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# Protecting Social Studies in Early Childhood Classroom

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Protecting Social Studies in Early Childhood Classroom

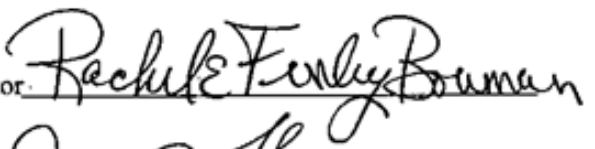
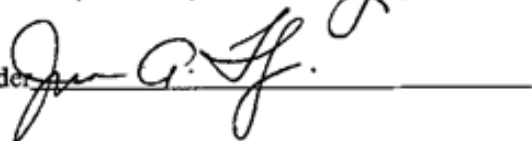
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Honors in Education

Elizabethtown College

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Honors in the Discipline in  
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## SOCIAL STUDIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

### Abstract

As the world of standardized tests drives the curriculum in the early childhood classroom, many times students aren't getting the effective social studies education they need in order to become active citizens. The state of North Carolina has done a great amount of research on what makes an effective K-12 social studies curriculum. From this research, they have created the 3C model of helping to make their students *College, Career, and Civic* ready. This curriculum covers the four content areas they found the most important to cover, history, geography, civics, and economics. Five schools in the Central Pennsylvania area were selected in order to compare their formal curriculum to that covered by the 3C model, in order to discover what is required to be taught in the classroom. The research conducted on each schools focused on their third grade curriculum due to the fact that this is a transitional year for students; it is the first time they are taking standardized tests. The information analyzed through the 3C Model and the five school districts is brought together in order to understand what important topics are being covered and what areas could use more focus. From here, an ideal social studies curriculum for the third grade level will be created to be used universally by schools.

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## Introduction

As standardized testing and the impact of No Child Left Behind are center stage in the education world today, teachers are devoting less time in the classroom to subjects not found on the state tests. Social studies is one of the subjects that is commonly being taught as an “add on” around holidays and during Black History Month, or completely removed from many early childhood classrooms in order to create more time for instruction in language arts and math, the two areas that are the focus of standardized testing in the early grades. By the time students are reaching the high school level, many teachers are trying to play catch up in the social studies field. Secondary educators are spending more time building a foundation of knowledge that could have occurred at the early childhood level. However, in some classrooms and school districts, social studies continues to be taught as a standalone subject or, at the very least, integrated in other curriculum. (Alleman, & Brophy, 1993). With fewer districts maintaining social studies as a standalone subject, many researchers (National Council for the Social Studies, 2008, para. 1) and educators are asking how we create an effective K-3 social studies curriculum that teachers use at the early childhood level to prepare students for the responsibilities of civic life while simultaneously addressing the time constraints and demands of standardized testing that currently exist.

The purpose behind teaching social studies is to create model citizens (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992). Each of the different aspects of social studies plays a key role in helping students become the active national and global citizens we wish to see in the world (National Council for the Social Studies, 1992). There are seven areas of social studies that are important to emphasize. The first of these areas is history, which focuses on past events, cause and effect, wars, change and patterns in history, and lessons learned from the past. The next area

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of social studies is anthropology. Anthropology is the study of different cultures and humanities, developing societies, and how people have affected the past, present, and future. Psychology is the study of individuals and their thoughts. It gives students the opportunity to think about why people act the way they do and why they determine the decisions that they make. The next area is civics and government, or simply politics and government. Students examine different forms of government and their functions, with the ultimate goal of developing a clearer understanding of what citizenship really is. The next area is economics in which students learn about wants and needs, goods and services, trade, scarcity, and money. The final area of social studies is geography, which is the study of physical location as well as how humans affect the earth. Each of the content areas is important to teach in order to give students the core knowledge they need to become citizens.

Social studies can help students with self-development in a social world. “Personal interactions facilitate child understanding of the social world of classroom, child care program, school, and community” (Mindes, 2005, p. 4). Students need to have an understanding of themselves and others in order to develop an appreciation of diversity and respect for all cultures. Having a primary focus on teaching our students to succeed on standardized tests diminishes opportunities for developing the social skills they will need in order to be successful in life.

