

# Ohio SOCIAL STUDIES Review

Spring 2012, Volume 48, Issue No.1



*W.P.A. Emergency School, West End Center,  
Cincinnati, Ohio*

Courtesy of the Ohio Historical Society

*Mayor's Visit to 3rd Grade Class*

Courtesy of Jessica Schocker

*GEAR UP Students and "The Thinker"*

Courtesy of GEAR UP, Bowling Green  
State University

*Butler County Emergency School*

*Teachers-April 15, 1936, meeting at  
Y.W.C.A. H.R. Reade, County Supervisor*

Courtesy of the Ohio Historical  
Society

# Ohio Social Studies Review

Ohio Council for the Social Studies  
Urban Education and the Social Studies Special Issue

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Guest Editors, Nancy Patterson and John Fischer

Spring 2012

Volume 48, Issue 1

*Ohio Social Studies Review*

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## FROM THE EDITORS

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Welcome to the first online edition of the *Ohio Social Studies Review*, a themed issue entitled “Urban Education and Social Studies.” We hope this new online format serves as an effective means of broadening the reach and impact of the pieces authored here. In this issue, we visit multiple classrooms, schools, and programs in urban environments around the United States. The contributions here speak to urban education issues from multiple perspectives. We hear from a legislator, teacher preparation professionals, student teachers, and public school students themselves.

In many social studies classrooms, a teacher will use activities to talk about perspective-taking and the assumptions and images we carry in our head. The students will be asked to think about what their ‘mind’s eye’ sees when the teacher says certain words like “immigrant,” “city,” “terrorist,” “peacemaker,” “poor.” If we were to do this activity ourselves, as social studies teachers and educators, what would we think of when the facilitator of the activity said, “urban?” Urban social studies classrooms are sites of promise, struggle, action, hope, and reality. They are classrooms where change happens and the future is shaped.

This issue begins and ends with articles pertaining to Ohio’s current political context. The opening piece is an interview with Ohio State Representative and former urban elementary teacher, Teresa Fedor. The interview sets the stage for the issue by providing insights into the policy struggles impacting social studies classrooms everywhere. Representative Fedor connects her experiences as an urban teacher and a veteran to her current advocacy as a teacher-legislator. *Political Courage in Action* highlights how teachers and educators must push open the doors, raise their voices, and work to impact the policies influencing our classrooms with special attention to the needs of urban schools and students.

Discussions about how to prepare future teachers for successful social studies teaching in diverse classrooms offer another perspective. Kaye Martin, Mindy Rutherford and Marlissa Stauffer describe one program designed to better prepare students here in Ohio. In their piece *The Rural Urban Collaborative: Developing Understandings of Culture and Teaching*, they share their plans, struggles and initial results of a program linking a rural university and an urban university. Through field experiences, reflection activities and symposia, future teachers and university faculty worked to engage in unique, diverse environments as a means of better understanding theory, culture, and the practice of rural and urban schools. Their story, however, is not a celebratory piece; rather, it is an honest reflection of what students told them they were getting from the experiences and how it compared to what faculty thought they were providing. Ultimately, their piece reminds us that context and culture matter both for the students in our rooms, the future of teachers in education classrooms, and teacher educators. If our goal is to achieve a deeper understanding of how context and culture can play out, Martin, Rutherford and Stauffer give us much to consider.

Jessica Schocker and her student teachers/co-authors Stephen Croft, Jennifer Licwinko, Pamela Muthersbaugh, Gabriella Rossetti, and Melissa Yeager, have take us into their urban classrooms in one region of the United States through their article *Student Teachers Tackle The Lack of Social Studies in Urban Elementary Schools*. They use their case studies of classroom activities to highlight the interconnectedness of social studies education and the life of a school. Their piece points out the immediate impact social studies interns can have on a school and its neighborhood, from rebuilding playgrounds and connecting with local politicians to simply coming to better know the cultural background and competence of students, families and communities. In a decidedly more celebratory account, Schocker et al. again remind us that passion, hope and action are important components of successful student teaching experiences, and that these same student teachers can affect change in the communities in which they serve. The authors conclude by reminding us that we all have a lot to learn from the student teachers who are placed in classrooms in struggling urban environments.

In *Making Sense of Citizenship: Urban Immigrant Middle and High School Students' Experiences With Perspectives On Active And Engaged Democratic Citizenship*, we move from the perspectives of student teachers to the voices of students. Ashley Taylor and Anand Marri raise questions about how immigrant students conceptualize active and engaged democratic citizenship. The voices of students are contextualized by the teachers and classrooms in which they spend their time. We hear from students such as Dyanand (a pseudonym) that of course the people to whom the laws are given should vote for the people who make the laws. Other voices complicate conceptions of citizenship and ultimately our democracy. The authors conclude that teachers and teacher educators need to both hear and use the conceptions immigrant youth are taking from their community, family and classroom contexts. The authors assert that our classrooms will be better when we view all of our students as having civic assets that can enrich our learning.

When we step out of classrooms and look at policy decisions happening in state capitals, we are aware of the push and pull of curriculum and testing decisions impacting teachers. William Muthig provides a *Legislative Update* on Ohio's *Am. Sub. S.B. 165*. Now that it has been enacted, the policy implications are beginning to play out in curriculum modifications happening at the state level. The bill is again evidence of the struggle to define social studies in Ohio's classrooms and schools—urban, suburban and rural.

We encourage you to search the archive of previous hard copy versions available as PDFs from the *Ohio Council for the Social Studies* website, and we hope you will consider submitting a manuscript for the next edition with its open call. It will be published in hard copy in the fall, with a submission deadline of May 30, 2012. Details about how to submit a manuscript can be found at <http://ocss.wordpress.com/publications/the-review/>. We will continue the discussion around issues of social studies in our country and the world and hope you will join that conversation.

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## POLITICAL COURAGE IN ACTION: AN INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVE TERESA FEDOR

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**Nancy Patterson, Guest Editor;** Bowling Green State University

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Teresa Fedor is in her 12<sup>th</sup> year in the Ohio Legislature and her second term as a representative to Ohio's 47<sup>th</sup> House District, a district that serves southern and eastern Toledo. According to her website, she spent 18 years in the classroom before pursuing public service. She was elected to the Senate in 2002, and prior to that, the citizens of Toledo elected her to serve the 52nd district of the Ohio House of Representatives in 2000. A proud veteran, she served in the United States Air Force and Ohio Air National Guard, after which she received a B.S. in Education from the University of Toledo. I had heard Teresa Fedor speak, advocating for teachers as uniquely suited for political life, and knowing she had been an urban elementary teacher, realized her story might be of interest to OSSR readers. She talked to me for 45 minutes about her career path, her experiences in the State House, and her perspectives on social studies education. What follows is a complete transcript of the interview.

**PATTERSON:** Thank you for taking this time to share your story with Ohio's social studies teachers. I'd like to start out with a story from you that illustrates what type of citizen you are. I heard you helped re-open the statehouse doors when they were locked at one point to citizens wishing to listen to the day's Senate Bill 5 hearings. The context was that protests underway in Wisconsin had sparked a similar reaction in Ohio. What's the story behind your involvement?

**FEDOR:** As a teacher, a citizen, and a veteran, I felt that day—that experience—was absolutely amazing. Of course I was there that day, and I felt it was my duty to help unlock the doors; it was extremely cold that day, and it was unsafe for many of the people standing outside; the Statehouse was nearly empty, but state highway patrolmen were blocking the doors. In fact, there were state highway patrolmen everywhere. For me, it was like having someone standing over you and taking over your classroom. It felt as though we were criminals. I looked up at the patrolmen and dared them to arrest me for opening those doors to the public. I told them, "This is nothing against you, but this is my job, and nothing you say will prevent me from opening these doors." I opened the doors and began to welcome hundreds of citizens in to their own State House. I never felt more right than on that day; it felt to me like the same spirit of the American Revolution. The locking of those doors sparked something in me. The year I taught the Revolutionary War period to 4th graders was my favorite year, and its lessons have shaped me.

**PATTERSON:** Was it ever known who ordered the locking of the State House doors that day?

**FEDOR:** No—no one ever admitted to making the final decision. Everyone was in shock; certainly no Democrat knew the doors were going to be locked. After the event, myself and several others sued the State of Ohio. Our case was settled in our favor and ensured quicker legal action in the event that access to the statehouse is ever denied again.



**PATTERSON:** You know that the journal is a social studies journal and it has a particular focus on urban education this month. I think our readers would be very interested in knowing about your career path.

**FEDOR:** After high school I joined the Air Force, returned to Ohio and then graduated with a teaching degree from the University of Toledo. I was eventually hired as a kindergarten teacher for Toledo Public Schools. My experience in many classrooms before I got my permanent job gave me a wide view of how different education is depending on what school you're in. Many times I likened my experiences to the Little House on the Prairie—very isolated, teachers didn't talk to each other, schools didn't have many resources, education quality varied widely. I was very happy to get my own classroom, and I traveled a half-day from one school to another, from one end of town to the other. Of course my experience was that in the good part of town, they had a lot more resources, and on the poor side of town, they did not, and the children weren't being properly prepared because of that. So after a few years, I started getting involved in the teachers' union and involved with our building committee; then I became a building representative, and from there helped elementary teachers during contract negotiations.

Through that process, I realized that teachers need to be heard, and that they should have a strong voice. I did see that we were able to improve some of the conditions about which we were concerned. That was the first part of my experience. When I got involved with the teachers' union, I realized that politics and elections were directly related to my job and school board races. That was a real "ah-ha moment"—that the quality of our support system and our profession didn't just happen. It was all involved with politics and the local school board. The local school boards are a very important element in our profession. The local school board is related to our contracts, our professional development, the necessary resources we need to do our jobs, and the quality of our working conditions. I think those are all essential in providing a quality education for our children.

When we are negotiating to do our jobs, we are advocating for our children. That is one and the same from our perspective, but where I am now in the Legislature, they don't see it that way. It's not a natural, organic thought. Politicians think we're separate from the children we serve, advocating only for ourselves as teachers, not for the children. It's different now, working at the State House, than it was working in my profession as an educator through the teachers' union and the school board. The further you get away from the classroom and the district, the more you have to deal with attitude, politics, and limiting resources such as funding. I have observed that from a majority of legislators' viewpoints, teachers are very-self serving and suspect in some way. From a legislator's point of view, when teachers are negotiating their contracts, they are exclusively negotiating for salaries and benefits. Legislators don't see teachers as also negotiating the quality of working conditions, more resources to do the job they need to do, targeted programming, or reform initiatives. I thought that was very interesting and very challenging when I first encountered it in the Legislature.

Through that transition, I became more involved with the local political party—the Democrats. At that time, Ohio had voted for term limits for our legislators, and in 1999, minority leader Jack Ford was recruiting to replace term-limited legislators. One term-limited legislator was in Toledo—State Representative Sally Perz. After being asked and giving a lot of thought to

running for office, I decided to take a chance and run. I felt as though there weren't a lot of voices representing teachers. I didn't know of any state legislators that were teachers at the time, so I decided I would go for it. I checked the support system I would have, I checked the demographics, I checked how long I would have to campaign before the election—it was just over a year. With the team I put together, it seemed as though I could make it if I worked hard enough. It was a great grass roots campaign, and many teachers were involved. I knocked on 10,000 doors with an army of people to help me. Basically, the teachers put me in office.

**PATTERSON:** So that's how it happened. I've heard you advocating for teachers as politicians. Could you say a little bit about that, because I know you recruited a lot of them to run this year.

**FEDOR:** Well, in my last twelve years as a teacher-legislator, there haven't been many other voices other than my own and a few others advocating for public education. As you know, this year, there have been huge budget cuts to schools throughout Ohio and also the unfair targeting of many public employees in Senate Bill 5, so that motivated a lot of people to get involved locally. I've always had the vision of having more teachers in the legislature to advocate for the resources and funding we need for our children. I thought that the only ones who could really do it were the teachers. I believed that they would be focused and stay focused until the job got done.

I talked to a lot of the union leaders in Ohio to recruit teachers to run for office. We need to turn education around, not play political football with education in Ohio. Teachers are moving targets. Education is a moving target that constantly gets batted around, but nothing really improves. So we need to stand firm on what we need and move it forward. Teachers work very, very hard in their jobs every day. They're committed, they do their homework, and they will do what they have to do to get the job done. So I thought we needed to have as many teacher candidates running as possible. My goal was to recruit 10. I am happy to report we have 11 teachers running from the schoolhouse to the State House in the state of Ohio, including myself.

