

Reflective Questionnaire

1. What are the social studies and why do/should we teach it/them?

The Social Studies are the topics and issues reflective of and contributing to the social structure of our world. While these include structured courses, such as History, Economics, and Government, the issues entrenched within the Social Studies categories reach far beyond these boundaries. Social studies help to explain the world we currently live in, the connections and isolations, the love and fear between nations and people. These are highly valuable lessons and topics for all students. Social studies teachers hold the responsibility of making students aware of their surroundings and their world to help foster within them a sense of accountability and knowledge for the world order and dynamics. This world order draws upon all of the social studies aspects, the governments and economics of differing areas and who are those responsible for their situations.

These issues must be taught to allow students this connection between their lives and the lives and situations of others. Drawing upon students' diverse experiences and their community a teacher will be able to establish the importance of Social Studies with their students. These subjects are able to illustrate to students how the social studies impact their everyday lives and current situations (good or bad). When teaching Global Issues in Detroit, I was able to relate situations of other areas of the world back to what we saw happening in the students' lives and communities. This not only provided students with ideas regarding their own lives, but establishing feelings of connections between themselves and others around the world.

Social Studies should also be used to create knowledge and experiences regarding other areas of the world to those with limited world experiences and/or considerations. While teaching in Manchester, MI, a very small village, I was made extremely aware of the limited cultures and

world knowledge in this community. As a Social Studies teacher I was able to broaden students' horizons and understandings. Being in such a small town I was in the position to battle against racism and naivety of different areas of the world. It is the role of social studies to provide multiple avenues and perspectives to the students. For instance, during a World History and Geography unit on Christopher Columbus we explored the feelings of Native Americans and the world changes effects that resulted from this invasion into the "New World." In this manner Social Studies was able to open student eyes and thoughts to the cause and effect, beyond personal to others. Drawing students outside of their comfort zones is the responsibility of Social Studies education.

2. What are the three main issues facing Social Studies and how should they be addressed?

The three main issues currently facing social studies education are: student apathy, discriminatory attitudes regarding specific areas of the world, and competing requirements between student needs and the state/national standards. As an educator it is imperative to develop a plan to confront these issues. They pose a threat to the future young adults and their understandings of Social Studies, thus their understandings of the world and relations.

With all of the blood, guts, and gore students encounter regularly, student apathy poses a problem for Social Studies education. Video games, movies, and TV shows all provide atrocities as entertainment: killing, torture, and inhumane treatment of fellow human beings are used as stimuli. Desensitization of these horrors creates feelings of apathy in students when they are confronted with mayhem of the world, both past and present. When Social Studies teachers attempt to bring to student attention to violence and degradation of humans students often return

indifference. There is no “shock value” left for teachers to use a venue of stimulating conversation and interest in issues.

I believe the best way to address this issue is through openly communicating with students. By letting students know you realize they are desensitized to the information being presented and making them aware (many don’t notice their own disinterest) students begin thinking metacognitively about the situation. Having an open venue for discussion with your students about their feelings is a great way to confront this problem.

When my World History class was learning about European witch hunts I decided to bring in an article from the BBC regarding present day witch hunts in Angola. We read the article out loud as a class and as the reporter conveyed horrors occurring to small children I notice majority of students disengaged. I had the reader pause and we discussed student feelings. I asked the group what they thought and felt up to that point. The engaged students were quick to jump in and describe their sadness and anger. However my goal was to reach the disconnected. I asked the students how many of them knew a child around the age of the four, a cousin, family friend, sibling, and all the students’ knew at least one young child. I then re-read an excerpt of the reporters witnessing a four year old who was accused of being a witch. I read the piece slowly and carefully, pausing often for emphasis. Following this rendition all the students had something to say.

We then carried the conversation onto why did it not matter until you could visualize a young child you knew. Students had great ideas about knowing the difference between reality and fiction but not necessarily thinking about the difference. Since this conversation I simply ask students to “think about this as a truth not a movie or game” and they fall back into this mode. By being upfront with students about your concerns helps students and the teacher.

Rather than attempting to continually “out gross” and shock our students into caring actually talking to our students is often the more beneficial way to reach them.

Discriminatory attitudes regarding specific areas of the world is another problem facing Social Studies teachers. Based upon the national sentiment and media portrayals this is not surprising, but still upsetting. I have encountered often with multiple grade levels students with discriminatory feelings regarding the Middle East specifically. This is not simply reflective of the youth but a national culture, which makes the issue all the more important for Social Studies teachers to confront. Students facing media and community discriminations makes the youth extremely vulnerable to a continuation. In order to prepare students to think differently and question their own attitudes we must present multiple perspectives and pose pointed questions forcing students to expand their thinking.

As with the previous issue I again believe the best way to confront this issue is to entice a conversation with students. An open line between students and teachers to discuss their opinions and questioning their validity is important. To make this possible the teacher must be open, even if they do not agree, to student beliefs. Student must feel comfortable sharing without worry they will be ostracized by their teacher, but rather respected and listened to. It is only when the student feels respected and respectful of the teacher that this type of conversation can really work to help push student thoughts beyond their current understanding.