Benefits for individual student development are particularly important during the early childhood grade levels because it promotes perspective taking, empathy, and the development of conflict resolution skills. Teaching social studies in the earlier elementary years provides a context in which students start to place themselves in a world beyond their family, school, neighbors, and community. They expand their understanding of how large our world truly is how they influence it, and make needed changes. As they get into the older elementary school years,

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they learn more about their “civic responsibilities through exploration of rich thematic units such as the study of food, clothing, shelter, childhood, money, government, communication, family living, or transportation” (Mindes, 2005, p. 5). Developing students’ understanding of these broad topics will help them build a foundation for future learning and experiences to grasp the difference between wants and needs and comprehend how they are affected by the choices of others.

Despite these clearly defined benefits found in the literature (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013; Pace, 2007, para. 5), social studies is quickly disappearing from many classrooms, especially at the early childhood level. Many schools are finding that social studies is not a priority compared to literacy and math, which are both tested by the states. Tests and their scores are deemed more important than the topics that could be discussed in a science or social studies classroom. In an increasing number of districts social studies and science have become the ugly stepsisters of the early childhood education world, as they are taught by some school districts or not at all by others. Although the U.S. Department of Education made the recommendation that Common Core should be implemented in schools nationwide, however, the Common Core excludes social studies standards for all grade levels prior to the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. This gives students six years in school without any specific social studies instruction required by national standards.

With all of the previous factors discussed combined, there is a need to help teachers and districts find ways to protect social studies from either total elimination in the early grades or merely adding it within other curriculum. Therefore, the purpose of this project is to investigate what is needed to successfully implement and sustain social studies in schools, especially at the early childhood level. This will be done by analyzing different curriculums within the Central

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Pennsylvania region to the 3C Model framework. I plan to identify the best instructional methods to teach social studies at the early childhood level given the time constraints that exist in classrooms today, determine curriculum content that is the most significant to prepare students for citizenship. Based on this analysis, I will create a model third grade social studies curriculum that teachers can use in grades K-3.

Through my research I will not have the time to truly see what is being taught in the districts chosen. I will have to use the formal curriculum to have an understanding of what the teachers are supposed to be teaching. I also have found that though this is a pressing issue, there is not a lot currently written or analyzed about social studies in the early childhood classroom. Most of the sources I found were dated, due to the lack of research out there. However, this has influenced me even more to complete this analyze as I find this an extremely pressing issue. Social studies is an extremely important topic that can help shape students into having a better understanding of who they are and where they have come from.



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### Literature Review

One of the newest curriculums being implemented in schools, specifically in North Carolina, is the College, Career, and Civic Life (3C) Framework. The idea behind this curriculum comes from a group of teachers who wanted to better prepare children for the challenges of higher level education, the workplace, and citizenship. The creators recognized that there will always be differing perspectives regarding their objectives. However, they strongly believed that the need for knowledge, thinking, and active citizens is universal. The framework is centered around an Inquiry Arc which focuses on “the disciplinary concepts and practices that support students as they develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in our social world” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 6). The idea behind designing this K-12 social studies curriculum is that it will better prepare students for their post-secondary futures in college or the workplace and eventually change the way the standards for social studies are written.

The Framework was conceptualized by prominent North Carolina leaders in the field of social studies education. It was further supported by fifteen professionals representing the four core content areas of history, civics, geography and economics. The creators aimed to align the curriculum to support all states in creating standards that will prepare even our youngest learners to be effective and eventually successful participants in all three C’s. This Framework is also to be used in conjunction with the already existing state standards and Common Core. Though most social studies standards don’t appear in the Common Core until the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, the C3 model enhances state standards that do exist by adding more real life learning and by starting in earlier grade levels. The curriculum builds students’ social studies content knowledge from kindergarten to 12<sup>th</sup> grade, creating increased opportunities to practice skills and deepen understanding and

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learning. With this foundation, upper grade level teachers are able to focus on more difficult skills such as higher level thinking involved with psychology or sociology, and involve students in discussions of challenging issues such as the environment, abortion, and marriage rights..