**PATTERSON:** So really over time the people on the Education Committee haven't been educators?

**FEDOR:** No.

**PATTERSON:** I'm glad you noticed that.

**FEDOR:** I noticed it right away. For example, in explaining the importance of providing resources for embedded professional development, it seemed difficult for my colleagues to understand. They're always looking for quick fixes; they're looking for things that *sound* good. Unfortunately, many of our adopted reforms will not spur the systematic overhaul that we need to adapt to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If their reforms don't work or they are not happy with them, it always seems to be the teacher's fault. In my opinion, legislators don't do a good job putting in quality education reform policies or the funding investments necessary to improve education for all our children. I believe we need teachers who are serving as legislators there to help straighten out education—we don't need politicians.

**PATTERSON:** Yes, I think that's the complaint you hear all time, that politicians are running schools, but nobody talks about the alternative, and you have.

**FEDOR:** I do believe term limits make it more difficult to improve public education. There is a constant change in leadership, philosophy, and ideas about public education and how to strengthen it (or not) in Ohio. The term-limited revolving door is turning faster and faster. It

seems to me we are swearing in a new legislator every week. Out of 99 members in the House, we have had something like 40 new representatives in just a year and a half. It's hard to keep up with knowing who your colleagues are and even harder to develop important relationships to get things done. It's a sad state of affairs. In my opinion, this working environment does not lead to stable, realistic, and all-important measurable public policy. Everyone loses. Novel ideas like *Teach for America*, with little meaningful research behind it get attention right away. If they convince enough people, it becomes law.

The Ohio testing system is one reform that was initiated many years ago. I support this accountability measure—who doesn't? It was stated from the beginning that this was a successful system that will work—we're going to be successful now. We're going to get rid of failing schools and failing teachers, but the persistent changes in the system have been nothing but a roller coaster for teachers and schools who endure one revision after another.

Often members of the education committee, when they introduce themselves in committee, can only mention their connection to education. To lend credibility, they mention their connection to teaching. It's not that they've taught, that they themselves have experience in a classroom setting. Maybe someone's wife is a teacher, or mother was a teacher, or father was a principal. They each know someone who was a teacher, and of course, each of them was a student, so they know all about education. That's a very typical perspective, and we need to change that. Ohio could be at the forefront of educational reform by utilizing people that *really* understand what it takes in the classroom.

**PATTERSON:** So that's part of the issue. I think that if you throw in the urban education context, it's even more complicated. I'd like for you to talk a little bit more about your experiences on the education committee and then we'll talk about urban schools. Does that sound okay?

**FEDOR:** Yes.

**PATTERSON:** A specific question about all that has been going on with social studies in the education committee; the new standards assessment planning has been held up because of S.B. 165. I am wondering if you were a part of any of those conversations and how it works in the education committee.

**FEDOR:** As far as social studies standards, we typically vote on basically *having* standards. That's what we do as legislators; that's our charge. It's very rare that we specifically mandate that specific content be taught. That's the huge difference here with S.B. 165.

It's been a very interesting twist for the Education Committee, when we have before us a bill that says public schools are going to be mandated to teach certain documents. To my knowledge, that's not been done before. I do question whether we are going down the right road, and I do question whether we are going to have a world-class education system if we don't have a consistent comprehensive social studies and history curriculum. A piecemeal approach will lead to teaching content that is a mile wide and an inch deep. We know our children don't learn the content very well in that manner. The decision to weaken the social studies assessment is compromising our greater goal of preparing them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**PATTERSON:** I read some of the committee proceedings, and one of the members was discussing over-stepping and the oddity of having a bill like this that talks about curriculum, and it actually

includes certain documents to the exclusion of other types of documents, so it is a really unusual occurrence.

**FEDOR:** Yes, this bill is a result of the February 2011 report from the Fordham Foundation. The study was critical of Ohio's education standards, saying that not enough children know about history. They don't know historical dates. I agree our children need to have a better understanding of our country's history. No one can argue that point, but here's what's happened that's alarming. Proponents used that report to dictate specific content to be taught. The proponents of the bill believe that children cannot be expected to defend the rights and freedoms of the Founding Fathers without an understanding of the original documents. One of the proponents of the bill was the Ohio Christian Alliance. They wanted these documents in particular to be mandated in the curriculum. The sponsor of the bill stated he believes that if these documents had been taught, we wouldn't be in the situation we're in at the federal level, with expanding government and overspending.

This is bad legislation. I believe whole-heartedly that we need to teach history in its entire context, so this is a significant change. We're going to be mandating the teaching of only the original founding documents, which of course do not include documents specific to women's rights, civil rights, voting rights, etc. It seems as though there is a theological orientation to this mandate. My question is: where is the focus on jobs and preparing our children to be successful in this global economy and the workplace? With the global economy, we need to be teaching world history in its context. Ohio is very short-sighted right now—we are not placing the value where it's needed. If you don't truly support public education, are you really going to care about the course it's taking?

**PATTERSON:** Let's talk about urban education. I know you have spent time teaching in an urban setting and working to support urban teachers. What is your perspective on how we need to address the needs of urban schools in Ohio?

**FEDOR:** My experience with Toledo Public Schools has generally been collaborative; we team taught, shared results, and talked to one another. We integrated our curricula together and in fact, when I left, students at Burroughs Elementary School were competing academically with students at Beverly Elementary School, and Burroughs was a *Title 1* school. We were successful in spite of the limited resources we had, because we worked very closely together. We have to work collaboratively—that's the best option, with everyone being involved.

**PATTERSON:** What was it like teaching social studies in an urban setting?

**FEDOR:** I want to start off by saying that I place great value in the importance of history and social studies education. Being aware of all the subject areas is important to bring context to all the information that we're trying to impart. I myself love social studies. I've had great experiences teaching it. As a fourth grade teacher before testing, I decided to focus on the American Revolution for the whole year. I integrated just about every other subject in to teaching the Revolution. I'm a veteran, too, so I feel it's important to connect social studies with civics. This was a great experience for everyone. The next year, I taught 5<sup>th</sup> grade and decided to teach the Civil War for the whole year. I was fortunate enough to have half the students from my 4<sup>th</sup> grade class with me for their 5<sup>th</sup> grade year. I continued to do wonderful things; I integrated math and literature, and they loved it. I still run into those students today, and they talk about how great

it was. We were on fire—they couldn't wait to come to school every day. Fortunately I had a preservice teacher and a student teacher who helped put these efforts together. It was the best two years I ever taught. Then testing requirements hit me in the face, and I couldn't teach that way anymore. Imagine, those kids reading, and reading, and reading and writing. They were incredibly creative because of the environment I created. I had more freedom then, before the tests. I know for a fact that the children's knowledge was not a mile wide an inch deep. It was a mile deep. You know, they even forgot when it was time for gym. Now that's pretty intense, engaged learning. I question what we have now and wouldn't want to go back to that.

**PATTERSON:** There is some worry that social studies is going away in the elementary grades for a lot of reasons. Do you share these concerns?

**FEDOR:** It does seem like social studies is being compromised in the curriculum, just like health education. I'm an advocate of having health education standards. Our children suffer without health education. It's affecting their lives now and will affect their adult lives. In this instance, we're not teaching them to fish—we're just giving them a fish. They know nothing about quality of food, health and nutrition. We have an obesity crisis. Public education and health education can have a huge impact on turning that corner, just like social studies education and history education keep our Republic intact. They need to understand the past, and they need to understand how it is tied to today's society so that they can continue making good choices for themselves and their country. You cannot assess that through a test—it just needs to be a quality, comprehensive curriculum on a consistent basis throughout their education. As it is, they're only memorizing—it's not even conceptual. I just want our children to have a quality education, and that means we shouldn't leave one subject out. We should be able to figure this out.

Back to urban education, I really believe that we need to involve parents, number one. We have *got to* be able to reach the parents. That is critically important. Number two, we need intensive early intervention for our youngest students. Number three, every child needs to be a proficient reader by third grade.

**PATTERSON:** Sounds pretty simple, except for maybe the parent piece.

**FEDOR:** It's true, if both parents are working, and some are even working different shifts, they don't really see each other or their children that much. It's not that they are purposefully neglectful; it's just that their lives are so busy making ends meet. I understand it's hard, and in my 18 years, I met with many parents who were struggling to balance everything and help their children in school, and I tried to help them out. Through working together, we did it. Communication was difficult because the school only had one phone hooked up for 24 teachers to use. I know that's changing, but not for every school in the state of Ohio. The bottom line is we don't have educational equality, and that exacerbates some of these problems, but they can be fixed. Also, students don't come in at the same level, so it involves a lot more individualized assessment, resources, and programming.

**PATTERSON:** So more money would help.

**FEDOR:** Yes, especially when you have massive state budget cuts to schools. Cleveland's getting ready to lay off 800 teachers. If they don't pass their levy, they're going to lay off another 700. Losing that many teachers has a devastating impact on children and their learning. Then there's *Teach for America*, where they're putting untrained young people in hard-to-staff schools where



children need the most help, and that's touted as the solution. I would think education professors would be outraged by this reform.

**PATTERSON:** The problem is, we know that it doesn't work; the retention is bad, that it's a waste of money and time, and that it's really damaging for kids. Ohio has endorsed the program, right?

**FEDOR:** Yes. Cleveland's going to be hiring *Teach for America* teachers, I believe just because it's cheap. It's cheaper than hiring licensed teachers, but the problem is, we're putting untrained teachers in the area where we need the *best*, most experienced teachers. These short-sighted decisions are not helping our students learn, and we need to reverse them. We absolutely need to reverse this. A lot needs to be done, and we need to commit the resources. Our best resource is our human capital.

**PATTERSON:** That means education as a priority. That means more teachers working to help inform policy-makers—just what you're doing.

**FEDOR:** Yes—money invested where it will make a difference. There is no better human investment than helping teachers be great teachers. No teacher goes through any college of education and thinks, "I'm going to be a bad teacher, and I'm going to leave within five years." They don't do that. It's the system that's doing that to them. It's the system that's producing this result. So, who's going to have the real political courage to stand up, say what needs to be said, do what needs to be done? I don't know a better group of people than teachers. Teachers do their homework, they work hard, and they do what needs to be done.

**To contact the author:**

Representative Teresa Fedor: [teresa.fedor@ohr.state.oh.us](mailto:teresa.fedor@ohr.state.oh.us)

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# THE RURAL URBAN COLLABORATIVE: DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURE AND TEACHING

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**Kaye M. Martin**, Ohio University- Lancaster; **Mindy Maher Rutherford**, Ohio University;  
and **Marlissa Hughes Stauffer**, Ohio Dominican University

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## **ABSTRACT**

Recognition of the importance of addressing the influence of culture and community upon teaching and learning has led teacher education programs to make significant commitments to change how cultural diversity is addressed. The Rural Urban Collaborative (RUC) is a collaboration between two universities, one in a large city and one in a rural area that provides diversity in teacher candidate field placements. Although the implementation of the RUC varied slightly for both universities, three practices were shared by all teacher candidates: field placements in schools different from those in the university community, reflections based on field experiences, and a symposium event that included speakers, activities, and panels of teachers and principals from both rural and urban schools. Preliminary analysis of student reflections and evaluations has suggested that, although a majority of students seem committed to working with students from ethnically and culturally diverse groups, they do not always recognize the importance of the various cultures that children bring to the classroom. This has led to the understanding that the role of context and culture in the classroom must be made more explicit in the activities and courses linked with the Rural Urban Collaborative.

## **THE RURAL URBAN COLLABORATIVE: DEVELOPING UNDERSTANDINGS OF CULTURE AND TEACHING**

Teacher education programs are increasing their commitments to diversity in teacher candidate field placements (Gay, 2010) because of concerns that include a perceived disconnect between the backgrounds of preservice teacher candidates and their future students (Leland & Murtadha, 2011; Milner, 2006) and the reality that teachers are often unprepared to teach in both rural and urban settings (Barley, 2009). In addition, teacher education programs realize more and more that minor changes in curriculum are insufficient for creating real change in our teacher candidates (Gay, 2010). The use of structured, diverse field placements has proven an effective strategy for developing cultural awareness and sensitivity (Fry & McKinney, 1997).