Competing requirements between student needs and the state/national standards may create within the educational system a “teach to the test” rather than “teach to the students” atmosphere. To keep the issues revolving around and throughout Social Studies influential to students, they must provide a connection between then and now. Many students are more concerned with the present situation of their world and lives, rather than the past. When the past

is not connected to the present in real ways the students are losing the “meat” of our subject. This does a great disservice to the future generations. Most importantly they are unable to see how these connections from the past have resulted in present day situations ultimately resulting in discriminations, unawareness, and misinterpretations (see above issue!).

My concern between these two concentrations is that teachers may adhere more to the state and national standards rather than what their students need to/should know. If schools and teachers are prescribed to teach particular units and lessons by politicians who have never entered the school or community, a disconnection is inevitable. When the content does not connect to the students, we know, students lose interest and motivation. Not only can students become unmotivated, more importantly, teachers are missing vital opportunities to expand their students’ horizons and knowledge bases.

Unlike the previous issues this cannot be solved by talking with students. Rather a teacher must develop creativity and ingenuity. This will help the teacher to cover the numerous topics while keeping the class unique and enticing. However, this still has a lot of information, so beyond creativity a teacher must develop their own opinion about what is more important. With the amount of information required to complete a teacher must decide what deserves more time, what skills are more vital than the topic, and what matters most to you the teacher. Teachers must also come to terms with the fact they will not be able to *teach* the students all the required material. They may be able to get through it but that does not mean the students will have learned. In order to confront this issue the teacher must know their own feelings and opinions and those of their district.

3. What are your thoughts about the Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations and the MME, how have these been integrated in your class?

The Social Studies Grade Level Content Expectations, in my opinion are O.K. I understand their attempted goal, which I believe is a good proposal. Having standard expectations by grade level to keep districts on a general track, I understand. My concern with the expectations is immense amount expected to be taught in contrast with student needs. Some students would be able to memorize the information, however memorization in my opinion is not learning. As stated above, this is my major disagreement with the expectations. If the concentration is upon “getting through the expectations” rather than focusing upon the student learning, then the expectations are working against the betterment of the students. This is not necessarily how the expectations will be treated though, and if done with concern for the students I believe they can be O.K.

Throughout the year I have followed the content expectations. However, I did not treat each topic equally. Certain sections of the expectations I felt should be expanded and others more condensed. This is one aspect of the expectations I enjoy. This document is not a prescribed lesson plan requirement but rather general information which can be adapted in each districts’ curriculum.

I believe the MME is a great disservice to the school culture, teachers, and students. Rather than encouraging students to critically think, develop opinions, and justify their answers, students are expected to memorize and regurgitate “the best story.” I strongly believe social studies education should be much more and reach far beyond this approach. Not only does this discourage different thinking and perspectives, more importantly (in my opinion) it inhibits student motivation and personal responsibility toward the issues being faced. If issues are reduced to simple facts in the form of a multiple choice test question, it somehow drives out the meaning and depth.

As preparing students for the MME is a requirement, and a major concentration of the school district in which I am currently working, I have attempted to integrate the MME preparation. During the course of my year internship teaching I have created 10 units for my World History classes. Of these 10 units, 6 ended with assessments other than multiple choice tests, 4 ended with multiple choice standard testing techniques. These four were not only multiple choice, they included essay and matching, but still a more traditional format. I included this type of format to help students prepare their multiple choice test taking strategies and skills, in preparation for the MME. Although this was not my own personal decision, I was *encouraged* into this practice by my mentor teacher in accordance with the district standards and desires.

4. What kind of teacher are you, who you thought you would be, and who you never felt you would be? (3 examples of the “never be” teacher)

I believe I have, in majority of aspects, become the teacher I expected to be. I am a teacher highly connected to students, desiring to create a comfortable and caring community environment within my classroom. Rather than solely being the teacher and source of knowledge in the room I allow students to take on the responsibility and opportunity to engage others and question what they are learning. I create diverse lessons attempting to reach multiple learning styles and various student needs. Regarding Social Studies education specifically I desired to be a multiple perspective teacher, who highlights different views and interpretations, challenging my students to think outside of the ordinary. I believe throughout this year I have really grown into this type of teacher, although not fully there, but definitely headed in the right direction.

There are a couple of concessions I have made throughout the year becoming the teacher I never thought I would be. I gave worksheets and multiple choice tests. Both of these go

against who I hoped to be as a teacher. I did not want to be one who gives a worksheet, they often seem so meaningless and fully of drudgery. However, I gave them often to my American Government classes. I was told to follow my mentor teacher's lesson plans strictly. I attempted to throw in different activities whenever possible, but I still was required to follow his outline, worksheets and all. I wish I could say this was the only time, however, I did also give them to my World History classes, over which I had complete control. There were times I just felt so overwhelmed with everything and drained I could not think of something creative or different and sadly returned to a "staple" of education. Another well-known tool of education I used, although it went against whom I thought I would be as a teacher, multiple choice tests. Again they were used continually in my American Government classes following my mentor teacher's requirements. And as mentioned above, I included them in my World History classes as well. It was highly *encouraged* by my mentor teacher and the district to "maintain" the districts excellence in social studies scores on standardized testing. Both accounts I turned into what I never thought I would be, a worksheet assigning, multiple choice giving, teacher.