During the process of designing the 3C Framework, the educators realized that a tough decision would have to be made (3C Framework, pg.14). It would be impossible to teach and include all of the social studies content areas within the Framework. They recognized that time constraints exist in classrooms and, therefore, only focused the curriculum on the most important content areas that would be the most beneficial for students: civics, economics, geography, and history. It was a tough decision to remove so many of the other disciplines; however, the educators incorporated “only four federally defined core social studies areas to streamline the development process and produce a concise document” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 15). These four subjects best underlie a rich social studies curriculum that focuses more on the concepts and skills. The Framework is designed to guide teachers in the ways they teach social studies, even with lacking standards, instead of replacing what is already there. It gives students the opportunity to experience social studies in an experimental setting in which their learning is more hands-on and interactive. This includes “practicing the arts and habits of civic life.”(National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 6) Students are given the opportunity to learn about their role in their community, nation, and the world. They are able to practice skills such as voting in mock elections, volunteering in the community, and carrying out their civic responsibilities as American citizens.

The first of the four disciplines in the Framework is civics. Civics is the study of politics and society; however, it should not be limited to this. Through the C3 Framework students develop a greater understanding of what participation in their community and nation looks like

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and learn how to express their opinions both in and out of the classroom. Students also learn about civic virtues and principles to develop their own personal perspectives and values while understanding how other people's views and ideas originate (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 13). Teaching civics in this manner enables students to not only study how others participate in making societal changes, but also practice participating in their community and taking informed action themselves.

Economics is the second area outlined in the C3 Framework. Economics enhances students' knowledge about how people choose to use resources and how our choices affect the nation and global economy that is a part of our daily lives. Having students learn this aspect of civic life earlier, the better it will be for them. As students move into the upper grade levels, their learning will have more depth and meaning with that basic layer of knowledge gained in the earlier school years. Through the study of economics within this curriculum, students practice economic decision making and the range of possible outcomes of each decision made. (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 35) Students learn about the national and global economy, how it impacts their daily lives, and how they can make a difference.

Geography is another discipline outlined in the Framework. It focuses on both the human and location-based aspects of geography using a "geographic inquiry" approach aligned with the inquiry model that is a cornerstone of the curriculum. Geographic inquiry helps people understand and appreciate their own place in the world, and fosters curiosity about Earth's wide diversity of environmental perspectives (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 40).

Students expand their own environmental perspectives by developing spatial views of the world through mapping, examining trends within human populations such as the movement and immigration patterns, and grasping the reciprocal relationship between the environment and

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human interaction within the environment. Through this type of learning, students generate their own ideas about taking care of the environment.

History, which fosters students' ability to evaluate change and continuity over time, is the final concept included in this Framework. It builds knowledge of significant events, developments, individuals, groups, documents, places, and ideas to support investigations about the past. Students examine the contexts in which change and continuity occur and evaluate how it can impact their lives as well as how it affected the lives of those in history. By investigating historical perspectives, students explore decision making, why these decisions were made, and determine what they would have done differently (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 45). Using primary and secondary sources as evidence to study and appreciate history helps students understand the future and why things are the way they are now. The Framework also includes sections on causation and argumentation, offering students practice in defining and supporting their own arguments to engage them in the content covered and apply this skill in their own lives.

The creators of the C3 Framework did not include anthropology, sociology, and psychology that are covered in the NCSS standards because of their social and behavioral connection. They believed these content areas were not necessary for a rigorous social studies program (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 14). The behavioral and social sciences are mostly taught in the upper high school levels and in higher education because they require more extensive analysis and deeper critical thinking skills. The creators of the framework wanted to design a curriculum that would be developmentally appropriate for a K-12 level, not just the upper levels. By removing these additional content areas, they were hoping to streamline the development process and produce a far more concise document. They did not, however, feel

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as though this framework should be seen as minimizing the importance of these other disciplines. They created add-on appendices within the framework to help cover these topics.

After determining the four essentials areas to include in the curriculum (civics, history, geography, and economics) the creators recommended five instructional shifts that “offer teachers a foundation for designing curricular materials and instructional activities that align with the C3 Framework” (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2013, p. 1). The instructional shifts are meant to “strengthen instruction” and “impact the design of curriculum and assessments” (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2013, p. 1). These shifts help teachers achieve the ambitious goals of creating well-educated social studies students within the 3C Framework and reflect best practices for instruction and assessment identified in the research. These creators used their beliefs and best practices of social studies education to create a curriculum that prepares students for successful futures.

