**Curriculum Design**

**First Grade Social Studies**

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**Statement of Purpose**

In the classroom, social studies engage students in the study of history, geography, economics, government, and civics (Ohio Department of Education, 2004). Ultimately, social studies instruction should help students assume their role as responsible citizens in America’s constitutional democracy and as active contributors to a society that is increasingly diverse and its relationships with other nations of the world. Social studies should provide students with the background to conduct research in order to cast informed votes, with the skills to solve conflicts, and with the wisdom to make good judgments in dealing with the tensions in society.

However, the problem is present because, much too often, social studies lessons are considered a relatively unimportant subject matter, whether in elementary school, middle school, or high school. This perception leads to lack of attention paid to social studies as a serious subject area, yet in the overall development of the intellect of students, no other subject matter content holds as much social integrity.

The social studies curriculum taught in many schools is a mile wide and an inch deep. So much has to be "covered" in a year that there is literally no time to go into much depth in anything. According to UNESCO Institute of Statistics, the instructional time spent studying social studies fell short of all of the following: reading, writing mathematics, and science (Nation Master, 2008). Similarly, The National Council for the Social Studies states that the Basic skills of reading, writing, and computing are necessary but not sufficient to participate or even survive in a world demanding independent and cooperative problem solving to address complex social, economic, ethical, and personal concerns. Knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for informed and thoughtful participation in society require a systematically developed program focusing on concepts from history and the social sciences (*National council for the social studies, 1998*). In many cases, learning is judged by the students correctly answering a number of questions on multiple choice tests. To think of such results as meaningful learning is a misunderstanding, yet it is done every day in many schools. When thinking realistically, there is no reason for students to do anything with such content once the test is over, and so it is quickly forgotten. Overall, social studies is about understandings, not skills; perhaps not just the "what," but also questions of "how" and "why." Learning the content of the social studies is about creating knowledge, not memorizing facts.

The first grade curriculum design included in this document builds on concepts introduced in kindergarten. The skills introduced in kindergarten grades are advanced in the second and third grade. This course is designed to create an evolving learning experience which will expand as student advance into upper grade levels.

I believe social studies should be part of the curriculum for the purpose of helping students understand human interactions that occurred in the past, are occurring now, and that are likely to occur in the future. With this knowledge students can develop skills and values that will make it more likely that they will be able to determine for any situation what the right thing is and execute it. This will be most important when doing the right thing is hard to do. It is about teaching the children of our future how to have respect, courage and honor.

**References**

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