On a more positive note, this is not necessarily an aspect of teaching I *thought* I would never be but I defiantly *feared* I would never be a classroom manager. At the beginning of this internship year that was my highest fear. One class in particular was an extreme challenge and left me questioning my ability throughout September. My mentor teacher tried to help, but somehow his method of intimidation (using his size: 6'5" and muscular) does not work for me (5'2"). Or when he is very frustrated he sends the student to the office with a write up. I struggled trying to figure out who I was as an authority figure and disciplinarian. Throughout this year I believe that has been my strongest growth and learning experience. I have really

developed my style of management that does not rely on scaring the students or sending them out. And my trouble class has transformed into one of my favorite groups.

5. What kind of social studies education would you pursue if given total freedom?

If I were given total freedom I would pursue a social studies education that focuses upon the present state of world dynamics, societal interactions and expectations, and economic consequences. The majority of the topics would relate back to these major points. My ultimate desire as a Social Studies educator is to impact students' and their view of the world in which they live. I believe to fully understand the world one must study history, previous national relations, types of government structure, and economic influences.

I would attempt to integrate these important topics throughout my lessons. Teaching students about how the past has come to shape our present and inevitably will continue to determine our future. Developing these interconnections and continually relating back to the present would be how my social studies classroom would be/will be organized.

The difference between the “would” and “will” comes about in what my district states. If, as in this scenario, I were given complete freedom I would skip over a lot of the content requirements which I feel are not vital toward my goals of student understanding. While the Renaissance was a great time period full of intellectual and cultural changes, I do not believe it is necessary to spend an entire unit, 2 weeks, learning about. I believe our classroom time would be better served studying the Vietnam War and a Post-WWII world.

Currently in my World History classes we are just starting into the French Revolution, and I am several chapters ahead of my department counterparts, translated the class will be lucky to finish WWI. Thus our students will only learn of WWII, Vietnam, and other major world

changes through the American History course, with a definite focus upon the **American**. What a tragedy for our youth.

(Side note: Upon voicing these concerns to the principal where I am interning, he told me students interested in the world perspective of WWII, Vietnam, Korea, or Iraq, etc would have to take it upon themselves to research and study the issues).

Thus in my ideal social studies classes impertinent information will be left out, and for those students interested in the changes to art and literature during the Renaissance will be encouraged to study that material in their own time, rather than the reverse.

6. Most important lesson about social studies education from this experience and why?

The most important lesson about social studies education from this internship year has been how much preconceived notions one must fight against. Notions of fellow teachers and students regarding what social studies education is are strongly ingrained. Both teachers (in this district at least) and students feel that social studies is taught in a specific, traditional, manner. By shaking this pattern up I had much to fight against.

Amongst the Social Studies department, my mentor teacher and one other teacher, I had become somewhat of a “joke.” While they both encouraged me to organize my World History classes as I believed fit, they were clear on their expectations of the success of these “ridiculous” practices. Both department members adhere to traditional styles of social studies teaching, lecture, worksheets, and multiple choice tests. When I began developing projects, requiring written responses, and providing assignments such as comic books and political cartoons I received little encouragement or support. They did not stop me but would send each other “looks” as I described my weekly plans.

Not only the social studies department but also other teachers seemed to believe in the traditional style of social studies education as well. Before the first formal written formal writing was assigned in my World History, 9th grade, class I decided to consult with the 9th grade English teacher. I wanted to carry their uniform writing policy between the two classes, thus working cooperatively with my colleagues. I found out this particular teacher's free period and went to discuss with her my intention. When asked how she typically has students structure their papers I was given extremely short and curt responses. I was confused by this behavior. I had talked with this teacher on several occasions during lunch in the staff room and had always viewed our conversations as happy and open. I decided to ask another teacher if she knew anything or had a guess regarding this response and I was informed that by assigning this paper I was "stepping on the English department's toes." Needless to say I was shocked.

Finally students were also ill-receptive to the idea of including different subjects in the Social Studies curriculum, including Art and English. In September when I would ask students to answer questions in complete sentences, participate in quick writes, and to write formal papers, they would often remind me "Ms. Engardio this is *not* English class." I would smile and reply, "I know. However writing is an important skill, one which takes several forms. This may not be English but you need to be able to write and formulate thought in my History class. Thus we practice." They were very accustomed to this speech and eventually stopped asking. By December, and certainly April students no longer asked if I wanted complete sentences and did not need a reminder for explaining their thoughts in response to a written question. They had developed in their writing skills and no longer saw this style of social studies education as unusual, or at least were no longer vocal about it.

From all of these experiences I have learned how important and the extent to which one must fight as a social studies educator against these preconceived notions. Whether against fellow educators or students, one must be prepared to explain your rationale for including diverse content and practices throughout your curriculum. Helping fellow teachers view your lessons, although different, as significant, and possible. Drawing associations between school departments for the students to see these interconnections and how they are intertwined is extremely important.

7. Most significant lesson from your mentor teacher and why?

Make time for yourself or you won't be a good teacher. This is the most important lesson my mentor teacher has taught me this year. From the beginning my mentor would continually ask me if I was still making time for myself and to maintain a life outside of school. I thought at first that this insistence was selfish and not really important. Throughout the year though, as I began to wane under the pressure and stress, I realized how valuable this lesson really was.

The difference I noticed in my own lesson and unit plans from the September to December were vast. At the start I was fully thrown into the plans and development. I wanted to make every lesson outstanding and unique. By December I had worn myself extremely thin and was looking into the next month with dread knowing I would now be lesson planning for another course.