Within this research context, the Rural Urban Collaborative (RUC) emerged in the spring of 2007 from a need articulated by the dean of education at Ohio University (OU) for teacher candidates to be ready to teach in any and all types of school settings. Athens' location in Southern Ohio limits Ohio University's teacher candidates' access to urban placements unless the school of education purposefully works to offer the candidates such experiences outside the local area. The creation, then, of the RUC worked to meet OU's need, but the dean reached out to other teacher education programs to provide them with the opportunity to work with OU and

provide their own students with rural placements in the field. Originally two teacher education programs in the Columbus area joined the Collaborative, but during the past two years (2010-2012) only Ohio Dominican University, located in Columbus, Ohio, continued to participate with Ohio University to allow its students to experience field placements in rural schools in addition to their usual placements in urban and suburban settings. These participating universities collaborated with Columbus City Schools for urban placements and with Logan Hocking Schools and Southern Local Schools for rural placements. Recently, RUC also included schools in the Lancaster, Ohio area for closer placements for the ODU students.

At the beginning of the development of the RUC program, faculty members drew on multiple fields of research: rural education (Howley, 1997), place-based education (Theobald, (1997), and culturally responsive teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2001). Researchers and professors grounded in the literature of these areas were some of the speakers for the early symposia. Through the symposia, rural or urban-specific field experiences, and reflections on those experiences, we have worked to create authentic experiences for our teacher candidates in order to enable them to better understand theories surrounding the work of addressing the influence of culture and community upon the classroom.

### **THE COLLABORATIVE EFFORT**

Planning and coordinating the activities of the RUC require collaboration among a large group of faculty and administrators from multiple campuses as well as varied school district representatives. The number of participants has grown and is continuing to grow from about ten volunteers when the initiative began in 2007-2008 to about 250 students who participated during the most recent quarter (winter, 2012). RUC Planning involves a steering group that meets four to five times a year. The steering group is made up of representatives from the participating campuses of the two universities and the cooperating school districts. They plan and evaluate symposia programs, discuss curriculum on varying campuses, articulate and revise goals, plan and implement evaluation of the program, and coordinate the efforts to expand and change the ongoing collaboration. Outside of those face-to-face meetings, steering group members collaborate through email, working documents, and a website that has been shared by some course instructors and that provides a degree of consistency in RUC-related curriculum across OU campuses. All members of the steering committee assume responsibility for the experiences that have been planned for the symposium programs. Our collaboration also extends to the curriculum of the course that accompanies the RUC field experiences.

### **CURRENT PRACTICES**

Although the implementation of the RUC varied slightly in format for each university based on its needs and its student population, three practices were central to the RUC experience for teacher candidates: field placement at a diverse school setting, reflection papers, and the symposium event. At their field experiences, teacher candidates are expected to assist their assigned mentor teachers with daily planning, grading daily work, reviewing homework, providing assistance to individual learners, and/or distributing/collecting work.

In order to provide an urban field experience, teacher candidates from OU are placed in Columbus City schools for the RUC. Historically, OU teacher candidates performed their field placements within Athens County. In order to provide a rural field experience, teacher candidates from ODU are placed in Southern Local Schools District in Perry County and Lancaster area schools. Traditionally, ODU teacher candidates had a mixture of urban (Columbus) and suburban (varying suburbs surrounding Columbus) placements only. As shown in Table 1, the RUC provides teacher candidates with the opportunity to observe at more culturally diverse schools.

Additionally, OU's teacher candidates on the Athens campus were asked to complete an online survey in fall 2011 to examine how their RUC field placement schools compared to their own educational experiences growing up. Based on the 32 teacher candidates who responded to the survey, 93.8% of the teacher candidates reported their RUC schools to be very or somewhat different from their own experiences (68.8% and 25%, respectively).

## **REFLECTION PAPERS**

Reflection papers require teacher candidates to research their schools and school communities, discuss their expectations and experiences, and evaluate themselves in the spirit of reflective practice. Typically, field experiences are most beneficial when followed by structured reflection for teacher candidates to analyze their own attitudes and beliefs and to develop an awareness or deeper understanding of cultural relevance in teaching and learning (Gay, 2010; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 1999; Fry & McKinney, 1997).

At the OU campuses, teacher candidates enrolled in a designated course write five reflection papers. Each paper has both an activity component and a related reflection. For the first paper, teacher candidates research demographics of their placement schools and community, reflect on how their placement school compares to their own educational experiences and discuss their expectations for their placement experiences. The second paper asks teacher candidates to tour their schools and describe the school building(s), facilities, and services and reflect on services and observed accommodations for students with exceptionalities. In the third paper, teacher candidates are asked to interview their placement teachers to learn more about their daily teaching activities, challenges, and strategies. In the second half of that paper, they reflect on their observations of their teachers' strategies for avoiding bias, promoting resiliency, and promoting high expectations in relation to content learned in their course at OU. For the fourth paper, teacher candidates interview (or observe, if placed with younger students) at least one student about his/her experience in school (their most/least favorite subject, what traits they like in a teacher, their thoughts about the importance of grades and homework, etc.). For the second half of this paper, they reflect on the student's motivation for learning and their teacher's observed strategies for motivating his/her students in relation to content learned in their course at OU. Finally, teacher candidates are asked to write a self reflection to compare their attitudes prior to and after their field experience, as well as to self-reflect on their progress and what they have learned about social justice, ethics, student well-being and professional competence, which are OU's professional dispositions for teacher candidates.

**TABLE 1**

**COMPARISON OF STUDENT POPULATION FOR ATHENS COUNTY AND RUC SCHOOLS FOR OU TEACHER CANDIDATES**

| <b>COMPARISON SCHOOLS OR AREA</b>                 | <b>BLACK</b> | <b>HISPANIC</b> | <b>MULTI-RACIAL/ OTHER</b> | <b>WHITE</b> | <b>ECONOMICALLY DISADVANTAGED</b> | <b>LIMITED ENGLISH PROFICIENT</b> | <b>STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES</b> |
|---|--------------|-----------------|----------------------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <b>ATHENS COUNTY<sup>a</sup></b>                  | 1.22%        | .38%            | 3.48%                      | 94.28%       | 54.88%                            | .38%                              | 21.26%                            |
| <b>COLUMBUS SCHOOLS<sup>b</sup></b>               | 55.91%       | 4.84%           | 6.32%                      | 31.12%       | 86.73%                            | 11.73%                            | 20.53%                            |
| <b>LANCASTER CITY SCHOOLS<sup>b</sup></b>         | 1.3%         | 0.8%            | 1.9%                       | 95.5%        | 51.6%                             | NR                                | 15.2%                             |
| <b>SOUTHERN LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICT<sup>b</sup></b> | NR           | NR              | NR                         | 98.5%        | 63.3%                             | NR                                | 30.7%                             |
| <b>OHIO<sup>b</sup></b>                           | 16.5%        | 3.5%            | 6%                         | 74%          | 45.1%                             | 2%                                | 14.8%                             |

*Note:* All data was derived from the Ohio Department of Education 2010-2011 Report Cards;

NR = not reported

<sup>a</sup> Percentages were averages across all district reports for Athens County.

<sup>b</sup> Based on Columbus schools participating in the RUC during the fall 2011 quarter.

<sup>c</sup> Based on all Lancaster City Schools for fall 2011 semester.

<sup>d</sup> Based on Southern Local School District for spring 2012 semester.



To ensure higher level thinking in the reflection papers, teacher candidates are required to apply course concepts to examples from their observations. At OU, these students are concurrently enrolled in their RUC field placement course, a course called “Students with Exceptionalities”, and an educational psychology course. The faculty members who teach these three courses meet regularly and discuss aspects of the RUC papers in their courses, as well as drawing on the field experiences of their teacher candidates in class. The reflection papers are all graded on a common rubric that assesses four areas: completeness (Are all questions thoroughly addressed?), content (Are all observations and conclusions supported by detailed descriptions), connections (Are there at least three or four strong, logical, and explicit connections to course content), and spelling and grammar (Is the paper written at college-level and without spelling, grammar or formatting errors?).

At Ohio Dominican University (ODU), involvement in RUC is not related to a particular course. Instead, it is offered as a professional development opportunity for a few self-selected teacher candidates and about 10 students who are part of the Dominican Scholars program. Typical involvement by ODU students involves attending the symposium, doing one or two days of field experience in a rural placement, and writing a single reflection paper. Experiences have varied from semester to semester.

Each university selected what types of experiences the students would have in course work and in the field, but the shared event for the students was the symposium—a one-day event featuring guest speakers, learning activities, and opportunities to hear from teachers and principals from both rural and urban schools. At two of the symposia, RUC participants travelled to the Columbus Global Academy to experience first-hand the unique school that serves the needs of recent immigrants to the United States.

## **PRELIMINARY RESEARCH**

In addition to a variety of other assessments throughout the RUC experience, data were collected at various points for the purposes of evaluating the RUC. The semi-annual RUC Symposium was evaluated twice: once by distributing a general evaluation tool to all participants at the end of the event and once via an online survey distributed to the OU teacher candidates on the Athens campus to gain more specific and quantitative feedback. The field placement experience in the RUC was also evaluated by providing an online survey to OU teacher candidates on the Athens campus to inquire about how the RUC experience compared to their own educational background, their expectations, and their experiences.

Teacher candidates were asked to complete an evaluation at the conclusion of each RUC Symposium to assess the effectiveness of the event. After the spring 2011 RUC Symposium, a short answer survey was completed in small groups by the teacher candidates from all campuses in attendance at the symposium. The results indicated that our teacher candidates had gained only a very basic awareness of cultural influence. When asked, “What impacted you most today about the role of location in a student’s learning experience?”, typical answers were “how much the environment can affect a student” and “location influences everything about a school.” These responses showed their limited understanding of the role of context and community. Similarly, when asked, “What did you learn today that you will [apply to] your own teaching

experiences?”, the teacher candidates provided positive, but overly simplified comments such as, “be very open to the diversity of students and embrace those differences,” “develop relationships with the students,” and “look at the kids with a blind eye.”

At the next symposium in fall, 2011, we attempted to provide more specific examples of the role of location in a student’s learning experience. An online survey was administered on the Athens campus and was completed by 51 teacher candidates. Once again, we were surprised that our teacher candidates did not learn what we thought we were teaching them at this event. Rather than seeing the depth of experience provided by personal examples of culture, many teacher candidates felt that these examples were “irrelevant” or “not meaningful.” Instead, they requested (in their evaluations) examples specific for their majors for use within urban classrooms. They did not appear to make the connection or to generalize that there are other types of culture.

An illustration of this was the teacher candidates’ response to an opening presentation at a recent RUC Symposium. After welcoming the students to his campus in an Appalachian, historically coal mining area of the state, the administrator host picked up a banjo and began to play. He described the history and culture of the region through a musical presentation that incorporated the origins of the banjo music with the history and economic struggles of coal miners, the unions, and the churches of the region. He then related these cultural and economic themes with personal and family stories that showed their impact on the educational expectations and availability for people in this rural region. In closing, students were encouraged to sing along in a stirring song that had been sung by striking union coal miners.

To the teacher educators in the room, the musical presentation was a wonderful and engaging example of the importance of the cultural context of this rural area. However, to our surprise, when we read students’ evaluations of the day’s experiences, a significant number of students wondered why the presentation was included at all. To our dismay, the teacher candidates’ evaluations indicated that, in general, they didn’t make the connection between the administrator’s personal story and the larger issue of context and culture. Their comments indicated that they “couldn’t find the connection between the opening speech and the symposium,” felt “like he just talked about himself,” and “did not find it to be useful” or to “relate to anything.”

Similarly, when the teacher candidates evaluated a presentation given by an administrator within the Columbus school system, they described it as “irrelevant” and that it was “informative if we were going to be in Columbus, but not helpful otherwise.” The teacher candidates did not seem to generalize her comments and examples from the Columbus school system to urban schools in general (even though it consists of a high percentage of urban schools) or to the larger role of culture in the classroom.

What is interesting is that the teacher candidates’ responses to the recent symposium were not a reflection of their desire to teach, or not to teach, in a rural or urban setting. In a survey conducted at the end of the event, more than 70% of the teacher candidates said they “agree” or “strongly agree” when asked whether they have a personal commitment to work with students from ethnically/culturally diverse groups. And of the remaining 30%, 80% of those simply answered with “no opinion” instead of the choice of “disagree” or “strongly disagree.”

## DISCUSSION

One potential explanation for the lack of connection and understanding in teacher candidates' responses is their lack of experience with students and classrooms that are different from themselves and their own experiences (Gay, 2010; Causey, Thomas, & Armento, 2000). In fact, when the fall RUC preservice teachers at the Athens campus were surveyed, 93.8% stated that their field placement location was either very different or somewhat different (68.8% and 25%, respectively) from their own school experiences (urban, rural, or suburban). Additionally, of those preservice teachers who were a minority in their field placement setting, 88% stated it was their first time experiencing a classroom as a minority. One course or one field experience is typically not sufficient for making real change in preservice teachers (Causey et al., 2000); Gay, 2010). Preservice teachers typically require guidance and reflection in order to think critically about cultural differences and social justice (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). Therefore, the responses of our preservice teachers may be the result of their relative inexperience and/or their need for more reflection.

