into the world of autistic children and those with dual exceptionalities.

Mont recounts his family's journey, from Alex's difficult birth through his fifth-grade graduation. He describes his and his wife's growing awareness of their son's “differentness,” the eventual diagnosis of autism, and the process of coming to terms with the diagnosis. He shares their ongoing struggle to understand and provide for Alex's educational, social, and emotional needs, while trying to maintain an acceptable quality of life for the rest of the family.

Alex did not comprehend the assumptions of the neurologically typical world; intuition and generalization were foreign to him. He had to memorize social and language “rules,” such as to whom “you” refers in a conversation, the difference between lying and pretending, and when it is acceptable to touch someone else's face. Alex did not recognize other students in his class, and he did not understand that others have their own experiences and feelings. He understood language literally, demanded rigid adherence to routine, could not tolerate much sensory stimulation, and would disintegrate into tantrums when his needs were frustrated.

On the other hand, Alex was brilliant. He loved board games at two, read at three, and used exponents and logarithms before kindergarten. He incessantly demanded detailed explanations, but could instantly grasp college level concepts in economics and calculus. When 85,000 students participated in the National Math Olympiad, Alex was one of seven fourth graders who achieved perfect scores. He finished second out of 9000 of the nation's top fifth graders in Johns Hopkins University's math talent search. While his intuitive skills were lacking, his analytical abilities were amazing.

It was Alex's brilliance that helped him compensate for problems that came with his autism. His mathematical prowess earned him the respect of peers, despite his very limited social skills and unusual behaviors. He was able to use logical, if complex, explanations to help himself cope with a world which could seem so confusing. He used his intellect to learn the rules of social interactions.

Like many parents of gifted, autistic, and twice-exceptional children, the Monts worked to secure appropriate educational services. Many gifted children display asynchronous development, but the asynchronies in Alex's abilities were extreme. The Monts encountered educators who assumed that because Alex had such high academic skills, he did not need special services. They also encountered educators who taught them ways to help their son and who advocated for him. Since their primary goal for Alex at school was for him to learn social skills, their parents advocated for him to be placed in a mainstream classroom with additional services, and this team approach benefited him greatly.

Daniel Mont strove to explain the neurotypical world to Alex and Alex to the world. To do so, he struggled to understand the mysteries of Alex's mind, his internal experience. He writes, “I wanted so desperately to crawl inside that little boy's head. To know my son.” In sharing his journey to know and to parent his son, Daniel Mont opens our minds and our hearts. In his words:

Alex is autistic. Alex is also loving, brilliant and resilient. He has taught me a great deal about life, about what it means to connect with other people and about how one builds a life that suits oneself. Through raising Alex I've learned about a lot of things—how the mind works, how special education should work, the generosity of children, and—oh, yes, math. Lots about math.

JUDY WIENER, LCSW, LMFT, is active in the Tri-County GATE Council, Pacific Region of the California Association for the Gifted. She is a psychotherapist in private practice in Agoura Hills, CA.

A Teen's Guide to Getting Published: Publishing For Profit, Recognition, and Academic Success
By Jessica Dunn and Danielle Dunn

paperback, $14.95, 249 pp. 

REVIEWED BY ELAINE S. WIENER

A perfect little gift for the writers in your family or classroom! The first edition was written by the Dunn sisters ten years ago when they were teenagers. They
even thanked their teachers! I can see no reason to withhold this book from adults who also would like to be published. It certainly has everything that anyone would want to know about Publishing for Profit, Recognition, and Academic Success. The humor and chatty style make this adventure quite appealing.

Some Jessica Dunn and Danielle Dunn insights:
Getting published is the ultimate com-

pliment, an affirmation that your work has strong merit.

But, publishing is not just about giving you a chance to speak; it’s also about offering others the chance to listen and convincing them to do it. Through your writing, you can inspire, comfort, motivate, inform, or simply entertain people.

The detailed—very detailed—suggestions range from how to find inspiration to the essential elements of good prose to editing to how to submit your creations with infinite care. There are cautions about pitfalls and being scammed. They are what make this book a piece of literature. My copy is highlighted in tens of pages; so will yours be.

Buy this for every parent, for every teacher in a gifted program, and for every teacher who has an interest in depth of learning for all their students. Use it as a reference for a specific thought or question…and simultaneously read it straight through as though you may miss something. For those of you who are old timers, Gifted Children and Gifted Education will gather all that experienced information into a nice new briefcase in the mind.

ELAINE S. WIENER is Associate Editor for Book Reviews for the Gifted Education Communicator. She is retired from the Garden Grove Unified School District GATE program and can be reached at: esw.ca@worldnet.att.net.

**Gifted Children and Gifted Education**

By Gary A. Davis


paperback, $32.95, 331 pp.

ISBN: 0-910707-73-1

**REVIEWED BY**

ELAINE S. WIENER

Gifted Children and Gifted Education!

Not a very creative title. Simple and direct.

There are so many other books on this subject, and this title does not entice us to read another one. But from the preface to the index, the reader soon finds out that this book is the book. I didn’t think anyone could summarize our whole profession with such skill and flair, not to mention humor.