At this time I began taking my mentor teacher's advice. I would set aside specific time for myself even if it meant I did not have the best lesson every day, sometimes the lessons were simple. Not only did this reinvigorate my lesson and unit planning, I felt a difference in my attitude toward school and work. I again was able to develop unique lesson plans, although not every day, these differences were still incorporated and I was much happier in class.

So although I was not able to be as exciting and unique as often as I would have enjoyed, it was still significantly different from an atypical social studies class of lecture, worksheets, and tests. I was a much happier teacher, which was translated into my creative units and lessons, and my general attitude and patience with students. Giving myself time and happiness really is an important component of good teaching.

8. Most significant lesson from you to your mentor teacher?

I believe if you were to ask my mentor teacher what the most important lesson I have taught him he would say, being creative and doing different assignments is really not harder than giving worksheets and tests. I think I have helped to expand his thoughts and ideas about how students can be taught and ways to switch up the class environment.

When I began the year I was nervous as I observed his teaching style, which is in great contrast to my own. My concern was that he would attempt to convert my teaching style to reflect his own. To my pleasure and surprise he responded very openly and supportively to my different style. As I was in charge of planning the World History classes throughout the year I began to see adaptations of my lessons and unit in my mentor teacher's classes. This was extremely flattering and made me very proud. Beyond just adapting my lesson ideas he also began to ask me more questions, seemingly not in worry but curiosity. Often they were questions of how long it took me to grade and how the students achieved with different activities.

I believe this has been the largest change to my mentor teacher from my year in his class. I hope he does take the challenge of throwing in some creative adaptations to his lessons. After seeing how easy it was and that it did not leave him with a lot of extra work he began to dabble in changes.

9. Most significant lesson from you to your students?

Social studies classes do not have to be a boring would probably be the response from students regarding my teaching style. I have actually had this conversation with numerous students over the year. Many complain to me regarding all of their past Social Studies classes, and future expectations. The district in which I work has an extremely old fashion style of teaching, especially Social Studies. Students are bored and frustrated with their classes and typically dread these requirements. Which really makes me very sad to know that students are not getting the fun and exciting aspects of Social Studies.

The students in my classes were exposed to much different types of social studies education than they were accustomed. Many thrived upon this diversity and really enjoyed my classes. They were also very vocal about their pleasure with the Social Studies. Coming to this from detest at the beginning to the year was a hugely rewarding experience. I had some students tell me that my class has made them interested in the subject, this was especially prevalent amongst my Government (11th grade) students. This increased my excitement because I strongly believe young people need to develop an interest and understanding of how and in what ways our government works. I hope my students remember this lesson, that Social Studies topics can be interesting and exciting, and carry them into their future endeavors. I do not want them to continually write off Social Studies topics, but think back and remember the stimulating lessons during our year together.

10. What was your best lesson or unit, and why?

My best unit was the World Changes unit. This unit was pertaining to Columbus' and European invasion into the "New World." Focus was placed upon how this exploration and invasion caused major world order changes, including to the past and present. Students were given a lot of freedom within this unit to establish their own learning practice. The end

assessment was a group project which involved a variety of learning styles. Student groups were to prepare a 2-3 page paper, a 5-10 minute presentation, a homemade artifact, and proper citations page. The coming together of these multiple requirements allowed groups to divide up components according to their group mates strengths. The content of this project was selected by the student groups around the idea of a major world change due to European exploration/invasion.

I believe this was my strongest unit because students were able to establish their own understandings, self and peer regulation techniques, and diverse representations of their gained knowledge. Students were able to select their own groups after they were given the specific rubric, thus they were able to select multiple styles of learners, and students who did not typically select each other were mixing up on their own accord. I believe this not only helped students learn the importance of various skills within a classroom, but also how to work cooperatively with different personality types.

Because students were given the opportunity to explore their own selected topic of interest, motivation was high throughout the groups. Many student groups that do not typically participate with enthusiasm were some of the most determined. Their topics were pre-approved by me, to help shape ideas that may have been too grandiose or difficult to connect. Other than this pre-requisite, students were given freedom over how they would research, write their paper, present their knowledge, and create their artifact. Having students highly motivated was encouraging and helped in my selection of this unit as my most successful.

Not only the motivation but the outcomes were a major determinant of this title as best unit. The projects produced by students were exceptional. Their work clearly demonstrate time, effort, and thought. Student artifacts were a major highlight as they were a part of the

presentations, students took great pride in explaining their artifacts and how they reflected the topic. Students that do not typically shine in their demonstration of classroom knowledge in the typical sense were given the chance to not only demonstrate to the teacher but their classmates as well. Providing this opportunity really enthused those students and offered their peers to view them in another, more intellectually respectful manner.

11. What was your worst lesson or unit and why?

My worst unit was the first unit of Government. This unit was focused around the principles of government, including the formation of the American government. When I took on this course in two classes for the first quarter of second semester I was given specific guidelines to follow. My mentor teacher required that I follow his unit and general lesson plans. I was allowed minor input, but he gave me the power-points I was to present, the worksheets, quizzes, and unit tests. The major purpose of this was my mentor wanted to ensure the students would receive the right content for the final common assessment. Given my freedom for $\frac{3}{4}$ of the year in the World History courses my field instructor and I agreed to follow this general format.