A second explanation could be that preservice teachers may also have immature and stereotypical expectations about urban students (Sleeter, 2001) and only very basic understandings of instructional strategies for diverse classrooms (Goodwin, 1994). As such, they may have needed presenters to make a more explicit connection between their specific examples and culture as a whole or classrooms in general. Rather than simply having a presenter discuss his own Appalachian heritage, we may have needed to draw tangible parallels with other cultural backgrounds or prompt related discussion questions among the students to help them to draw that conclusion.

Additionally, preservice teachers may not have given much thought to cultural differences and their influences and may not feel comfortable addressing such differences or disparities in an attempt to avoid appearing biased or racist (Gay, 2010). In fact, rather than being open to change their beliefs, preservice teachers tend to hold on to their prior knowledge and beliefs about students and learning. They typically believe that hard work is the key to learning and that all students are basically the same, regardless of diverse backgrounds (Causey, et al., 2000). The sentiment that "kids are just kids" is often expressed by white pre-service teachers who are inexperienced with diversity and adopt "color-blindness" as an approach for dealing with cultural differences due to their inexperience and anxiety (Sleeter, 2001).

Although a majority of our students seem committed to working with students from ethnically and culturally diverse groups, it appears they do not realize what they do not know related to race, community, setting, and the intersection with teaching. Great efforts have been made, and are still being made, to overcome the effects of racism in our schools and to help future educators see the worth and potential of all their students. However, one unintended consequence of these attempts may be that teacher candidates may be unwilling to acknowledge diversity or to recognize the importance of the many cultures that children bring to the classroom. Evidence of this failure to attach significance to cultural difference appeared in some of the reflections students completed in connection with their field experiences.

Our teacher candidates are not unusual in their need to learn more about the intersection of culture and diversity and learning in the field of education. Ullucci and Battey (2011) articulated

their own experiences with teacher candidates who, like ours, seem to be unaware of the need to examine their own understanding of race and culture in order to prepare to meet the needs of their students.

*“I don’t care if they are brown, white, or green! I treat all kids the same,” explains Joseph, a student in a master’s course. “I don’t pay attention to their backgrounds,” echoes Patricia, “It’s not necessary. Why make things complicated? I just try to be color-blind.”* Our preservice and in-service teachers are emphatic. They argue feverishly that culture plays no role in their classrooms, that they are impervious to difference. Undergraduates or graduates, practicing teachers or not, individual refrains remain of “I am color-blind” blend into a troubling chorus of “we don’t see race.” As teacher educators, who teach in very different contexts, we have been struck by the consistency, urgency, and frequency in which pleas of color-blindness emerge. We imagine our experiences are not unique (Ullucci & Battey, 2011, pp. 1195-1196).

## **CONCLUSION**

As we explore ways to help our teacher candidates understand the cultural contexts of schools, we are continuing to analyze the data that informs us about how the RUC experiences are affecting their knowledge and attitudes. The data have presented us with some important surprises. One of the most striking surprises has been that, just as our teacher candidates often fail to recognize the experiences and contextual knowledge of their students, we as teacher educators have often failed to consider these factors as they relate to our students. We intended that through the RUC experiences our teacher candidates would become familiar with a variety of school contexts, both rural and urban. The hope was that they would discard previous stereotypes they might have had with contexts that were new to them, that they would recognize the unique possibilities and challenges of various school settings and would be, in the words of the RUC mission statement, “prepared to teach anywhere.” In fact, we learned we cannot assume that teacher candidates even understand why the context of the school and the culture of students are important to teachers concerned with student learning.

It is becoming clear to us that teacher candidates, especially those in the initial courses of the teacher education program, simply are not yet able to view their experiences through the same lenses as those of more experienced teachers. The educative experiences must be accompanied by explicit connections to the “Big Ideas” we hope that students will gain from the experience. For example, most of the student audience for the banjo presentation understood the concept of culture, but their visions of teaching were still mostly limited to the presentation of disciplinary content. They have not yet become aware of the critical importance of considering who the learners in their classes will be. They have not learned yet why culture matters. This understanding of the role of context and culture in teaching and learning must be developed more intentionally in the activities and courses linked with the RUC.

Because of our recognition of this need, planning for future symposia has included thoughtful consideration of how the day’s activities might be chosen and structured in ways that will make explicit the ways that culture impacts teaching. Speeches and teacher discussions (which were previously centered on questions from the students) can be framed in ways that make

it more clear to students how these relate to the themes that we wish them to focus on. Our hope is that students will not be left wondering why any part of the program was included. We know that what is learned through one day's experience in the symposium will need to be reinforced through many other experiences, and we will continue to find ways to link the RUC with classroom learning. For example, for the class that is linked with the RUC for OU teacher candidates, a textbook has been chosen in order to link cultural learning from the field experiences with a deeper knowledge of the importance of culture.

Simply adding a course in cultural issues or a diverse field placement is not enough to sufficiently change cultural awareness or understanding for preservice teachers. There needs to be a more extensive programmatic infusion of the importance of culture (Sleeter, 2001). Preservice teacher education programs need to make significant commitments and programmatic changes in how cultural diversity is addressed. Teacher candidates need to change not only their instructional strategies, but also their attitudes and beliefs about culture (Gay, 2010) and their understanding of social justice (Baldwin, et. al., 2007). Social justice, which is a concept that is embraced as a conceptual foundation for most teacher preparation programs, goes beyond cultural awareness and requires preservice teachers to think critically about cultural injustices that affect teaching and learning (Nieto, 2000). Preservice teachers may need to study their own attitudes and beliefs through narratives and reflection in order to truly understand social justice (Cause, et al., 2000; Gay, 2010).

Class and culture erect boundaries that hinder our vision, blind us to the logic of error and the ever-present stirring of language, and encourage the designation of otherness, difference, and deficiency. And the longer I stay in education, the clearer it becomes to me that some of our basic orientations toward the teaching and testing of literacy contribute to our inability to see. To truly educate in America, then, to reach the full sweep of our citizenry, we need to question received perception, shift continually from the standard lens. (Rose, 1989, p. 205)



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## To contact the authors:

Kaye M. Martin: [martink@ohio.edu](mailto:martink@ohio.edu)

Mindy Maher Rutherford: [maherm@ohio.edu](mailto:maherm@ohio.edu)

Marlissa Hughes Stauffer: [stauffem@ohiodominican.edu](mailto:stauffem@ohiodominican.edu)

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# STUDENT TEACHERS TACKLE THE LACK OF SOCIAL STUDIES IN URBAN ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

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**Jessica B. Schocker, Stephen Croft, Jennifer Licwinko, Pamela Muthersbaugh,  
Gabiella Rossetti, and Melissa Yeager**

Penn State Berks

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## **ABSTRACT**

This paper presents some of the issues in teaching social studies in urban elementary schools, specifically, the influence pre-service teachers may be able to have on social studies in urban elementary schools. Senior-level student teachers share their experiences of including social studies in creative and culturally responsive ways. Examples include interdisciplinary planning, community engagement, and service and advocacy work. A discussion follows with suggestions for in-service mentor teachers and university methods instructors to help empower student teachers to include social studies in their classes. Specific suggestions include: (a) teaching culturally responsive philosophy, (b) utilizing strategies of teaching for understanding in order to put culturally responsive theory into classroom instructional practice, and (c) fostering opportunities for student teachers to be models of participatory citizenship, leading by example.

## **Student Teachers Tackle the Lack of Social Studies in Urban Elementary Schools**

The experience of student teaching is one that teacher education majors anticipate for years in college, often idealizing the experience in their minds before ever setting foot into a classroom for any meaningful length of time. As a professor of teacher education, I (Jessica Shocker) have often heard my students express expectations about teaching what they want to teach, spending time how they want to spend it, and having an unlimited toolbox of resources and technology at their disposal. Although teacher education courses and field experiences prior to senior year student teaching may begin to provide students with a more reasonable view of teaching in a public school, my experience has indicated that the full-time field experience, typically situated at the end of an education program, is the time when students begin to understand the realities of public school teaching.

The student teaching experience is particularly powerful for student teachers who are placed in an urban environment. Many of them, particularly when their previous experiences as students are in suburban areas of privilege, are shocked at many of the issues urban schools face. In the social studies methods course at our institution, methods professors discuss ways that social studies education may be the key to improving the elementary school years in an urban school environment. This paper shares some of my experiences in preparing student teachers to teach social studies at urban public elementary schools, and will highlight ways my students have made extraordinary efforts to affect change in urban environments through social

studies education. Five students provide four case studies of their experiences and opinions about student teaching in an urban setting in their own words. Finally, I provide suggestions for inservice mentor teachers and methods instructors to help foster a positive relationship with their student teachers through the implementation of thoughtful and creative social studies education.

Penn State Berks is located in Reading, PA, a city of 88,000 residents, which ranks as most impoverished in the nation for cities with over 65,000 residents, according to the United States Census Bureau in 2010. A stunning 41.3% of residents live below the poverty line in Reading (Tavernise, 2011; “Reading, Pennsylvania,” 2011). Penn State Berks’ student teachers are placed for a year-long internship in one of the local Reading elementary schools, where they spend two days per week in the classroom for the first half of the year and then every day in the classroom for the second half of the year as they assume more teaching responsibilities. The student population is roughly 75% Hispanic and 80% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch (“Test Scores for Reading,” 2011). Reading’s school district consists of a disproportionately high percentage of low-income students, which is a trend among urban districts nationwide (Frankenberg, 2009). The city of Reading consists of a large urban city center and the city limits cover a total of 10 square miles. A small cohort of Penn State Berks students is placed in the nearby Lebanon district, also an urban setting with similar challenges. The common characteristics of urban schools are well known among educators: class sizes are large, resources are small, transience is common, communication is poor, and graduation rates are low, to name a few.

Particularly troubling is that many urban schools that are in danger academically are probably among the least likely to prepare teachers for social studies instruction. Research indicates that schools invest time and resources on literacy and math, subjects tested on standardized tests. Teachers report spending very little time on social studies and most time on the subjects tested (O’Connor, Heafner, & Groce, 2007). Schools are led to believe that social studies is not important because it is not included on the mandatory state tests. Furin (2005) refers to this phenomenon as “the death of social studies” in urban elementary schools.

I suggest that elementary students in a high poverty, urban environment need social studies education just as much, if not more, than their suburban counterparts. Many children in Reading, for example, are immigrants or the children of new immigrants, learning to adapt to a new culture or to bridge cultural gaps between home and school. They are often English language learners (ELLs), learning a new language along with a new culture, something extraordinarily complex and daunting (Rieger & McGrail, 2006). They lack basic social studies content knowledge, which not only prevents them from becoming effective citizens, but also may hinder their reading comprehension, because they have trouble making connections to what they read (Kato & Manning, 2007). Although the aforementioned items, along with many more, are critically important in the daily lives of urban students and their families, student teachers are not often taught about this important social studies content in classrooms where the emphasis is on preparation for standardized tests (Furin, 2005).

The practice of culturally relevant pedagogy, which draws on the many resources available in an urban community and the strengths of students’ cultural groups, is essential for urban student success (Ladson-Billings, 1995). When teachers do not teach in a culturally responsive way, and issues such as racism or class privilege are not addressed, it sends a silent message to

children that their teachers do not understand or acknowledge their experience (Erikson, 2003). However, research has indicated that when urban students and parents trust the teachers in their schools, student achievement is higher (Goddard, 2001). Effective urban educators, therefore, should thoughtfully seek to encourage and incorporate the qualities offered by the rich and diverse cultural backgrounds of their students in an effort to encourage community unity while fostering group identity.

Five student teachers outline key aspects of their experiences with social studies in their urban elementary school placements. These students have enthusiastically accepted their call to bring excellence to their urban elementary classrooms, and are finding ways to do so, even where it is not easy. They have expressed a belief in education and in their students. Further, they have been impacted by highly motivated mentor teachers who model how to succeed as urban educators. I selected these students to write specifically for this piece, providing a sample of the extraordinary initiatives I have seen in the 2010-2011 academic year by student teachers to make social studies a priority in urban elementary schools. In the four cases below, student teachers show leadership by integrating social studies in their curricula, by encouraging community building and interdisciplinary studies, and by working to serve as models of participatory citizenship. Following each case, I provide a commentary.