The first of these shifts is to craft questions that spark and sustain student inquiry. Students create their own questions about what they are learning in a way that is both compelling and supportive of concept comprehension. Compelling questions are more content based and convergent, centering on enduring issues and concerns (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Supporting questions “focus on descriptions, definitions and processes about which there is general agreement within social studies disciplines, and require students to construct explanations that advance claims of understanding in response” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 23). These questions guide the development of inquiry into a compelling question. Although students in the early childhood level will need a great amount of guidance and support to create these questions, the goal is to move students to a point where they understand the importance of asking questions that fosters deeper comprehension of content. For

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example, by the end of second grade, students should be able to craft questions that are both supporting and compelling and decide how the questions connect to the material. Additionally, students must determine the kinds of sources that will help them create and answer these questions, and consider the multiple points of view represented in an argument, the structure of an explanation, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). These align with the Language Arts/Literacy Common Core standards that focus on the skills of questioning, argumentation, explanation, and point of view.

The second of these instructional shifts is to cultivate and nurture collaborative civic spaces. This shift fulfills the key component of the C3 Framework, civic readiness, by working on different elements such as collaboration. “Civic engagement in the social studies may take many forms, from making independent and collaborative decisions within the classroom, to starting and leading student organizations within schools, to conducting community based research and presenting findings to external stakeholders” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 31). Civic engagement is a means of both learning and applying social studies knowledge. Students are expected to communicate their conclusions to a range of audiences based on the idea that even young children benefit from the opportunity to share their conclusions. This gives students the ability to critique their own work and that of other students. Students then build on their knowledge by applying it to other experiences both in and out of the classroom and making the necessary changes to better themselves and their communities. Collaboration, one of the key elements that is a natural part of civic life, gives students the chance to work together and rely on one another to examine questions about the four content areas.

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The purposeful integration of content and skills is the third instructional shift in the C3 Framework. It is intended to help teachers more fully understand the content that should be taught, how to organize it, and when to teach it. The Framework focuses specifically on “disciplinary skills” and “key conceptual knowledge” associated with the social studies disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 18). It is important that teachers understand how to make these topics developmentally appropriate, particularly at the early childhood level. They must be taught with the best practices of social studies instruction for the right age level. If not, the information could be too much for younger children to comprehend and respond to. Skills in these disciplines exist for the purpose of active development and application of content knowledge. The goal is that “students will come to know the disciplinary content as they apply C3 skills to be fully college, career, and civic ready” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 6).

The next instructional shift is the promotion of literacy practices and outcomes that emphasize research-based analytical skills using disciplinary concepts and tools. There are two types of literacies within the framework: inquiry and disciplinary literacy. Inquiry literacy includes questioning, developing claims with evidence, and communicating conclusions. The idea of inquiry literacy is to encourage students to think out of the box about their learning, specifically in a social studies setting (Swan, Lee, & Grant, 2013, p. 3). The second literacy practice, disciplinary literacy, emerges in social studies from the four content areas and requires special attention for instruction. It offers a roadmap of the content areas for deeper examination of each discipline. Students learn concepts and skills that are used to understand deliberation, analyze economic data, develop spatial reasoning, and determine cause and effect. It is important

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to teach these literacies individually; then, once the concepts are developed, they should be taught together.

The final instructional shift, providing tangible opportunities for taking informed action, is the main idea within the C3 Model. Students communicate the results of their inquiries through discussions and use this information to take informed action associated with environmental issues and other social concerns at a communal, national and global level. Teachers also need to provide sufficient time and space for students to complete these activities. “Real experiences to make Social Studies come alive for children, urge early childhood education students to take advantage of the learning opportunities that come up each and every day in children’s lives” (Friedman, 2005, p. 1). For example, in one study (Friedman, 2005) a preschool classroom that was co-taught had one of the teachers taking maternity leave which sparked students’ curiosity about babies, how to take care of them, and how a new arrival affects family life. The other classroom teacher tapped into the students’ natural curiosity by exploring how to take care of babies. Once students acquired a solid foundation of knowledge on a topic connected to their real life experiences, the teacher asked the preschoolers to compare and contrast the information developed to promote higher level critical thinking skills. Students took the new knowledge they had gained to talk with their parents and help them out with little brothers and sisters they might have. The students were able to have hands on experiences with learning and then apply their knowledge to real life situations.