The first unit of this course was an absolute disaster. My lessons were mundane, lecture and worksheet. At the end of each chapter students were given a study guide and a multiple choice quiz. Before the final test over the first two chapters we played a Jeopardy style review game and then they took a multiple choice test. It was boring. The students did not learn the type of content and connections I believe to be invaluable to Social Studies education. Rather they learned to memorize facts, which frankly to me, without first establishing connection are unimportant.

Following this unit both the students and I were depressed with the notion of this continuing for a year. So after careful discussion with my field instructor I began to make slight

changes. Although I was required to follow a specific plan, in what I presented, gave as worksheets, and assessments, I did have freedom with class time. It was through this loophole that I was able to incorporate the aspects of Social Studies education that I believe to be pertinent. The two units following this first were much more reflective of my personal teaching style and philosophy. While I did not have total freedom, I was able to adapt and make the changes I felt necessary and still maintaining the status quo that was required by my mentor teacher.

12. What are your ideas about how the world is/should be, and how are they reflected in your teaching?

I desire for my classroom to be a community environment. I want students to feel free and open within my class to share and question ideas, history, and current affairs. I would like to harbor within my students a constant wonder and critic of the world. I do not mean critic as always bad, simply wondering. Along with this I desire my student to be free to share, feel, and express themselves openly without fear of reproof by peers. I want my classroom to engage students and allow them freedom. Freedom is reflected in my teaching through the use of a wide variety of lessons and activities within a given day.

I encourage my students to speak openly in a community learning environment manner. I want students to be free to question what I, the teacher, am describing for them during a lecture, their textbook pages, or each other. Student comments, questions, and opinions are highly encouraged and openly received in my classroom. Working cooperatively with peers and fellow classroom members is a major component of my teaching, hoping to encourage the use of each other as a resource for knowledge.

I desire my students to expand upon their thinking and questioning of the world dynamics, a wonderful instigator for this type of thinking can be peers. By allowing each student to express themselves and their own ideas we will be helping one another grow and develop and solidify certain philosophies. I believe this type of cooperative learning is extremely important. By having students act as instigator and questioner, students are exposed to a variety of mindsets and opinions. If only the teacher is questioning students or if the only person students question is the teacher they may would not have the same sense for the diversity of attitudes. Thus I believe it is important for students to take part and share in their learning process.

In my any of my Social Studies classrooms students will be learning about the world. They will be learning about turning points in history that profoundly affected the outcomes and current state of affairs. Constant connection to the past and present situations I want students to make these inferences and begin to see how important the past has been to creating the world today. I will also encourage students to analyze the information presented to them by me, news programs, peers, and media. Through these analyses I hope students will begin to constantly question what they are being told and what they hear to encourage a more actively involved youth. They will work on this type of questioning process through projects and class work. For instance, critical reading for authorship will be used in my classroom. This is a practice of reading material to discover who the author is and what point-of-view is being represented and which is being degraded. This is vitally important when learning about marginalized segments of society.

I want my students to develop these practices to carry out into the world and spread. It is important for students to have exposure to this type of thinking within a school context because we are preparing students for the world outside of their school walls. As with anything practice

is important to master a skill set, and this type of thinking is a skill set. Rather than preparing students to sit and absorb the news programs I want students to question them, which will only come if they are also allowed to question me when I lecture (similar to news programs) or their assigned readings from textbooks equivalent to news articles, or each other equivalent to others they will encounter throughout their lives.

This questioning of each other brings up another very important point, practice at how to share and question each other while maintaining respect. Without being taught people cannot be expected to know how to share ideas and opinions and discuss properly sensitive issues, which is where my role comes into play. I am there as a facilitator of these types of discussions and thus it is also my role to maintain a safe and non-threatening learning environment for all my students. As this is my role I will be teaching students how to keep comments on the ideas not the person and how to hold respectful tones and manners throughout a debate. It is important for students to learn this practice because without it often shouting matches follow and no learning takes place, just hurt feelings and anger. Anger breeds nothing positive, in my opinion, and thus will only hinder the desired outcomes.

This ideal classroom connects to my ideal society on every level. I desire people to know and understand more the connections of the past with affairs of today because I believe that is the first step to preventing more destruction and hatred that seems to be spiraling out of control currently. I also believe it is important to rectify the mistakes of our forbearers and to prevent similar problems in the future. I desire students to question points-of-views because each is unique and has an agenda of their own. I want people in the world to take these points-of-view into perspective more and realize a much more equalizing and non-discriminatory atmosphere. Once we question how and why people and groups are being represented in a specific way the

higher our chances of changing hatred into understanding and acceptance. Teaching students to respect other people will help to harbor these changes. Without respecting one another the differences and anger grows and can put a wall between segments of society. The use of respect will help to tear down these walls, over time, and develop into a more open society. Thus in short, my ideal classroom is a reflection of the skills and practices I believe necessary for my ideal world.

13. How has incorporation of critical perspectives been important, appropriate, and beneficial to your own teaching?

Incorporation of critical perspectives has been extremely important to my type of teaching. As stated in response to the above question I believe critical perspectives and thinking are required in Social Studies education to make students aware of differing views and opinions. Students should be exposed to more than one type of history or as it is known by one segment of a population. This will allow students a more critical eye when developing opinions and understandings of future national and world decisions. As these students will develop into the future leaders (not to be corny) they will be responsible for affecting major world changes, either in wars, invasions, or creating a more peaceful world (as I would hope). By allowing students this opportunity in their youth to explore how past leaders have affected the world and people they will hopefully be more critical and objectively consider multiple sides rather than only their own interest.

