

20th Anniversary



From 1988 to 2008, *Social Studies and the Young Learner* (SSYL) has grown in the scope of its content, in its circulation, and in the influence it has within the elementary education community. At a time when social studies is being marginalized in the elementary curriculum due to budget cuts and short-sighted public policies,¹ it is vital that we have strong platform on which to showcase our best peer-reviewed work and to voice our hopes and concerns.² Please share this 20th Anniversary issue of SSYL, after you have read it, with a colleague and see if it doesn't inspire them.

We begin this Twenty-Year Anniversary Issue with short reflective essays by each of the former editors of the journal: Huber M. Walsh, Gloria T. Alter, and Sherry Field; by the current editor; and by SSYL editorial board member Kim D. O'Neil, who complements this section as the classroom teacher representative. Each educator wrote on a topic of his or her choice, and we think the result is an interesting and diverse special section for the journal.

As I read through the first SSYL of twenty years ago, I realized that several authors therein might want to contribute to this anniversary issue. I contacted these outstanding educators and quickly garnered manuscripts from Thomas Turner, Mary Haas (with co-authors Barbara Hatcher and Cynthia Szymanski Sunal), and Lynn E. Nielsen (with co-author Judith M. Finkelstein). Their new articles are described below.

The first article, "Teachers Who Shaped Our Lives" by Andrea S. Libresco, arose from a recent panel discussion at Hofstra University. Teachers and pre-service teachers recalled their own elementary school teachers who challenged them to think critically, feel deeply, and engage fully with the world.

In "The Bear is Still Singing: Creating Lyrics with Social Studies," Thomas Turner describes how teachers (and students) can borrow memorable tunes, create their own content-rich lyrics, and wind up with lessons that won't be quickly forgotten.

Citizenship and Ethics, the theme of the first issue of SSYL in 1988, is revisited in the next two articles. Omiunota Nelly Ukpokodu gives us a brief comparative study in her article "Fostering National and Global Citizenship: An Example from South Africa."

The article "Citizenship Education: Engaging Children in Building Community" describes ongoing work at the Dr. Walter Cunningham

School for Excellence in Waterloo, Iowa. It was written by the professor/teacher team of Lynn E. Nielsen, Judith M. Finkelstein, Amy Schmidt, and Annette Duncan.

"Teaching about Elections During a Presidential Election Year" by Mary E. Haas, Barbara Hatcher, and Cynthia Szymanski Sunal is a crucial guide for how to bring the excitement of the 2008 presidential elections into the elementary classroom in exciting, nonpartisan, and developmentally appropriate ways. (A fun fact: the presidential contest in the year that SSYL was launched was between then vice president George H. W. Bush and then Massachusetts governor Michael Dukakis.)

Two Children's Literature pieces conclude this issue. "Being Teddy Roosevelt: Exploring Biographies and Overcoming Life's Obstacles" by Myra Zarnowski demonstrates how our students can use biographies in developing their own personal strengths of character.

In "One World, Many Languages: Using Dual-Language Books," Heather Leaman shows why using books that provide text in English and in one other language might be an excellent teaching strategy for all of your students.

We hope that this issue of SSYL might spark your desire to try a new idea in your classroom. For example, stay informed about the presidential election, and use this national event to teach your elementary children about voting, elections, current events, and citizen participation in a democracy. Be sure to exhibit democratic ideals in your dealings with young students. As a social studies teacher, you are responsible for educating the citizens of our country. 🌐

Notes

1. A typical entry from today's news: "With the loss of one seventh and one eighth grade teaching position, two courses formerly taught all year—science and social studies—will be taught for just half the year. ... If the school department must further cut its budget to meet the finance committee's recommended below-level-funded budget, the hit list includes a second grade teacher, reducing three classrooms down to two, with a resultant hike in class size." (M. E. Jones, *Nashoba News* [Shirley, Massachusetts], July 4, 2008, www.nashobapublishing.com/ci_9786449).
2. Visit the SSYL archives at www.ncss.members and read "Advocating for Social Studies: Becoming AGENTS for Change" by Tina L. Heafner, Katherine A. O'Connor, Eric C. Groce, Sandra Byrd, Amy J. Good, Sandra Oldendorf, Jeff Passe, and Tracy Rock, in *Social Studies and the Young Learner*, vol. 20, no. 1 (September/October 2007): 26–29.