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SOCIAL STUDIES AND THE YOUNG LEARNER

(ISSN 1056-0300) is published by National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) four times a year: September/October, November/December, January/February, and March/April. Logotype is an NCSS trademark. Contents ©2024.

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INDEXED by Institute of Education Sciences, eric.ed.gov.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Social Studies and the Young Learner
NCSS, 8555 Sixteenth St., Suite 500
Silver Spring, MD 20910 USA

Uplifting the Wisdom and Insights of the LGBTQ+ Community in the Elementary Curriculum

Corey R. Sell and Sandra Leu Bonanno, Guest Editors

In this special issue, we aim to reveal and uplift the wisdom and insights of the LGBTQ+ community (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and those identities not mentioned or yet fully described) often erased from the elementary curriculum in order to provide a more accurate and honest account of the past and combat curriculum erasure. We recognize that the stories presented here are important for all students to learn; however, for students in the LGBTQ+ community, these stories provide a lifeline and a means not merely for educating but for thriving as their authentic selves within our pluralistic society.

The first article, “Before Stonewall: Early LGBTQ+ Activism in Philadelphia,” Cathy A. R. Brant and Andrea M. Hawkman present a text set on lesser-known examples of LGBTQ+ activism that occurred prior to the Stonewall Riots. Through historical analysis work, students examine forms of civic engagement and grapple with ways LGBTQ+ activists resisted.

Next, Carolina Snaider, J. Eric Fisher, and Katherina A. Payne, authors of “From Farmer to Soldier: Using the Inquiry Design Model to Revisit Civil War Soldier Wakeman’s Story,” curate a robust set of curricular materials that help students nuance their framing of gender and individuals who transgress gender. These materials are featured in this issue’s pullout. This inquiry centers Wakeman’s narrative to disrupt our notions of representation.

In “Defining Ourselves for Ourselves: Exploring Black Queer Civic Activism with Young Children,” Danelle Adeniji, Zutella Holmes, and Amanda Vickery provide opportunities for students to deeply examine citizenship and civic activism. Utilizing the C3 Framework, the authors detail a civic inquiry into Black Queer and transgender activists that provide students opportunities to “evoke new imaginations for a more just future.”

The final article, “Queer in Plain Sight: Using Everyday Social Studies to Engage in LGBTQ2IA+ Histories” by Joanna Batt, offers an interdisciplinary lesson that weaves together art and social studies inquiry. Batt crafts an opportunity for students to learn from well- and lesser-known LGBTQ+ figures, underscoring that “queer history is history.”

Lastly, the article “Restorying in Elementary Social Studies Education: Using a Pedagogy of Insurgency to Decenter Cisheteronormativity in Anti-LGBTQ+ Contexts” by James Joshua Coleman and Maia Sheppard will appear in the September/October issue. The authors spotlight a pedagogical strategy of restorying as a tool for reimagining the cisheteronormative narratives taught within the elementary curriculum.

If we remember “how we treat people’s stories is how we treat them ... and those stories can then become how many students see and treat themselves,”¹ then it is imperative that we tell the stories of the LGBTQ+ community and we do so with care. Thank you to all the reviewers who helped make this issue a reality. ■

Note

1. Joanna Batt, teaching demonstration on counter narratives, Metropolitan State University of Denver, Denver, CO, February 2023.