I believe it is more than appropriate to include multiple perspectives into every lesson and unit and every subject matter pertaining to Social Studies. There are multiple sides to everything, from History to Economics. By exploring with my students those that gained *and* those that lost from given events students have developed a far more critical eye. Students are

highly encouraged to question all texts they encounter, either their textbooks, news articles, or their teacher. This encouragement is in a hope for their questioning and critical thinking will carry throughout their lives and interactions with Social topics.

The inclusion of this type of teaching and learning has been more than beneficial, it is absolutely necessary for my students to walk away from my classes with the knowledge and content I desire. Without including this type of multiple perspective teaching, I don't think I would be able to accomplish my goals as a Social Studies educator. By sharing only one side, even if I take the approach of the "side less told" or as I described above the "losers" in a given situation, students would still be missing a critical piece of the proverbial puzzle. They would understand who lost, but not the reasons behind the "winners," and their intentions, which would be creating for the students a "bad guy." While some students may walk away from the multiple perspectives approach with an idea of a "bad guy" nation, it will be created through their own thoughts and understandings, not presented for them in that manner by the teacher.

14. Two detailed examples of incorporating critical perspectives in your teaching, were they successful?

Two examples of the incorporation of critical and multiple perspectives into my teaching were during a unit on Genghis Khan and another on the American exploration/invasion by the Europeans. The first of these two units was less successful than the first; however I would not call it a wash by any means. Both engaged students on different levels and required them to consider perspectives to their studies.

The Genghis Khan unit was the second unit created by me for the World History classes. I wanted to begin engaging students with the idea of "two sides to every story." While the content was included it was not the focus of this unit nor did it reflect my end goal. The purpose

of the unit was targeted toward student skills and understandings based upon this philosophy of multiple perspectives. Students formed into partnerships of their choice. They were allowed to select a topic, not necessarily history, which they were to research and at the end of the unit present their findings to the class. This research was to focus around two sides to any “story.” Meaning no matter what topic the groups selected the students were to research and present two sides, or two ways people view the topic.

Students were highly motivated and excited about this project, especially because it was extremely free. In the future I believe I would put more restrictions on the type of topics available for students to select from; however the overall purpose was successful. This unit was an introduction to a very different view of Social Studies learning than these students had been exposed to so far in their educational careers. By allowing freedom with the topic selection, albeit too much, students were highly motivated through their interest in the content. The unit served as a nice transition into the critical thinking and multiple perspective consideration with Social Studies content. One partnership presented on the Vietnam War. The group posed how both advocates and protestors viewed the war, and the reasoning behind each side. Not only did these students gain understanding regarding the topic specifically but through their presentation other students were exposed, even briefly, to the subject matter and how different opinions reason their stance.

A second unit pertaining to critical perspectives on history involved the American exploration/invasion by the Europeans. This was the fifth unit of the year and thus I had generated more confidence in the creation of units and was unafraid to experiment more with lessons and unit. During this unit the goal was critical reading and questioning of material presented. Students were given guidelines and specific types of questions to ask themselves

while reading to help target what the author is really saying and who the content is written for. My main goal for this unit was for students to critically consider what they are presented with as “truth.” Rather than simply reading material I wanted students to decipher based upon the reading which perspective the author is writing from.

During this unit the class explored multiple genres and texts to practice the questioning procedure. I wanted students to practice asking these questions and how these questions and help them decide which perspective is being presented. Students began by interpreting song lyrics they selected as a group, which did not pertain to the specific content of the American’s. After this we turned to Disney’s *Peter Pan*, which does contain aspects regarding the view of Native Americans especially in the song What Makes the Red Man Red?. Following these practices we delved further into content, however students were continually aided by each other and me, they were not expected to analyze these works alone at any time. The end of the unit was a project/presentation. Students were able to select texts of their own choice, most selected pictures, regarding the understanding of Native Americans or European explorers. They then presented their findings to the class regarding which perspective these texts were “speaking” from.

I believe this unit was an extreme success. While generally some students were higher achieving than others, and seemed to grasp the concepts quicker, they all definitely picked up new understandings regarding what they see, hear, and read. I even had students complain that I wrecked the songs they selected and *Peter Pan*. This led me to believe that I changed the way they viewed the texts that continually bombard them. Students were able to learn from this unit how perspectives impact the texts they often view as truth.

While both units worked to different degrees, I believe strongly in the importance of both goals. Introducing the premise of multiple perspectives to students who had not yet had this exposure is an important first step. Even though the concepts were difficult, I also feel strongly about students analyzing the texts and authors for their opinions behind the “facts.” These two units couple to result in higher student understanding of multiple/critical perspectives.

15. What is the role of technology in a Social Studies classroom, and how have you incorporated it into your teaching?

Technology is able to enhance Social Studies education with the use in and out of the classroom. Using technology as an asset can help the teacher and student to push past their earlier limits of understandings. It also allows more liberty in selecting topics and resources. Social Studies educators can enhance their lessons and create more connection to student culture and interest through the use of technology. I have used technology to enhance my classroom in numerous ways, two examples are through student led research and incorporation of student culture into the units and lessons.