#### **STUDENT TEACHER CASE 1: PAMELA AND GABRIELLA**

After collaborating substantially in our Penn State Berks social studies methods class and student teaching in the same school with first- and third graders over the course of several months, student teachers Pamela and Gabriella discovered a serious deficiency in general social studies knowledge. Many of their students were unable to name the current president of the United States; several guessed George Washington or Abraham Lincoln. Further, when students found out that the student teachers were in college, most of them were uncertain what “college” was. After Gabriella provided an explanation, she asked if any students might know someone who went to “a special school to become qualified for a certain job.” Not one student raised a hand. Upon learning this information, the student teachers questioned how students could become participatory citizens in the future with such a lack of basic social studies knowledge. In talking with veteran teachers at Penn State Berks, their concerns about the lack of social studies understanding were validated. The cooperating teachers expressed strong desire to incorporate social studies content into their daily routines, but pressures to increase standardized test scores often push social studies to the side, resulting in efforts to “squeeze” social studies in wherever they can. Determined to help rectify this lack in the curriculum, they were inspired to integrate interdisciplinary social studies throughout their student teaching experience in a variety of subject areas and routines, moving beyond a paradigm of squeezing bits and pieces into a cramped curriculum.

Gabriella’s classroom consisted of 22 first-grade children, ages six and seven. Each of her students lived within a 10-block radius of the elementary school, and a majority of them walked to school daily. Because there was a “collared-shirt required” dress code in the district, most of her students wore donated clothing. Nineteen of the 22 received free lunch; the others paid a reduced price. Luckily, most of the parents were actively involved in their children’s education, though several parents did not speak English, resulting in the child often serving as translator.

Pamela's third-grade classroom consisted of 22 students, all of whom qualified for free breakfast and lunch every day. Nine of her students had family living in Puerto Rico and return there for extended periods of time over the summer. Due to the level of cultural diversity in her classroom (13 Hispanic students, two Asian students, six Caucasian students, and one African-American student), she believes they had a powerful opportunity to learn values of diversity at a young age. After learning from their social studies methods course at Penn State Berks the power of culturally responsive teaching, both of them (Pamela and Gabriella) drew upon the rich diversity of students in their classrooms to teach relevant social studies.

This experience prompted them to commit to challenging students to be critical thinkers and active problem solvers and to teach them meaningful and values-based skills and content. For example, Gabriella committed to integrating social studies, specifically cultural studies, with language arts, conducting regular read-aloud sessions with multicultural texts. During these readings, she asked well-crafted discussion questions that helped students make connections to the culture of focus, while meeting the expectations of the language arts standards. She deepened the social studies connection by giving the students related writing prompts. As an informal strategy of providing feedback and using students' multicultural roots to teach social studies and cultural awareness, she drew upon students' ideas during instruction, which resulted in feelings of pride and accomplishment among them. An unanticipated theme of cultural study and appreciation emerged in her classroom where the students and Gabriella celebrated cultural holidays and shared their family traditions. Gabriella regularly shared Italian traditions from her family's cultural origins, and modeled how to compare and contrast one set of cultural traditions to others; the students especially enjoyed this activity, evidenced by hands waving eagerly in the air to participate in these comparative discussions.

Pamela has made special efforts to teach social studies through a thematic unit on immigration, as many of her students were immigrants or related to immigrants. The students listened to personal stories from immigrants to the United States from around the world, and were able to relate these stories to their own experiences or the experiences of their friends and family in the local community. This relevant content informed the students about the processes of immigration as well as the cultural and emotional impact of immigration on individuals and communities. The students used a number of interdisciplinary social studies and language arts skills to meet school standards as well as create authentic learning experiences, including communication, writing, and speaking skills, inference making, decision making, point of view, conflict resolution, accepting responsibility, and reading strategies. Further, identifying a need for her students and their families to be participatory citizens in their local community, she taught skills for reading and interpreting newspaper articles and for analyzing and understanding television news. The children regularly watched CNN Student news, where students broadcast for students.

### **Schocker Analysis of Case Study 1**

I remember when Pamela and Gabriella presented the results of their assignment for their School and Community Inquiry class. This assignment required that student teachers conduct research about the communities where they teach, their students' backgrounds, and the economic and social climate. They were stunned at the lack of social studies content knowledge of their students, and more inspired by this experience than they ever could have been by my insistence

as a methods instructor that social studies is indeed important. Both women took action based on what they found. In creating a safe environment for her students to share cultural experiences and learn from one another, Gabriella taught tolerance and the use of culturally responsive methods. She also modeled these skills by sharing her own experiences. This connected Gabriella to her students and created the perception of her as a teacher who cares about her students.

Pamela's achievements were impressive: she learned to identify student and community needs and to adapt her planning accordingly. She seamlessly integrated social studies across the curriculum, which demonstrated high levels of critical thinking and perseverance in a climate where it could be easy to let the subject be lost in the midst of standardized test preparation. While most preservice teachers in a methods class demonstrate a passion for social studies, particularly when creating a product for a class grade, these student teachers embodied their passion by taking it beyond the class requirements, making these implementations in their classrooms of their own volition. None of the teaching experiences they expressed were mandated by class assignments.

### **STUDENT TEACHER CASE 2: STEPHEN**

Stephen had a tremendous desire to make a significant difference in the lives of his future students. Prior to his senior year of student teaching, he believed his natural charisma and personality would create an amazing learning atmosphere where students would learn better than they have ever learned before. During his first meeting with his mentor teacher, he was excited to introduce a classroom website where students and parents could reference current and past topics, access academic resources, and communicate with the teachers. He learned quickly that it would be an ineffective tool; a majority of the students did not have Internet access. This perplexed him. How, in this day and age, could a simple website be ineffective? As Stephen spent more time there, he learned the reality of teaching in an urban public school, where he witnessed old, worn-out clothes that were too small or too large, a lack of jackets for weather conditions, and many students' families relying on government assistance for food and shelter. From this eye-opening experience, he learned that these students are in survival mode. He realized that if he was going to be an effective teacher, he would need to meet students where they were and make lessons relevant to their daily lives. What better way to do that than through social studies?

Stephen's methods professor (Schocker) had assigned a project that would give student teachers a better understanding of our students, school, and community. The assignment was to gather information on the local demographics, including graduation rates, unemployment rates, district revenues, and the cost of living. The goal was to reveal information about the school and community that would help student teachers make decisions in the classroom. With three other preservice teachers, he set out to tour the community surrounding the school, taking photos and making notes of the surroundings. It was a surprising experience to see firsthand what these students walk past everyday. The refreshing part for him was that despite all the poverty, poor housing, and decaying community, the students do not see it this way. He observed that they loved their school, their friends, and the community. This understanding transferred into his preparations for lessons in the classroom because he was able to prepare lessons that are more meaningful to the students.



Stephen was placed in a departmentalized classroom in an urban district where he taught language arts and social studies twice per day. About 15% of his students were ELL. According to the schedule guidelines, the students in his school spent 46% of their day on reading and language arts, 27% at special/lunch/recess/morning meeting, and the remaining 27% on social studies. However, more often than not, they extended language arts and never got to social studies; it was not viewed as a priority. Recently, Stephen had the opportunity to change that pattern when it was his turn to take over the classroom for the first time by himself. He reports having seized this opportunity to teach social studies, believing from his social studies methods course that he had the tools to develop a meaningful, interdisciplinary unit on patterns of weather based on the Teaching for Understanding Framework (Blythe, et. al, 1997). His overarching goal was to cover the skills and strategies mandated by the school district curriculum in language arts, while connecting everything to social studies and life skills that these students would benefit from, such as safety during storms, predicting and analyzing data, reading weather maps, conducting research, and speaking in front of their peers.

Stephen counted his unit as a huge success; the students were engaged, enjoying themselves, and focused. He successfully encouraged the students to write by asking them to explain with descriptive details a storm they experienced, when it took place, how long it lasted, and what was the storm like. All of the students had a story to tell, and it gave him insight to how they perceive storms. Next, to gather more data on students' preconceptions, he had the students complete a Quick Draw Write (QDW) activity. The students were required to draw a picture of a storm of their choice, then explain what they already know about this storm. Through the use of cooperative grouping, he assigned specific storms to each group, used graphic organizers to guide their research, used the computer lab (for the first time this year) to conduct research on their assigned topic, combined each group member's research to formulate a storm poster, and completed the project with a video presentation by each group. He reported never seen his class more engaged and excited to do classroom work than during this process, stating the best part was they were learning and utilizing the skill and strategy focuses without him having to stand at the front of the classroom to drill the material. He observed that many students used graphic sources on their posters, which was their reading skill that week.

What he found during his first classroom takeover was that students have a natural desire to learn social studies when it is presented in a way that relates to their lives and encourages their participation. It is his conclusion that very few kids enjoy being lectured to, and even fewer enjoy the repetitive nature that has become public school teaching in a high-stakes testing environment. He deemed his experiment was a success that solidified his belief that incorporating social studies into the reading and language arts lessons allows for authentic learning. It took a lot more work on his part to plan the instruction, but it was extremely rewarding. The values and information that can be learned through social studies are extremely valuable to elementary students, especially in an urban setting. Social studies teaches students how to function in daily life and how the world around them functions. He recalled learning about social studies as a kid not only in school, but also from outside role models and reflected on the fact that many of his students did not have role models who talked to them about the science of weather, or politics, government, or history for that matter, so it's even more imperative that these students experience quality social studies in school.

## **Schocker Analysis of Case Study 2**

Similar to Gabriella and Pamela, Stephen did not have to carry out this interdisciplinary unit in his student teaching placement because of a class requirement. Stephen was particularly inspired by our School and Community Inquiry assignment. He may have been among the most optimistic student teachers we sent into the field this year and then shocked by the realities of urban public education. Stephen is not alone in being surprised that many urban children do not have Internet access at home. He also reported being surprised by the lack of resources available based on what he had seen his own children have access to in their suburban school district. A believer in preparing children for productivity where they have the tools to be successful, he has sought to develop curricula that empower students with relevant knowledge that contribute toward positive life skills. What makes Stephen's case atypical in my professional experience is that in spite of his particularly idealistic view of education before he started his student teaching, he refused to modify his expectations of what the students could learn as a result of their structured deficiencies. While he had to adjust his expectations of an online interactive component of the class outside of school hours, he did not budge on the expectations he held for excellence in research. Stephen not only taught students about the value of social studies concepts, but he did so while simultaneously imparting important and transferrable research skills. His reports of the results of this unit indicate that these students are empowered with new skills to apply not only to understanding the science of weather patterns, but to any other topic of research in the future.

## **STUDENT TEACHER CASE 3: MELISSA**

The majority of Melissa's third graders in Reading either had parents that were not born in the United States, or the students themselves were immigrants. All of her students were of minority ethnic groups and all qualified for free or reduced lunch. Over 95% of them lived in subsidized housing and walked to school each day from their housing projects. Very few of her students had a family car, and most had never traveled outside of their zip code. The experiences of her students inspired her to develop a thematic unit using principles of the Teaching for Understanding framework around the National Council for the Social Studies standards for civics and government. Most specifically, she wanted to focus on the unique nature of democratic ideals. Her philosophy of social studies education evolved in her methods class, where she came to believe that students need to experience the world outside of the small part to which they are exposed, and for children in an urban school, imaginative social studies may be the only way to accomplish this. For starters, she wanted her students to feel knowledgeable about where they lived and to believe they had control over their futures; she stated she did not want to see them become victims of ignorance.

A large emphasis of the unit Melissa planned revolved around the role of the citizen, the components of democracy, the importance of voting, strategies of decision-making, and the knowledge and efficacy to peacefully promote societal change. She kept her students engaged with hands-on activities such as playing cooperative learning activities, where she consistently related the students' background knowledge and experiences to key concepts. She reported she was very fortunate to have the complete cooperation of Reading's Mayor, Vaughn Spencer (See Image 1). He took time out of his busy schedule and came into her third-grade classroom

to serve as a role model for her students. Leading up to this experience, the students had researched his campaign platforms, his biography, and issues that face the city of Reading as a whole. They connected with the mayor, because he graduated from Reading High School and had been a teacher in the district for more than 30 years prior to entering politics. The students asked him a variety of high-level questions, including how did he plan to reduce littering in the city, what subject did he teach and why, and how do I become a police officer? The students had conducted such extensive research and planned such thoughtful questions that Mayor Spencer at one point during the session commented, “How do they know so much about me?” Melissa said, “The Internet! We researched!” The students wrote him thank you notes the day after his visit. One student wrote that when he went home and told his mother he had met Mayor Spencer, she revealed for the first time that she had been one of his students. Melissa saw this experience as bridging a large school-to-home gap.