Instructional practices such as those demonstrated by the teacher in the Friedman (2005) study must be purposeful, informed, and reflective of what children experience in their lives. The shift, providing tangible opportunities for taking informed action, is broken into three parts to help students apply classroom learning to the real world. Students must first understand the



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pervasiveness and complexity of the problem being discussed as part of the curriculum. This includes examining the issue at hand in its entirety, understanding both sides of the story, and investigating all of the details. The second aspect of this shift is assessing options for action given the context of the problem. Students must understand the pros and the cons of the situation, map out different choices, and determine the cause and effect of selecting each option. The final step is engaging in a deliberative process that moves toward an “action” plan. Students identify the best action to take based on the situation and create a plan to actually carry out this idea. Throughout this process, students “should be grounded in and informed by the inquiries initiated and sustained within and among the disciplines” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. 59). Students practice citizenship in the same way they engage in historical thinking, economic decision-making or geographic reasoning, ultimately bringing everything taught in the curriculum full circle.

The 3C Model, or the College, Career, and Civic Life Model, prepares children for the challenges of higher level education, the workplace, and citizenship. However, the model presents a number of challenges for educators wishing to adopt it. In order to be successful, these lessons need the same amount of time and dedication as subjects tested by the state; however, due to the issue of time, it is challenging to persuade districts to accept the curriculum. The Framework also doesn’t include all of the social studies standards, which makes it too limited [how]. The best way around these issues is through integration (Alleman, & Brophy, 1993). Teaching social studies through integration gives teachers more time to meet the necessary Common Core standards.

While integration may be the most viable approach, there is limited number of curriculum available to teachers and districts wishing to do so. Therefore, I will research what is and isn’t

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working in schools that do integrate, analyze curriculum that utilize best practices within the framework of the 3C Model, and create a curriculum that integrates social studies at the early childhood level.

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### Methodology

To bring social studies back into elementary classroom, educators are going to need to look for ways to make the social studies curriculum most effective in covering the necessary topics and still allow for time to teach the tested subjects. The North Carolina Department of Education has conducted some research on the College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework and has created a chart to help elementary educators in teaching social studies material that will best help students grow to reach all three C's (see Appendix A). This chart includes four social studies core content areas. The four content areas are geography, history, economics, and civics. These core content areas were chosen to allow students to have more "real world" learning in order to prepare them for their future as citizens of a democracy. These content areas allow for a focus on human experience and can help students build questions. The rich social studies teaching found in the 3C model allows students to have the opportunity to seek out answers to these questions. Students can look at these disciplines on their own or in conjunction with each other to answer questions with evidence based research.

There are many different types of curriculum models that can be followed in order to help students be successful. Jerome Bruner writes about a form called spiral curriculum. This is the idea that information can be taught at a simplified level first. Then later in the child's education it can be expanded on in order to take a more complex form. (Bruner, 1960). This way children are starting to solve problems on their own. As the material gets more complex, so do the problems they are trying to solve. Students should be growing with the curriculum in the idea known as concept learning. The curriculum structure suggested by state of North Carolina builds upon itself in the four core content areas in order to help students' learning. Students start at a level where they are just understanding concepts, and, as they grow in cognition and social emotional

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capabilities, they start to analyze those concepts to give them a deeper meaning. This is known as Bloom's Taxonomy. As you master one of the earlier categories it was a prerequisite for mastery of the next step, which would be more complex (Krathwohl, 2002). Through the framework, students in kindergarten to begin to learn concepts that they will build through their time at school. At the high school level, students begin to have such a deep understanding they are able to discuss, analyze, and critique content.