Computer use for research and presentations allows students choice and motivation with a project. At Manchester High School my students are always very excited to use the computers and internet. Students like to explore the applications and variety of possibilities with applications, such as Power-Point. During presentations students like to show off their skills with crafty and different animations and usages. Not only can computers allow students choice and personalization with how they present information, it also seems to make finding that information more enjoyable. Even when the content is a topic they typically would not enjoy, such as the Ottoman empire, students are more excited to learn when they are in control of the websites and type of content they are exploring. By capitalizing on this motivation teachers can

reach students that might otherwise lack interest or motivation in the content. Teachers can also use computer technology and resources to help motivate students by allowing more selection in the topics being researched. Making the internet available students are no longer limited to the content found in their textbooks or the local library. Instead students are able to explore their interests in relation to a specific time period and/or region. For instance, when writing a comparative essay on the Middle Eastern gunpowder empires I have one student extremely interested in music and thus selected for his topic a comparative piece regarding music of that region between the past and present and the influence of the past and the present. By utilizing the school computers students are able to research the content they find most interesting in relation to the overall goal of the teacher.

Another role technology can play regarding Social Studies classrooms is the ability to activate and incorporate student culture. Using projection screens and the internet/downloading capabilities students can connect between their culture outside of school walls with the culture inside. One way to make this connection is to bring this culture into the classroom. By showing students clips of movies they might watch in their free time and aiding students to develop these connections the subject matter can help students become engaged with the material. For instance, when teaching a unit on Genghis Khan I showed the students a preview of the movie *Mongol*. By visually stimulating the students with the war, fighting, and love story they were more excited to hear about Genghis' story. It can also be used to illustrate for students what the teacher is attempting to describe, such as a clip from *Marie Antoinette* when learning of the French Revolution. Other than movie clips, TV shows can also be used in the same way, to help motivate and entice students. Or to capture pivotal moments in our present, which will become history in the future.

Utilizing the technologies available a Social Studies teacher, one can motivate students. Not only increasing their curiosity in a topic but to help them connect the subjects to their personal interests and lives.

16. How have you addressed ESL students/students with disabilities in your classroom?

I have addressed student needs throughout my lessons and units. At the beginning of the year Manchester High School has a large migrant population, all of whom are ESL students. To accommodate these students I prepared lessons which could be adapted and were created to help enable these students. However this did not only occur at the start of the year, but lasted throughout my teaching. These accommodations not only benefited the ESL students but also the students with disabilities so they were continued throughout the year.

At the start of the year to help the ESL students specifically I allowed for a variety of assessments within each lesson. When given an assignment students were continually allowed to write or draw (with a short explanation) their responses. By allowing students the option to draw their responses and only write a short explanation students were able to work to their own comfort level. One of the ESL/migrant students was high level and did not apparently struggle. Some other students though were not as well versed in English. They could draw their answers and still push themselves to include English learning with the explanation. I created this lesson with the hope of reaching the ESL learners and I realized how beneficial this was for multiple learner needs. Students with learning disabilities, especially those with writing needs, were also highly motivated by this option. Accommodations of this sort were positive for all learners in the classroom, including general education students with an artistic interest.

Continually providing students with options has been another accommodation for students with learning needs. I have found during this internship that many students struggle

continually with motivation and positive regard for their academic abilities. Students with low motivation can have their enthusiasm increased by being given a choice in their topics and presentations. When students believe they have a choice they are more willing to devote extra time and effort to the assignment. Increased motivation will not only benefit the students' work but also their feelings of possible accomplishment. Many of the high needs students lack the belief in their ability to successfully complete an assignment. However when their form of assessment is their own decision they will feel more capable of completing it effectively. All factored together this type of assignment can greatly increase abilities of students at all levels.

Creating these sorts of lesson activities and assignments are motivating and helpful for all students. While the focus for the teacher would be around aiding the students with disabilities and needs, all students benefit from accommodations.

17. How does interdisciplinarity relate to Social Studies education and how have you made it more feasible in your classroom?

Interdisciplinarity is relevant to Social Studies education because of the inter-connection of the disciplines within and outside of Social Studies. Within the context of Social Studies education there are multiple disciplines that play into each subject. For instance, when learning about history one cannot leave out geographic, government, and economic influences. In a lesson pertaining to the French Revolution in a World History class the teacher must include information on the economic relevance of the revolution. Connections between these disciplines is highly important because they each play a role in affecting the results of the other discipline.

Interdisciplinarity involves not only Social Studies content but also other disciplines within the school. English has been a major influence throughout my Social Studies classes. I continually attempt to integrate English and writing into my curriculum. Although writing a

history paper is slightly different from writing for specific styles of English classes, students are still practicing demonstrating their knowledge in written format. Art is another opportunity for students to cross disciplinary lines in my Social Studies classroom. Representing their knowledge in artistic format, such as a drawing, story board creation, and other creative pieces is a possible demonstration of their knowledge in an artistic discipline.

Pushing students, and the teacher, across discipline lines enables students to multiple ways. One, students with different abilities and attention are given an opportunity to excel and enjoy a subject that may otherwise lack their interest. For instance, a student who does not enjoy research but has talents and skills with art can connect their skill to the Social Studies content. This can help peak a student interest in the content matter through their enjoyment of another discipline. Within Social Studies education specifically, including these different types of concentration within a given subject matter will allow for deeper understanding on the part of the students.