It makes sense that as the years pass, the accumulated knowledge in gifted education increases. Our files have new categories and multiply in the night. Dr. Davis must have realized this and decided to gather it all in this new handbook so we can stop our incessant organizing—at least for now.

The chapter categories present us with familiar comfort:


To begin each chapter there is a little playlette, preventing you from taking yourself too seriously…although the point made is very serious. The many subtitles in each chapter provoke thinking unto themselves, and the bulleted summary at the end of each chapter is a whole course in clarity and glorifies the word succinct.

The format of the book, the charts, the lists, the definitions, and especially the summaries make this journey a comfortable one—an easy one. The facts, upon which all style and design rely, are repeated with a variety of nuance until they are internalized. This book is a teacher! But the words in-between the main thoughts are what make this book a piece of literature. My copy is highlighted in tens of places; so will yours be.

Buy this for every parent, for every teacher in a gifted program, and for every teacher who has an interest in depth of learning for all their students. Use it as a reference for a specific thought or question…and simultaneously read it straight through as though you may miss something. For those of you who are old timers, Gifted Children and Gifted Education will gather all that experienced information into a nice new briefcase in the mind.

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**Smart Kids with Learning Difficulties**

By Rich Weinfield, Linda Barnes-Robinson, Sue Jeweler, & Betty Roffman Shevitz


paperback, $16.95, 195 pp.

ISBN: 1-59363-180-4
The subtitle to this book is *Overcoming Obstacles and Realizing Potential*. The beauty of that phrase is that the commonly used, overly emotional labels of twice exceptional or learning deficits are replaced by an attitude change. These are children with difficulties—roadblocks—that can be faced and overcome with solutions. These solutions are described in this package of researched and beautifully organized outcomes!

Five chapters, five questions, and many, many answers!

Who are these kids?
How do we find them?
What needs to be done, and who is responsible for doing it?
What do good programs and services look like?
What actions ensure that our bright kids will overcome their learning difficulties?

These are not new questions, and perhaps the answers aren’t new. But oh, the answers are so wisely communicated that it will quickly become your compact encyclopedia, effortlessly carried around and used by you!

This book addresses many categories: Asperger’s Syndrome, ADHD and other attention deficit disorders, dyslexia and other learning disabilities, autism, and other obstacles.

However, the path to the solutions has road maps and Tools with TIPS (To Impact Pupil Success), tables, What Works/What Doesn’t Work charts, and my favorite, ORR charts that tell the reader how to Observe, Reflect, and Respond.

The authors have great hearts as seen by their introductory paragraph:

Diamonds are rare. Two-hundred and fifty tons of rock, sand, and gravel must be processed to yield one carat of polished diamond. The diamonds we will be discussing are also rare. Bright students with learning difficulties are often not identified because their brilliance and roughness may mask one another. We see only the rough parts such as their inability to write or read effectively. What results is an attitude of discouragement and defeat. When we do find these diamonds, we must help them to shine and reach their potential by identifying their gifts and talents.

This book, also, is a gem!

**ELAINE S. WIENER** is Associate Editor for Book Reviews for the *Gifted Education Communicator*. She is retired from the Garden Grove Unified School District GATE program and can be reached at: esw.ca@worldnet.att.net.
Call for Presenters

California Association for the Gifted
45th Annual Conference
Santa Clara Convention Center & Hyatt Hotel
March 2-4, 2007

Name of Presenter

Title

District/Agency

Presenter's Address, City, State, & Zip

Email Address

Phone/Voice Mail Fax

Will you have a co-presenter? If so, attach a page with the above information for each co-presenter.

Title of presentation/workshop

Limit your title to 60 characters, including spaces

On a separate sheet of paper prepare a 75-word description that can be used in the conference program book. Include (a) the content of your presentation, (b) two important concepts or learning outcomes your audience will take away from your presentation, and (c) the implications for gifted and talented students. Also, a separate paragraph describing how this presentation relates to gifted education.

Reference: Give the name of a person who can recommend you as a presenter:

Name

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- Curriculum & Instruction
- Differentiation
- Fine Arts
- Identification, Program Design, and Assessment
- Interdisciplinary
- Language Arts
- Math
- Parents & Community
- Professional Development
- Program Design
- Science
- Social Emotional/Guidance
- Social Science

- Special Needs
- Technology
- Thinking Skills

Check specific room set up needs

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*Check this choice only if tables are essential for using manipulatives.

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- Intermediate
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Check your availability

- Fri., March 3
- Sat., March 4
- Sun., March 5
- All Days

Do you agree to have your session taped for resale?

- Yes
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Check the audience size that works best for your presentation

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- 150
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- 200

Check all audiences this presentation targets

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Parents
- Counselors

Circle all grades this presentation targets

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- 12

An overhead & screen will be provided. Any other equipment ordered will be at the presenter’s expense. List other AV required.

Attach this form to the description of your presentation and send three copies by October 1, 2006 to
CAG Office, Call for Presenters, 1215 K Street., Suite 940, Sacramento, CA 95814.
Applicants will be notified of acceptance or rejection in November 2006.
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Gifted Education Communicator ISSN 1531-7382 is published four times a year: Spring, Summer, Fall, and Winter. Opinions expressed by individual authors do not officially represent positions of the California Association for the Gifted.

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