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### Research

The suggested materials from North Carolina are applicable through first grade to high school. This is done because the study found starting to teach social studies at an early childhood level is extremely important in order to create effective citizens. The research conducted focused primarily on third grade when reviewing the curriculum. Students at a third grade level are typically between the ages of 8 and 9 and thirds graders are developing more complex and detailed thoughts. During this time students are typically moving past remembering and moving more in questions that are of the next level, understanding. “When children are moved beyond Bloom’s lowest level, remembering to the next level of understanding, they are answering questions which ask them to organize previous information, such as: comparing, interpreting the meaning, or organizing the information.” (Garland, 2014) They go from understanding material to starting to look for a deeper meaning. Third grade is the first year that Common Core standards began to be available for social studies, though they are still embedded within the ELA curriculum. “By the early 2000s, every state had developed and adopted its own learning standards that specify what students in grades 3-8 and high school should be able to do.” (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2016) Common Core looked to create K-12 standards, however, their social studies standards do not begin until third grade. Third grade is also the first year that most students are introduced to standardized tests. It is during this grade that many teachers start eliminating social studies from their teaching time in order to include more time for the tested subjects. (Walker, 2014) The focus is turned away from social studies as its own subject. It begins to be integrated with reading and writing in order to cover themed topics, typically surrounding holidays. The surface tends to only be skimmed on the topics that are

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required to be taught. Students are losing the opportunity to dive deeper into social studies concepts in order to learn and grow towards becoming effective citizens.

Using North Carolina’s framework, five school districts in Central Pennsylvania were selected in order to analyze their curriculum from their perspective. Then schools were chosen for comparison to schools in the North Carolina study, to see if Pennsylvania schools are teaching the same core social studies subjects and if they utilize a similar approach. From this qualitative comparison, conclusions could be drawn about the universal application of the 3C Framework in schools around the nation. These schools were self-selected by the author due to their various sizes and economic backgrounds. Knowing that in larger schools students are sometimes viewed as numbers and the material relayed to them is sometimes more test focused. “As testing mandates increase and the pressure to perform accelerates, finding schools that do not have reduced time for social studies is clearly difficult.” (Bowman, 2009) However, smaller schools tend to have more time with less students in the classroom and this can allow for more time for social studies. Self-selection was then designed with a purpose of ensuring some diversity in size, socioeconomic background and time for social studies in the elementary classroom. The research was aimed to find schools that had curriculum outlines that were published. The schools analyzed through this case study had curriculum designs published on their websites, but did not include any social studies concepts. The following table shows the demographics of the districts analyzed.

<b>Districts</b>	<b>Amount of Students</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Teacher to Student Ratio</b>	<b>Number of Elementary Schools</b>
<b>Manheim Township</b>	5,778	Lancaster County, Pennsylvania	16:1	Six
<b>Hempfield School District</b>	Approximately 7,000	Lancaster County, Pennsylvania	15:1	Seven

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<b>City of Lancaster School District</b>	11,500	Lancaster County, Pennsylvania	N/A	Twelve
<b>Derry Township</b>	Approximately 3,600	Dauphin County, Pennsylvania	14:1	Three (Early, Primary, Intermediate)
<b>Elizabethtown Area School District</b>	Approximately 4,000	Lancaster County, Pennsylvania	8:1	Five

The first district is Manheim Township school district. This Lancaster County school's social studies curriculum is a kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade program. In third grade they cover the following topics: communities, geography skills, the ancient civilizations of China and Egypt, modern civilizations including Spain and Brazil, as well as, economics through Junior Achievement (See Appendix B). Manheim uses a concept approach to teach social studies. Junior Achievement is a program that "works to change student's lives by helping them understand business and economics."(Junior Achievement) Districts that use this program typically start it at the kindergarten level. It gives students a unique way to learn about communities and economics. In third grade students primarily focus on spending and saving money, as well as, the importance of money to a city.

Hempfield School District social studies curriculum starts in kindergarten and continues into students' senior year of high school. Out of all of the schools outlined here, Hempfield is the only district that is mapped to the PA standards. There are four different themes that are covered in their third grade curriculum and each theme has subdivisions of topics to be covered (see Appendix C). The first theme is geography where they spend time talking about spatial organization and geographic literacy, physical and human characteristics, and the impact of humans and culture. The next theme is the levels of government. In third grade they discuss the principles and political development, political institutions, sovereignty, authority, and power, and

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the rights and responsibilities of citizens. The third theme is the history of Lancaster County where they cover the historical analysis and interpretation of the county, its society and culture, principles and political developments, and conflict and consensus. The final theme covered is the cultural and economic characteristics and where people live. This covers content on society and culture, principles and political developments, conflict and consensus, scarcity and choice, markets, economic interdependence, and work and earnings.

