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# Agency and Empowerment with Young Learners



Scott Waring

Scott Waring

The theme of this issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* is “Agency and Empowerment with Young Learners.” Kindergarten and the early grades are a time in which children can begin to experience the feeling that “I can make a difference,” and practice the social skills that make civic engagement possible.

In the first article, “Start Local, Go Global: Community Partnerships Empower Children as Scientists and Citizens,” **Sara Hartman** and **Sami Kahn** invite students to “think about a policy for local bee protection,” act as “energy ambassadors” promote energy saving tips, and discuss how plants grow as well as “food insecurity.”

In the article “Kindergartners and ‘Philosophical Dialogue’: Supporting Child Agency in the Classroom,” **Stephanie C. Serriere**, **Michael D. Burroughs**, and **Dana L. Mitra** challenge students to assume different points of view using characters in the book *Hey, Little Ant*.

In her article “When Retired and Practicing Teachers Collaborate: Enhancing Elementary Social Studies Instruction,” **Ava McCall** reveals how teachers benefit from having “someone with whom to plan and teach social studies, share resources, and discuss how to provide engaging lessons for all students.”

The PULLOUT in the center of this issue, “Handouts for Children as Scientists and Citizens,” by **Sara Hartman** and **Sami Kahn** (authors of the first article) offers a framework for children to record their observations, state challenges or problems for society, list resources (materials, people, and organizations), and then suggest solutions or action steps.

How we consider different historical experiences and perspectives is the topic of “Rethinking Columbus Day: Empowering Learners through Collaborative Reasoning” by **Rena Shifflet** and **Lauren Hennig**, which employs two contrasting works of children’s literature.

“Examining the Evidence in a History Lab: George Washington and Slavery” by **Cara Ward** and **Travis Matthews** describes how students engage with primary source texts, a painting, and a photograph (images created in different decades) to arrive at a more complex understanding of a historic icon and the society he lived in.

In “Remixing” Current Events: Navigating the Transmedia Terrain with Fifth Graders,” **Daniel G. Krutka** outlines how teachers can provide opportunities for students to explore current issues and “identify blind spots in media coverage.”