**IMAGE 1:** Mayor’s Visit to Third-grade Class



Motivated by the mayor’s visit, the students were energized to learn about voting and democracy. After learning about their role as future voters with control over electing officials and choosing laws, her students simulated a class-wide campaign and vote on a class handshake. She predicted that overall, the experiences of bringing democracy to life will not only benefit her students individually but the future of the city of Reading and ultimately, the United States. She concluded that it is critical to teach social studies in urban schools so students gain the information they need to grow up to be positive and participatory citizens.

### **Schocker Analysis of Case Study 3**

When I received Melissa’s email inviting me to visit her class because the mayor would be the guest speaker, it signaled to me that she had also achieved success. Like her peers, Melissa was not required to prepare this unit for any course requirement. Melissa’s confident persistence demonstrates her belief in doing what is best for her students, in spite of any perceived obstacles. In observing Melissa’s work, I saw her demonstrate planning, preparation, and implementation similar to an experienced, veteran teacher. A result of hard work, passion, and the critical application of the Teaching for Understanding Framework (Blythe, et. al, 1997), she learned

about in our social studies methods class. Melissa's experiences indicate that novice teachers can be prepared for excellence in social studies planning and instruction. Her optimism and training led to an exciting social studies experience for the children in her school.

#### **STUDENT TEACHER CASE 4: JENNA**

Jenna's first impression was that the physical conditions of the school in which she was placed were inadequate for the physical and social development of elementary aged children. Believing the opportunity to communicate and play is an essential part of the elementary student experience, her mission as a student teacher was to improve the social centers of the school: the playground, the hallways, and common spaces (see images 2 and 3). These spaces are where children create a community, an important aspect of informal social studies education. Upon completing an assignment in her methods class, where she reported learning "startling facts" about her school, district and greater community, she knew that she had the knowledge and power to make an impact for her students. Through the entire assignment, she talked about being able to see her students' hopeful, innocent faces behind the facts, making it that much more meaningful for her. At the time of this writing, school is currently in Corrective Action II for the second year, failing to meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP); this is the second lowest status of all 24 schools in the district. The district itself is 78.7% Hispanic and the rate of ELL students is 19.1%. The district report card reports that the 90.9% of the Reading School District population is economically disadvantaged. As such, she has implemented a service-learning project as a contribution to the school's five-year strategic plan, which was created based on the above information to strengthen partnerships and supports.

**IMAGE 2:** Damaged Fencing



**IMAGE 3:** Unstable Swing Set





She reported that her ambitious goal to improve the social centers of the school has been challenging and rewarding. On top of her responsibilities as a preservice teacher in and outside of the classroom, she allotted a significant amount of time to finding companies to donate products, time, and/or service to complete several important improvement projects. Along with writing a grant to get safe and secure fencing around the school playground, she secured donations from local hardware stores to provide painting supplies. These donations were used to develop a community involvement activity for her students and their families. As a community, they repainted the activities, maps, and murals located on the playground blacktop and the walls around the school. Her goal was to improve the school itself while promoting the importance of community service and community unity. The social studies curriculum in her classroom focused on the big idea of community, such that in her view, not only did the service project allow her students to become actively involved with bettering their school, but it also tied directly in with their social studies curriculum. To involve the community, she took her ideas to an upcoming school board meeting, modeling involvement by contributing to the community models of effective citizenship for my students, an essential component of social studies education.

#### **Schocker Analysis of Case Study 4**

What makes Jenna's case so fascinating and absolutely different from most of the student teachers I've worked with is that she is a superb model of action-taking. Nothing is impossible in Jenna's mind. The first indication of this was when she announced her plan to attend a school board meeting in order to obtain permission to revitalize the playground at her school. Then, slowly, piece-by-piece, she has begun to assemble the supplies necessary to carry out her plan. By my perception, what Jenna has done for her school is twofold. First, she has modeled for other teachers in her school and other pre-service teachers in her cohort how much can be achieved by a hopeful, determined teacher. And second, she has modeled for her students what it means to be a participatory citizen invested in her community. I am not sure where Jenna got the faith to believe, as one student teacher, that she could change the face of her entire school's play area, and I certainly cannot take credit for it. But, I think what she has done is show the role that student teachers can play in shaping the social studies curriculum in their student teaching placements. Her contribution forges a partnership between the college, the school, and the community, an example of successful community outreach. I am anxious to watch her project play out in the remainder of the school year.

#### **DISCUSSION**

In six years of working with student teachers at different colleges and universities, I've seen amazing passion, hope, and action. This semester has been among the most inspiring. This begs the question: what can we learn from student teachers? They are about to step into a field they love, undaunted by negativity and obstacles. Each day, they look past chipping paint, graffiti, and lack of resources and keep their eyes on what is important: their students. I have learned from experience that working with student teachers to affect change in their own schools and communities has been the most effective method for preparing educators to teach social studies. Student teachers, however, need to be empowered and impassioned by social studies methods

instructors and mentor teachers in order to succeed. These are the three top suggestions for fostering this relationship suggested by the case studies profiled here.

First, our pre-service teachers must be prepared for culturally responsive teaching. This means they must not only respect different cultures, but they must learn detailed nuances about the cultures of their students and understand the contributions these cultural groups have made over time. It is essential that student teachers learn that cultural groups have different communication strategies that teachers must appreciate and utilize (Gay, 2001). In our methods class, for example, we spend a significant amount of time talking about the importance of understanding the communities where we work. This can be accomplished through an inquiry assignment (referenced in the pieces above) where the student teachers immerse themselves in the community by talking to locals, walking around town, exploring the library and other public buildings, and conducting research about the community's demographics and history. This particular assignment was developed by a collaboration of social studies methods instructors at Penn State University campuses. The actions that student teachers took as described above demonstrate the theory of culturally responsive teaching in practice; they are studying the school community and then taking action with and for their students.

Second, after learning the basis of culturally responsive teaching, student teachers need a planning and instructional framework that fosters its implementation. My students each semester apply culturally responsive practices to their social studies curriculum preparation by using the Teaching for Understanding Framework, which focuses on encouraging collaboration among children and assessment through performance-based projects (Blythe, et. al, 1997). This constructivist model helps teachers to plan based on student and teacher interests, available resources and opportunities in the community, standards, and meaningful content. The opportunities in the community can be defined in many ways, including community buildings and landmarks, but also as community leaders. Melissa's visit with the mayor, for example, provided an information source from the students' own community far more salient than a textbook passage about community leadership. Because the model encourages a large amount of communication and feedback between teacher and student, student and student, and student and self, it lends itself perfectly to the concepts underlying culturally responsive teaching. The model suggests that teachers develop overarching understanding goals that can be transferred to other topics and experiences and that students demonstrate understanding by performance-based assessments, receiving constant feedback from multiple sources. For example, in their case study, Gabriella and Pamela both have a goal that their students will understand and appreciate the impact diverse cultures have on the strength of a community. Over time, their students have participated in performances that indicate their achievement of this goal.

As another example, Jenna set a goal that her students would understand the important role of a participatory citizen. In creating opportunities for these students to take pride in and improve the conditions of their economically disadvantaged school, she allows them to enact the participatory role. In this capacity, they will demonstrate positive citizenship and pride in their community. The opportunities for student ownership and teacher differentiation are nearly limitless. Further, when time is not available for isolated social studies instruction, pre-service teachers need to know how to integrate social studies across the curriculum with a framework



that fosters cross-curricular strategies, as Pamela, Gabriella, and Stephen illustrated above. The Teaching for Understanding Framework easily lends itself to interdisciplinary studies.

Finally, I suggest that student teachers be encouraged to lead and teach by example. A community service project involving the students in an urban elementary school provides a platform for a rich social studies experience, where students learn about their community and to participate in a positive way. This goes beyond teaching kids merely about community; it teaches appreciation of the community. Jenna's students, for example, may not remember all the facts they learn in third grade, but they would very likely remember repainting faded or graffiti-covered murals as a group or watching a new fence be constructed with funds received after diligent and persistent lobbying and grant writing. Such experiences not only teach participatory citizenship for the strength of a community, but also show the children that their teacher cares deeply about them and is committed to their positive school and community experience. Melissa's students who met their city mayor will hopefully remember a feeling of togetherness and empowerment that translates far beyond that event. Further, they were able to share this experience with their parents. Research has indicated that urban student achievement is higher when parents are involved (Jeynes, 2005). This type of event creates an opportunity for such involvement and inspires educational discussions between students and their parents.

I strongly encourage social studies methods faculty and mentor teachers to nurture and empower optimism within student teachers. They have the desire to make a difference and are learning the tools to do so with our support. The creative drive in these hopeful college seniors certainly raises my passion for urban education every year, and I have come to realize the power of the teacher education system. If we can be motivated by our students and our students can be empowered by us, we have an enormous potential to affect change through the practice of social studies in urban elementary schools. The cases I have presented above show student teachers transcending stereotypes and beating down clichés on their way to becoming the educators they always believed they could be. We all have a lot to learn from student teachers who work relentlessly, without losing hope, from a place of good intentions with solid training and instruction to guide them.

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## To contact the author:

Jessica B. Schocker: [jbs213@psu.edu](mailto:jbs213@psu.edu)

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# MAKING SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP: URBAN IMMIGRANT MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES WITH AND PERSPECTIVES ON ACTIVE AND ENGAGED DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP

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**Ashley M. Taylor and Anand R. Marri**

Teachers College, Columbia University

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## **ABSTRACT**

**This** study focuses on how a diverse group of 1.5- and second-generation immigrant youth in urban public schools conceptualized active and engaged democratic citizenship. The findings revealed three themes: community and family as primary influence, participatory notions of citizenship, and moving toward enactment. This study contributes to the growing literature on how urban immigrant youth make meaning of their experiences with citizenship education and how these experiences are shaped by contemporary political, socio-economic, and educational contexts, such as disenfranchisement of poor and minority youth, and resegregation of schools. Findings illuminate immigrant students' conceptions of citizenship and how these perceptions may affect their current and future civic engagement.

## **MAKING SENSE OF CITIZENSHIP**

The rise in the number of immigrants (Rong & Preissle, 2009) is reshaping U.S. schools and raises some questions: (a) How should we educate the growing number of immigrant students for engaged democratic citizenship and (b) what should these children know and be able to do in our democratic society (Fass, 1991)? Complicating efforts to prepare immigrant children for engaged democratic citizenship (participating in formal and informal civic-related activities) is the "civic opportunity gap" in secondary schools, where students who are more academically successful, White, or have parents of higher socioeconomic status receive more classroom-based civic learning opportunities, including service learning, debates, and classroom simulations (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008).

Levinson (2012) found clear evidence that immigrant adolescents, especially in urban areas, demonstrate consistently lower levels of civic knowledge, skills, and participation compared to that of their counterparts. Because immigrant adolescents are often underrepresented in the political process, have far less voice, and have less favorable political representation than higher income citizens (Kahne & Middaugh, 2008; APSA Task Force on Inequality and American Democracy, 2004), we seek to understand how immigrant youth conceptualize citizenship as a means toward closing the civic opportunity gap.

In addressing the civic opportunity gap, this study focuses on how a diverse group of 1.5- and second-generation immigrant youth <sup>1</sup> (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988) in urban public schools conceptualize active and engaged democratic citizenship, particularly focusing on what immigrant youth are saying about being engaged in the democratic process (voting, solving community problems, discussing public issues, etc.), and their understandings and experiences of citizenship through the research question: how do urban 1.5- and second-generation immigrant middle and high school students conceptualize active and engaged democratic citizenship?

### **Conceptual Framework**

This study follows a conceptual framework that involves active and engaged citizenship for *all* youth. We focused on this topic because one of the primary goals of social studies education is to prepare students to be active and engaged citizens (NCSS, 2010). We define active and engaged democratic citizenship as participating in formal civic activities such as electoral and political voice activities—voting, jury duty, paying taxes—and informal activities such as discussing current events and politics with family and friends (Rubin, 2007). Westheimer and Kahne (2004) conceptualize “good” democratic citizenship in three ways: personally responsible, participatory, and justice-oriented. The personally responsible citizen acts in a responsible way in his/her community, for example, by obeying laws, paying taxes, and recycling. The participatory citizen is actively engaged in a collective or community-based local, state, and/or national civic related efforts, wherein students are taught how community organizations work and are prepared to run these efforts in the future. Justice-oriented citizens critically analyze and assess social, economic, and political forces in society, and promote collective action against issues of injustice.