18. What ways do you see Social Studies teaching work as imbedded in, working for, against, or through culture?

Teaching Social Studies is highly intertwined with culture, both in the teaching of cultures and working through the districts culture to best reach students. Culture is an integral part of societal structure and impacts the material students learn and how they learn. Another component of culture that continually affects the school environment is how educational culture negatively impacts segments of society, such as the poor and minority ethnic groups. Social Studies teachers must take all of these different influences of into consideration.

Social Studies teachers should be establishing understandings in students of different world cultures. By including these types of learning experiences throughout the curriculum a

Social Studies teacher can work for different cultures and for the development of a more accepting society. Teaching students about the purposes and views of other cultures will develop less discriminatory attitudes. In this manner Social Studies education is working for cultural differences and approval.

All education is also imbedded in culture, especially Social Studies content matter. Culture must be considered by a teacher who is focused upon reaching their students in a real and permanent manner. By working with the students' and community's culture a teacher is better able to impact those individuals in significant ways. Acknowledging the culture students are carrying with them into your classroom will help the teacher develop plans for reaching them. While teaching in Manchester, MI I had to consider student culture and understandings when conducting both the World History and Government courses.

Education also works against certain segments of society and differing cultures. The assessment driven educational system created by the testing and standards requirements creates an educational system that is working against the minority students. Test questions are written for white middle-class students. This is a definite hindrance for minority students, the test is written in a language outside of their culture. In this sense education and testing standards work against the culture of these student groups.

19. How can you as a Social Studies teacher reach elusive learners?

I believe as a Social Studies teacher, we are in a unique position to reach students that are disenfranchised with their educational system. Many students come to school sick of the system and feeling disconnected from the content and their daily lives. Every subject matter has the chance to impact and engage these students in a variety of manners. Some students simply “click” with certain teachers. As a Social Studies educator I believe we have a special

opportunity to reach these students. Our content is able to connect to daily lives and interests regularly, unlike Advanced Algebra or poetry writing, which while important concepts for their own reasons, are not likely to be influential in every students' everyday lives. Social Studies however, will be that subject that continually connects to students, now and in the future.

By including lessons that demonstrate these connections Social Studies educators have an opportunity with these elusive learners. With patience and continued demonstration of the importance of Social Studies education students will open up and become more engaged with the material. Reaching these "lost learners" is often difficult and a tiring practice. However, once reached the extent of impact is vast, because creating this connection can transfer to other classes and educational goals.

When writing this question there was a specific group of young men I had in mind. I had them in my 11th grade Government classes. They entered, already having experienced classes with my mentor teacher, whom some had already failed during their time at Manchester High. When I began teaching, they were disengaged and often not participatory. However, as my time as their teacher continued, they opened up to me more and more. As we talked about different topics, not always related to school, but also about their band, they began to involve themselves with my classes. They would also ask questions or insert comments during lectures – which I would often build off of to carry on discussions with the class. This kept the young men involved and interested in the course material. They would come to class on time, turn in all their work, and genuinely demonstrate knowledge and engagement with the material. Since I have stopped teaching the class, their behavior is completely contrary to this, they are continually late to class, do not turn in work, and are not involved with the course material.

All students, even those elusive learners, are interested in what affects their lives now and what will affect their futures. By incorporating and building off of these interests Social Studies teachers are in a unique position. We more than many other core content teachers, are in a position to reach these students through drawing upon their daily lives, interests, and futures. As long as we use these to our advantage and allow for student expression of opinion in our classrooms, these students can become a great asset to our classrooms, their own learning and extending the knowledge of their peers.

20. In your opinion, should a Social Studies teacher share their political ideology with their students?

This is a question that has continually been brought up throughout my Social Studies education classes at MSU. I did not typically participate in these debates because I was still confused and unsure of my own opinion. However during the course of this year I have begun to develop a preliminary opinion. While I can understand both sides, the fear of telling and ostracizing students of a different ideology or being viewed as pushing your opinions on your students as opposed to question of sharing experiences as a great way to show students how engagement works with true Social Studies.

Overall I believe that telling students your ideology in general is extremely important, not limited to or excluding politics. Having an open dialogue with my students about a variety of topics is extremely important to me and my ideal running of a classroom. This includes sharing my ideology. While I was hesitant to share my political views with students fearing that I would alienate those that have opposite opinions or create an aura of pushing my opinions on students. However, as part of my government class I had the students complete a survey of their own political ideologies. I had always felt that, I could not ask students to do something I was

unwilling to share. This sparked deep thought considering this question. I also considered the alternative, to them not knowing. Especially with government classes, where we talk so often about politics both past and present, the question seemed most relevant.

Are my thoughts, opinions, and ideas not transferred through my teaching concepts anyway? No matter how much one tries or claims to be unbiased, I don't believe it is possible. The very choice of content, what is included in the subject, are biased. So attempting to teach without acknowledging these biases seems more harmful in my opinion. If I admit to my ideologies, then students will know and be able to "filter" their content for whatever biases are present. If I do not concede to having opinion and ideals of my own, then not only am I not setting a good example for my students I am also "lying" to them. Pretending as though the material is only truth without influence is unjust to students whom do not know both sides.

Thus I believe that telling students your opinions and political stance is a good choice for me. While I do not expect all Social Studies teachers should or would want to share this knowledge, for my teaching style and desires I believe it is important.