

Motivating with Social Studies



Linda Bennett

Teachers from Alaska, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Massachusetts, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Texas, and Wisconsin are motivating students with social studies. Are You? As you read this issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, you will learn about exciting examples of motivating with social studies, as provided by educators in the states listed above. I believe you will find ideas for your classroom and set new goals for motivating students because you will discover that social studies matters in the lives of your students.

The first article is about second graders at Wright Elementary School in DeKalb County, Illinois who used primary and secondary sources to learn local history. In “DeKalb County, Illinois: A Local History Project for Second Graders,” Danielle Bell and Mary Beth Henning describe how an inquiry project can motivate young students and develop their inquiry skills.

An Indiana preservice teacher and a Hawaiian teacher designed an “*Aloha, Hoosier!*” pen pal activity for third grade students. Raymond Callahan and Kam Chi Chan used “pen-pal communications to motivate student learning and to enhance students’ cultural awareness.”

Robert Millward promotes using visual images and artifacts to stimulate and intrigue students and engage them in history. In the article “Rope Circles and Giant Trees: Making History Come Alive,” he describes how paintings and hands-on activities can inspire students and teachers to learn social studies.

Eui-kyung Shin and Marsha Alibrandi developed lessons using online interactive maps at Google Earth. The Pullout, “Online Interactive Mapping” explains how using technology during social studies can motivate students to see their world from new perspectives.

In “A Marvelous Journey: Calling Home from Greece,” Lana Holman and John Sucich tell the story of how fourth grade students at Belmont, Massachusetts “traveled” to Greece. The authors tell how seizing an opportunity, which at first seemed impractical, led to an experience that was education for both teachers and students.

From intergenerational service learning to oral history, fourth and fifth students are motivated by meaningful conversations they share with older adults. In “Bridging the Years: An Intergenerational History Project,” Rahima Wade, Diane Gardner, Paul Doro, and Sandy Arendt give numerous examples of how teachers can develop rich experiences for students and the elderly.

Using culturally relevant text motivates students to connect to their heritage and develop literacy skills. In “Developing Literacy through Culturally Relevant Texts,” Iliana Alanis describes how she facilitated a team of teachers in a Spanish/English dual language education program to use literacy and social studies so students see themselves as integral parts of the curriculum.

We hope that you might consider how you motivate students with social studies. Each elementary teacher has the potential to make social studies come alive. 🌍

ON THE COVER:

Student art at West Boulevard Elementary School. Supervising teachers, Jonette Ford (fifth grade) and Mary Lynn Agnew (art). Photograph by Linda Bennett