Haste and Hogan (2006) argue that in order to understand what good citizenship is, we need to start with the citizen and understand their individual motivations—morally and politically—and how this influences civic participation. They posit three different domains of civic action: voting behavior, helping in the community, and making one’s voice heard. These domains are grounded in different political purposes and motivations. In considering youths’ motivation for civic engagement, Rubin (2011) argues that students’ daily experiences—inside and outside of school—inform their understanding of civic and political participation. Jensen (2008) examined immigrants’ “cultural identity” as a source of civic engagement (p. 70). Findings show political/legal engagement as well as community involvement—such as bicultural skills and consciousness—create complex and varied contexts for students in developing their civic identities.

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<sup>1</sup> We define 1.5-generation immigrants as having arrived after the age of six and before the age of 12; second-generation immigrants are born in the United States or have at least one foreign-born parent (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988)

## **METHODOLOGY**

We collected data in four urban public middle and high school U.S. history classrooms, with a focus on four teachers and 16 immigrant students. We selected these four teachers based on the following criteria. They:

1. provided equitable opportunities for all students to learn and engage with multiple sources and perspectives in their teaching;
2. encouraged students to connect their learning beyond the classroom and into the larger community; and
3. were involved in professional development opportunities outside of what was required for their school/district.

These criteria served as a proxy for “good” teaching, offering a multitude of perspectives toward educational success and how this success is attained (Lightfoot, 1983). Furthermore, we observed their teaching once district educators, supervisors, and school administrators had recommended them as meeting the stated criteria.

We collected data through three methods. First, 120 students (all students in the four classes—about 30 per teacher) completed a pre- and post-course questionnaire (based on the 2004 IEA Civic Education survey) that broadly inquired about their attitudes toward democracy and citizenship. Second, we took field notes and audiotaped two to three class sessions per week per classroom to capture student engagement and responses. Third, we invited 16 1.5- and second-generation immigrant students (see Figure 1) to participate in three semi-structured interviews (beginning, middle, and end of the yearlong course). For this study, we define 1.5-generation immigrants as having arrived after the age of six and before the age of 12; second-generation immigrants are born in the United States or have at least one foreign-born parent (Rumbaut & Ima, 1988). The selected 16 students met the criteria based on immigrant status, teacher recommendations, observations, parental/guardian permission, questionnaire responses, and diversity of academic achievement. We then assigned pseudonyms and analyzed the data through line-by-line inductive coding (Miles & Huberman, 1984), generating focused codes and revealing themes regarding active and engaged citizenship.

**FIGURE 1: PARTICIPANT CHART**

| <b>STUDENT/<br/>TEACHER<br/>NAME</b> | <b>GENDER</b> | <b>COUNTRY OF<br/>ORIGIN</b> | <b>GENERATION</b> | <b>AGE</b> |
|--------------------------------------|---------------|------------------------------|-------------------|------------|
| <b>Mr. McGrady</b>                   |               |                              |                   |            |
| Josue                                | M             | Mexico                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 18         |
| <b>Mr. Buford</b>                    |               |                              |                   |            |
| Pasqual                              | M             | Dominican Republic           | 1.5               | 13         |
| Malika                               | F             | Guyana                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| Kelvin                               | M             | Jamaica                      | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| Dyanand                              | M             | Guyana                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| Munny                                | F             | Guyana                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| Emily                                | F             | Dominican Republic           | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| Justin                               | M             | Jamaica                      | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 13         |
| <b>Ms. Mahasin</b>                   |               |                              |                   |            |
| Jalisa                               | F             | Antigua                      | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 14         |
| Jonathan                             | M             | Mexico                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 14         |
| <b>Mr. Kirkland</b>                  |               |                              |                   |            |
| Sally                                | F             | China                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 17         |
| Stanley                              | M             | Haiti                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 17         |
| Aleksandr                            | M             | Russia                       | 1.5               | 17         |
| Yanina                               | F             | Panama                       | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 17         |
| Jenny                                | F             | China                        | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 17         |
| Raymond                              | M             | Philippines                  | 2 <sup>nd</sup>   | 17         |



## STUDY CONTEXT

In this section we describe the context of the four classrooms through a description of the teacher, school, and students.

### **Case 1: Mr. Peter McGrady at North Shore Community High School**

Mr. McGrady, a White male in his thirties, has taught at North Shore Community High School (NSCHS) since 2001. NSCHS, a small public transfer high school, provides an accelerated credit program for grades 9 to 12 of approximately 150 students, aged 16 to 20, who have had a history of truancy or previously dropped out of another school. Seventy-nine percent of the students at NSCHS were Latino, mainly from the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, and nearly 80% of the students receive free lunch.

Mr. McGrady described his students as “poor, working-class kids” who have had “negative experiences in the classroom.” Many of his students wanted to graduate from high school and were trying to “get in and get out,” doing only the minimum of what they needed to do in order to graduate. Mr. McGrady’s U.S. History I course enrolled 14 students and U.S. History II enrolled 20 students. However, his classes rarely had the number of students enrolled in attendance because students unofficially dropped out, skipped school, or had other unexpected events detain them. One student, a second-generation Mexican immigrant, was willing to participate from Mr. McGrady’s class.

### **Case 2: Mr. Lance Buford at Future Academy**

Mr. Lance Buford, a White male in his mid-twenties who grew up in Kansas, began teaching at Future Academy (FA), a small technology-based school comprised of grades 6 to 12 with 608 students, in 2005. The school’s demographics include, 36.3% Black, 61.2% Latino, 1.5% White, 1.0% Asian, including 13.5% English Language Learners and 16.0% special education students. Most of the students came from households located in the poorest U.S. Congressional District.

Mr. Buford’s third-period U.S. history course enrolled 25 eighth-grade students, 11 boys and 14 girls. He described this class as one of his smartest classes with several “superstars.” The demographics of students in this class reflected the demographics of FA. The students all came from low-income families and about half (12 students) started at FA in sixth grade. Only three students had one or both parents graduate from college. Seven immigrant students agreed to participate from Mr. Buford’s class.

### **Case 3: Ms. Salma Mahasin at Future Academy**

Ms. Salma Mahasin, an African-American Muslim woman in her late twenties, began teaching four years ago. Ms. Mahasin transferred to FA because she disagreed with the previous school’s administrative policies. The principal at FA made her feel comfortable and afforded her much pedagogical freedom.

Ms. Mahasin’s fourth-period U.S. history course enrolled 22 ninth-grade students, 10 boys and 12 girls. Like Mr. Buford’s classroom, the demographics of students in this class reflected that of FA, and all came from low-income families, where none of the students’ parents had graduated from college. Two immigrant students were willing to participate from Ms. Mahasin’s class.

#### **Case 4: Mr. Wes Kirkland at Excellence High School**

Mr. Wes Kirkland, a White male, in his late forties, had been at Excellence High School (EHS) for 16 years. EHS is a specialized test-in high school, one of the top high schools in the district. The demographics of EHS includes 58% Asian or Pacific Islander, 21% White, 8% Latino, and 13% African American. Fifty-four percent of the students have free and reduced lunch and the school had a high annual attendance rate of 96%.

Mr. Kirkland's third-period U.S. history class enrolled 30 11<sup>th</sup>-grade students. The class demographics reflected the school's demographics. Mr. Kirkland described his relationship with the third-period U.S. history class as a group he had "very good give and take with." He was able to joke around with the class because "there were a lot of sparks" and students would "just dive in and pick up the slack," bouncing ideas off one another. Six immigrant students agreed to participate from Mr. Kirkland's class.

#### **FINDINGS**

Immigrant youth in this study conceptualized citizenship in varied ways due to a number of factors: identity(ies), family, movement, school curricula, and community engagement. The findings revealed three themes that answered the research question of how urban 1.5- and second-generation immigrant middle and high school students conceptualize active and engaged democratic citizenship: community and family as primary influence, participatory notions of citizenship, and moving toward enactment.

#### **Community and Family as Primary Influence**

Participating students conceptualized active and engaged citizenship based largely on what their parents said and did. They reconceptualized their "sphere of engagement," e.g., local community, and "those with whom one joins in engagement," e.g., family, community members, and peers (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 53). Echoing findings from Epstein's study (2001), immigrant students similarly noted that their parents, friends, and community members were more influential to their civic knowledge and understanding and how they conceptualized engaging in civic activities than what they learned in school.

Emily, a second-generation immigrant from the Dominican Republic in Mr. Buford's eighth-grade class, when asked why her parents vote, replied, "maybe because they want to change something." Emily's explanation of voting focused on her mother's actions in a recent election. Emily experienced her mother's perspective first-hand that voting was necessary if one wanted to voice their opinion and elect new leaders. When asked if she thought voting was important, she stated, "Yes, of course, because your voice needs to be heard. And you don't want no lame president, like President Bush, to be ruling where you live and stuff." Emily explained that her parents were also not supporters of President Bush. This political stance is perhaps one of the key reasons why her parents voted, why she recognized the importance of voting, and why she emphasized that your "voice needs to be heard." Speaking out and stating your opinion is a critical component to developing one's civic identity (Rubin, 2011) and envisioning one's self as part of the political process. Emily revealed that her parent's voting not only showed her how to become politically engaged, but also why this action can lead to a collective change in society (Haste & Hogan, 2006).

Furthermore, Emily stated that she had also spoken to friends about politics and voting and they discussed issues that interested them:

You know President Bush, let's say, he was letting global warming happen [...] He wasn't telling us to stop driving cars or anything. He was, like, not telling companies to bring down the prices on things that could help cars move [to] solar. And there was this scientist sending him reports, like, every month, and he just ignores them. Saying global warming doesn't exist.

Emily explained that she had learned the content surrounding global warming from science class, but it was with her friends where she discussed how and why this environmental issue was not being sufficiently addressed, and revealed that she thought the president should have taken a greater role in reducing human environmental impact. Through experiencing political discussions with family and friends, Emily revealed how she was contextualizing her schooling experiences and how that encouraged a developing civic identity that was “aware”: she was “desiring to work for change” (Rubin, 2007, p. 470), while forming an understanding of and connection with a current political issue. It was this issue, and others, that supported Emily's desire to go to the voting booth to “pick what I want,” fostering active and engaged citizenship.

On the other hand, Jalisa—a second-generation Antiguan immigrant—went beyond family and community influence, stating she would vote “because my ancestors fought hard for me so I could vote, and I don't want to have to pay, like, the tax, the vote tax. And it's not right [...] they fought hard for it. And it's not fair.” Jalisa noted her ancestors as one reason for being civically engaged; supporting “cultural remembrance” (Jansen, 2008, p. 79) and the need to remember traditions and what others “fought hard for” in order for her to have the right to vote. We found that it was important to “start from where the citizen is” (Haste & Hogan, 2006, p. 474) and consider what motivated immigrant students to engage civic and politically in society. For example, when Raymond, a second-generation Filipino student, was asked when the last time politics played a role in his life, he said that it was in the most recent presidential election “because it influenced the people around me and the people around me influence me [...] Like, if one of my brother's friends had to go to, like, a war, then it influences me 'cause that's my brother's friend.” The immigrant student participants' revealed having different political purposes and motivations based on locally and communally situated experiences (Knight, 2011).

### **Conceptualization of Citizenship: Participatory Notions**

This study's immigrant students shared participatory notions of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), where citizens are actively engaged in collective or community-based civic related efforts. One student in Mr. Buford's eighth-grade class, Malika, a second-generation Guyanese immigrant, defined a “good citizen” as:

Someone who follows the law, drives good, goes to college, good manners, polite to each other, recycles...volunteering is good. Being part of stuff, like, after-school programs [...] If you want to, like, help with, like recycling—or something. Be part of a, like, a group, and join together.

Malika's explanation represented a movement on the continuum toward participatory notions of citizenship, emphasizing the knowledge and skills to know what to do and how to do it, and

a desire to know how one might enact change (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), by stating, “be part of a group, and join together,” “studying pollution,” and “it’s better to recycle because, if not, the world may come to an end.” Malika recognized the importance and enactment of being involved in a community issue, and what might happen if action is not taken. This involvement/engagement came from her interactions with her mother, who was a “good citizen, who screamed at her for not recycling.”

Dyanand, a second-generation Guyanese immigrant, in Mr. Buford’s class also conceptualized participatory notions of citizenship when explaining why voting was important:

Democracy is about for, like, the people who’s gonna give the law should be elected by the people who the laws are given too. I want to have something to say about that.

While Dyanand solely noted the importance of voting, he revealed a different understanding of the purposes of voting that go beyond the personally responsible, or individual, reasons for voting to engaged democratic citizenship by stating “elected by the people who the laws are given too,” showing the knowledge and skills to know what to do—vote—and why to do it—for the collective good (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004).