The City of Lancaster School District social studies curriculum for third grade includes five different topics where students explore specific content (see Appendix D). The first topic is “Structure, Properties, and Potential” where students will learn about land and water in their area. The topic of “Bright Ideas” covers area on rules and laws as well as citizenship. “Patterns and Change” talks about the Native Americans that used to live in the PA area. The next topic covered is “Communities and our Environment” and specifically discusses students’ community over time. Finally, students talk will learn about “Surviving or Thriving?” where they get to learn about their economy.

Derry Township is the smallest district in this study and has a one of the most detailed curriculums and is more concept based. Their curriculum includes five different content areas to be covered within the third grade social studies curriculum (see Appendix E). This formal curriculum starts with citizenship and government is the first content area it includes material on local government, national government, state capitals and borders, citizenship, branches of government, resolving conflict, American heroes, and national symbols. The second area of content is communities over time. This includes learning about Jamestown, Native Americans verses early settlers, the Civil War, Lewis and Clark, American colonies, concept of continuity and how change causes effects, and modern inventions. Students also study about communities.



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Topics covered include, changes from settlement to current time, interdependence of citizens, location and description of own community, three types of communities, interpret data and draw conclusions, and civic responsibility. Students also spend time discussing the state of Pennsylvania; more specifically the five landform regions, Native American tribes, label the major cities, and talk about William Penn. Finally students will learn about people working in a community by discussing consumers and producers, technology and good citizenship.

The fifth and final district analyzed is the Elizabethtown School District. The content covered in Etown's third grade social studies classrooms includes five broad concepts (see Appendix F). Those topics are communities, map skills, government, immigration, and economics. Having such broad concepts allows for teachers to let students decide on what direction to take the material. This can help to make learning engaging and meaningful.

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### Conclusion

The following table includes data comparing the content of each of the school districts' third grade curriculum to the suggested materials of the 3 C model.

	<b>Geography</b>	<b>History</b>	<b>Economics</b>	<b>Civics</b>
<b>Manheim Township</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	
<b>Hempfield</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>City of Lancaster</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Derry Township</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>
<b>Elizabethtown Area</b>	<b>X</b>		<b>X</b>	<b>X</b>

Each of these five districts are unique in size and demographics, yet they all seem to teach the same main concepts outlined by North Carolina in their third grade classrooms. When looking at the schools' curriculum against the North Carolina model, five out of five of the school districts have curriculum written for geography and economics content. Four out of five of the schools includes history and content on civics/government. This supports that each of these areas of social studies are extremely important for the individual development of students. Students learn more about themselves and where they come from, as well as the many cultures of the world. Social studies opens up conversations on diversity, equity, and dignity. (The New York State Education Department, p. 12). Students find meaning in their communities; understand how their community and its leaders function, and identify opportunities to assist others in the world. If social studies is removed from the curriculum, students don't have opportunities to get exposure that prepares them to understand the role of a citizen.

The sizes of these schools range from over 10,000 students to smaller schools of about 3,000 students. This show that no matter the amount of students in a school, covering this core material is important. Making sure that students get each of these core content areas early enough

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in elementary school to build a basis for knowledge to come. Then, as Bruner stated, as the students grow older their learning can become more complex and students already have that basis of knowledge to help them solve problems. These schools are taking those suggested materials and really breaking them apart to allow them to have more meaning for students and allowing them to be engaging. Students have responded positively in previous classrooms through lessons that involved more engagement. Students found these experiences enjoyable and also were able to talk about the information they had learned about through different activities. It would be interesting to see what steps these districts' teachers take in order to make sure students are taught all of material. From here we can take the curriculum of the suggested materials and that actually being used and create an ideal curriculum for all schools to use to be more universal. This way all students are guaranteed to have the opportunity to learn all of the same important content that could help prepare them to be active citizens. The outcome of the students depends on many variables, including time and emphasis placed on the curriculum.