Jonathan, a second-generation Mexican immigrant, discussed taking an active/participatory role in a political issue—the Iraq War; however, his reasons for action were not necessarily for the collective or “greater good” of U.S. society, but rather his individual concerns. When asked, do you think we should be in Iraq?, Jonathan stated: “Not really [...] we should finish the war at least because we don’t want to make this nation look weak.” The dialogue continued:

Interviewer: Do you think regular people like you and me could do something about the war?

Jonathan: Yeah.

Interviewer: What should we do? What can we do?

Jonathan: Write letters to Congress or something; protest the war.

Jonathan continued that he didn’t know if he could truly make a difference, because “I don’t know. I just don’t trust them [the federal government].” Although Jonathan envisioned a participatory action around a political issue he felt passionate about, his distrust of the government made him question whether he could truly make a difference. This distrust carried over into the next theme wherein students problematized how they could move their participatory conceptions of citizenship into enactment on a local and national level. Participants’ conceptualized informal civic activities within the context of their lives (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 55) and sought alternative forms and solutions toward enacting democratic citizenship.

### **Conceptualization of Citizenship: Moving Toward Enactment**

Immigrant students rendered an unclear connection between their conceptualizations and enactment of citizenship. Students envisioned active citizenship through voting, jury duty, and recycling, but were slowly moving these ideas toward enacting participatory and justice-oriented notions of citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). For example, Malika, when asked if she watched and/or read the news about current events and politics, stated:

[Yes,] cause my mom watches the news every night and every morning. So I always know what happens. I pay attention. It's good to know everything. One time, I came up with an idea, 'cause when the tsunami was happening, I wanted for our school to have a drive. So I told my teacher, and we went, came up with a drive, and made, like, a lot of money. Everybody donated money so it helped them. And we gave it [the donations] to the Red Cross, and they sent it to the tsunami [relief efforts].

Malika sought to do something about a justice-oriented issue as evidenced by her stating “I wanted for our school to have a drive. So I told my teacher.” Furthermore, her response showed that she was not only organizing and executing the event locally, but also knew why she did it—given her watching and paying attention to global issues in the news—and was able to see it through. Malika's responses represented enacted participatory citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) through her trying to make a difference in the lives of others: “everybody donated money, so it helped them;” however, she discussed this enactment in the context of current events rather than when asked about good citizenship. Her civic activities support a reconceptualization of “the purposes of engagement” for immigrant youth as located within and across communities (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 53). Malika's response rendered an understanding of why she wanted to engage in this action given its impact on the community, but lacked a clear conception of this action as “good” citizenship.

Yanina, a second-generation Panamanian immigrant, in Mr. Kirkland's 11<sup>th</sup>-grade U.S. history class, expressed a sincere excitement to exercise her right to vote and saw it as something she could do to make her voice heard:

I'm gonna register the day of my birthday. I know one vote doesn't make a difference, but if everybody says that, nobody's going to vote. I'm going to be the odd one and actually vote. I mean, if one person votes, maybe my vote does count. I still believe I have a voice.

Yanina argued that we should require people to vote, and if people complained about an issue they could actually do something to make a difference, instead of solely criticizing it. She explained:

That's the big issue of voting. People who don't vote [...], but yet they want to complain. And then, you know, nothing happened. And you, you had a right to complain. At least you know, you tried, you did something. But if you didn't do anything, just sitting there complaining all day [...] you're just blah-blah. That's all that is.

Yanina rendered participatory notions in her statement “if one person votes, maybe my vote does count. I still believe I have a voice.” She expressed the necessity to exercise her vote, and for her, it was a way of “speaking out” against, or for, the government based on the issues and ideas she supported. This action showed Yanina's “appreciation of American democracy” (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 81) as an immigrant who supported the freedom to be engaged in civic and political activities.

Furthermore, Yanina moved her conceptualization of citizenship toward enactment by helping others. She explained that helping others did not necessarily mean that you had to organize an event or community service project, but you could simply help somebody's life. Thus she was moving collective/broader participatory notions of citizenship toward a local/community form of civic engagement within the context of her life as an immigrant:

[Yanina's definition of a good citizen as someone who] "obeys the laws, votes, basically, try to be as best as you can. You know, make an impact on society. At least even, [not] necessarily [a large] impact on society, but an impact in somebody's life. You know, help an old lady cross the street, random daily things. You don't have to do anything big, you don't have to save the world, but just random acts of kindness. So you know, help people from time to time.

Malika and Yanina's conceptualizations moved along the continuum of "good" citizenship through their personal and community experiences. However, this movement toward enactment was not clearly defined as "good" citizenship, perhaps due to a disconnect between their conceptualizations (as mostly learned from family and community influences), enactment, and a civic opportunity gap in schools whereby youth might not have significant classroom-based civic learning opportunities that tap into their community/household "funds of knowledge" (Moll, et al., 1992). Conversely, Raymond conceptualized a "good" citizen as one who participated in community service; however, he had not seen his parents volunteer because "they don't have time for that." His reason for involvement stemmed from personal motivation: "I don't want to sound, like, messed up, but, like, I don't want to do it just to do it. I want to do it and, like, get a cause out of it." While Raymond clearly conceptualized enacting "good"—active and engaged—citizenship, he struggled with how, when, and where he would participate in community service activities.

Raymond negotiated how to conceptualize his ideal project for giving back to the community:

I'd try to get children to go in more after-school programs so that they, like, won't go into things like crime [...] Also, I'd try to get, like, better equipment for students to learn with. It'll be more concentrated on children. 'Cause, like, they have to grow up. The adults, they're most likely not going change [...] So I'd like to focus on the children.

Raymond continued to say that the government should provide free and public education, but he does not trust the government—or anyone, for that matter—because "you're never aware of what they're gonna do unless you're actually in it;" therefore, he felt that part of his job as a citizen is to think about, and one day work with, urban youth—like himself—to give them "good equipment to learn with." Raymond displayed participatory notions of citizenship through assisting his community's youth by promoting the "welfare of immigrant or cultural communities" (Jensen & Flanagan, 2008, p. 79), and protecting future generations.

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Findings from our study contribute to the growing literature on how urban immigrant youth make meaning of their experiences with citizenship education, and how these experiences are shaped by contemporary political, socioeconomic, and educational contexts (Bixby & Pace, 2008). These students reconceptualized active and engaged democratic citizenship through locally and communally situated experiences (Knight, 2011). They engaged in multiple civic learning opportunities such as organizing events, problematizing issues, and debating "good" citizenship through participating in community-based formal and informal civic activities



(Rubin, 2011), e.g., going to the voting booth with family members, discussing political and social issues with parents/friends, and engaging in community-oriented projects inside and outside of school.

These civic learning opportunities/experiences notably influenced how our immigrant participants: (a) learned how/why to take action around various issues; (b) negotiated the impact of their “voice” in politics and society (Haste & Hogan, 2006); and (c) problematized enacting individual and/or collective action for the “common good” (Westhemier & Kahne, 2004). These conceptualizations are critical contexts to better understand how immigrant youth develop their civic/cultural identities (Rubin, 2007; Jensen, 2008) and encourage further civic learning and engagement for *all* students.

Social studies teachers would benefit from examining how students’ parents and communities conceptualize citizenship, are civically engaged, and how current community-based initiatives tap into students “funds of knowledge” (Moll, et al, 1992). Building on immigrant youths’ local, experiential, and contextual civic knowledge and engagement might enable educators to narrow the civic opportunity gap.

Teacher educators could potentially tap into immigrant youths’ conceptions and knowledge of citizenship by using these findings as a case study for preservice teachers on what the continuum of “good” citizenship (Westhemier & Kahne, 2004) looks like for a diverse group of immigrant youth. Possessing a more diverse understanding of what a “good” citizen is and does (Rubin, 2007; Jensen; 2008) potentially encourages new teachers to view students as already possessing civic assets, thus furthering a new knowledge of what it means to be an active democratic citizen.

Lastly, educational researchers should inquire about a more complete picture of citizenship conceptions, influences, and enactment by furthering their examination of students’ contextual influences on “good” citizenship. As researchers, understanding students’ contextual influences, and their impact on conceptions of citizenship will offer a more nuanced understanding of immigrant students’ enactment toward engaged democratic citizenship.

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## To contact the authors:

Ashley M. Taylor: [amt2161@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:amt2161@tc.columbia.edu)

Anand R. Marri: [marri@tc.columbia.edu](mailto:marri@tc.columbia.edu)

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## AM. SUB. S.B. 165 IS ENACTED

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**William Muthig;** Social Studies Consultant, Ohio Department of Education

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The last week of March saw the Ohio General Assembly move Am. Sub. S.B. 165 from conference committee consideration to passage in both houses and on to the governor's signature. This legislation requires the State Board of Education to "incorporate into the social studies standards for grades four to twelve academic content regarding the original texts of the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitution of the United States and its amendments, with emphasis on the Bill of Rights, and the Ohio Constitution, and their original context." The model curricula and achievement assessments will have to be revised accordingly.

This content must be incorporated into the American history and American government courses required for graduation. This affects the coursework for "students who enter the ninth grade for the first time on or after July 1, 2012."

The new legislation requires that not later than July 1, 2013, local boards of education are to adopt interim end-of-course examinations for American history and American government. These interim examinations are to be used until the state end-of-course examinations are selected. The state end-of-course examinations for American history and American government are to be determined by July 1, 2014.

The end-of-course examination for American government is to have at least 20 per cent of the examination devoted to the identified documents as well as "historical evidence of the role of documents such as the Federalist Papers and the Anti-Federalist Papers to firmly establish the historical background leading to the establishment of the provisions of the Constitution and Bill of Rights." The legislation does not stipulate any percentage of content for the end-of-course examination for American history; however, it still must address the historical documents.

High school graduation requirements will now consist of American history, one-half unit; American government, one-half unit; and social studies, two units. The legislation notes that a "valid educator license for teaching social studies in the applicable grade shall be considered sufficient to teach the additional American history and American government content" now required.

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## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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**Stephen Croft** lives in Robesonia, PA with his wife and three children. He is in his final year at Penn State University studying Elementary Education, fulfilling a lifelong passion to teach. When not in classes, he spends time with his family exploring nature trails, attending sporting events, and coaching baseball.

**Jennifer Licwinko** is a senior at Penn State Berks, where she student teaches in an urban setting with a group of inspiring third graders. She has been an English mentor to elementary students in South Korea and Taiwan. She loves sports, the outdoors and traveling.

**Anand R. Marri, Ph.D.**, is an Associate Professor of Social Studies and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He teaches courses on civic and economics education. A former high school social studies teacher, his research examines the ways in which urban students can be better educated for active citizenship.

**Kaye Martin, Ph.D.**, is an Associate Professor of Middle Childhood Education at Ohio University—Lancaster. Her research interests include Middle School Curriculum, Language Arts, and Social Studies Education.

**Pamela Muthersbaugh** is a wife and mother of two children, Dylan and Bryn. Support from her husband has made it possible for her to follow her dream of becoming a teacher. She enjoys watching her play baseball and basketball and her daughter play softball. She is a senior at Penn State Berks.

**Gabriella Rossetti** is currently a student at Penn State Berks. She is in her senior year, majoring in elementary education. She lives in Reading, PA with her fiancé and two cats. Gabriella has always had a passion for working with children and enjoys being able to impart knowledge into young minds.

**Mindy Rutherford, Ph.D.** is an Assistant Professor of Teacher Education at Ohio University—Athens. Her degree is in Life-Span Development Psychology from West Virginia University. Her areas of scholarly interest include educational psychology and child development.

**Marlissa Hughes Stauffer, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor of Education at Ohio Dominican University. Her research interests include teacher learning, project-based learning methodology and teacher leadership.

**Jessica B. Schocker, Ph.D.**, is an Assistant Professor of Social Studies at Penn State Berks in Reading, PA. She teaches courses in social studies methods, educational foundations, and Women's Studies. Her research consists of studying the representation of women of color in history classes and developing strategies for interdisciplinary practices that promote community and social justice.

**Ashley M. Taylor** is a doctoral student and instructor in the program in Social Studies Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. She teaches social studies methods and diversity in the social studies curriculum courses. Her research focuses on social studies teacher pedagogy for urban newcomer students.

**Melissa Yeager** is a senior at Penn State Berks, where she is majoring in elementary education. In her student teaching placement, Melissa is committed to teaching social studies with a focus on civic engagement. She is the mother of a young son.

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