This ideal curriculum would cover all four of the core content areas suggested by the state of North Carolina. Within those limits, the curriculum should cover the state standards. It should not be so detailed that it is scripted, where everything that needs to be said by the teacher is written down for them to recite. By allowing for teachers to be more creative in the classroom it can allow students to guide the direction in which the topics can go. The focus should be on building on their prior knowledge of these topics by asking students what they already know. Taking the time to understand the level of knowledge your students already have and then looking to build up from that. The level of knowledge should be close to the same, if this program starts the moment they walk into a school for the first time. For geography, students should be focusing on spatial organization and geographic literacy. In history, students should

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focus on the founding of our nation as well as significant symbols and their importance. This can include conversations about the Pledge of Allegiance and why we recite it each day or whatever direction students are interested in taking it. For economics, students should start to work on skills involving money, trade, wants and needs, and scarcity. Finally in civics, students should be learning about rules, laws, and consequences. They should be learning about the formation of these rules and laws and their purpose and importance. They should also learn about the systems of government. Each year, the content areas should be the same but the instruction should not be identical.

The detail found in most of these curriculums is exciting to see that schools are focused on covering these important topics. However, the questions are how much time is spent on these topics and how much detail are they gone into? If students are rushed through the material, how much are they really learning? It is also important to note that the curriculum observed for this study was just the formal curriculum of the schools. There are many other factors that can affect the learning such as the topics delivery, limit of study, and what the students are actually learning. Students cannot be expected to perform well if the expectations are too high for them to reach. The other districts with curriculum with less detail can also be worrisome. These schools might not be spending enough times on certain topics and too much time on others. The lack of curriculum written also gives teachers the free will in the classroom. This can be great, as teachers can create really inventive and engaging lessons. However, this does not always mean that the students are all learning the same material grade wise. Each of the teachers might take the topics in different directions and then the students will not all have the same common knowledge moving into the next grade.

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# SOCIAL STUDIES IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

## Appendices

### Appendix A: North Carolina Suggested Materials

3	NC maps Globes US and World maps Big books on geographic concepts Posting of cardinal directions Posters of continents and oceans Weather charts and materials Pictures of community helpers Social Studies software Computer/lab Materials on conservation of natural resources Compasses Geographical photographs Pictures of human settlement	Culturally diverse pictures Historical, grade appropriate big books and teacher text Pledge of Allegiance US and NC flag Representations and videos of diverse holidays/celebrations Historical artifacts Various forms of communication Historic pictures of people, places, and communities (past) Posters of environmental issues Posters of diverse patterns of Cultural traits (languages, religion, etc.) Trade books on people who made a difference	Examples of currency from various countries Pictures of community jobs Listing of community services Materials on economic activities within a community (how money is used – residential, commercial, educational, etc.) Stock Market Simulation information	Posters displaying manners Pledge of Allegiance Posting of class rules Posting of character traits Pictures of community helpers Copy of “We Are the People” Copy of “The American Promise” Pictures of the mayor, governor, and president Elementary current events Newspapers/magazines Copy of The Preamble North Carolina Encyclopedia website
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### Suggested Transition Materials for an Effective K-5 Social Studies Program

3		Recommended trade book list Folktale/Real character puppets Current videos on famous people		
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Appendix B: Manheim Township:

<file:///C:/Users/Nicole/Downloads/Gr3-2014-2015.pdf>

Appendix C: Hempfield School District:

[http://curriculum.hempfieldsd.org/Social%20Studies/03.%20Grade%203/SS\\_G3\\_YAG.pdf](http://curriculum.hempfieldsd.org/Social%20Studies/03.%20Grade%203/SS_G3_YAG.pdf)

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Appendix D: City of Lancaster:

[http://www.lancaster.k12.pa.us/download/district\\_documents/school\\_board/charter\\_school\\_applications/abecs/2.%20APPENDIX%20A%20CURRICULUM.pdf](http://www.lancaster.k12.pa.us/download/district_documents/school_board/charter_school_applications/abecs/2.%20APPENDIX%20A%20CURRICULUM.pdf)

Appendix E: Derry Township:

<http://www.hershey.k12.pa.us/Page/268>

Appendix F: Elizabethtown School District:

[http://www.etownschools.org/cms/lib/PA01000774/Centricity/Domain/11/Grade\\_3\\_SS\\_Curr.pdf](http://www.etownschools.org/cms/lib/PA01000774/Centricity/Domain/11/Grade_3_SS_Curr.pdf)