

This issue of *Social Education* presents two valuable special sections on important current topics. One offers insightful analyses, information, and teaching tips for exploring the challenges facing today's economy. The other deals with the use of instructional technology in the classroom, and includes a detailed analysis of the implications of ChatGPT.

The special section on economics, edited by Scott Niederjohn and William C. Wood, focuses on teaching about the U.S. economy at its current uncertain juncture. In the opening article, Niederjohn, Mark C. Schug, and Tawni Hunt Ferrarini review the state of the economy, which has shown a distinctive combination of strengths (low unemployment) and weaknesses (significant and stubborn inflation). They focus in particular on the high inflation rate and suggest a class activity that compares and contrasts today's inflation with that of the 1970s era of stagflation.

Jane Ihrig and Scott Wolla review the recent policies of the Federal Reserve, whose dual mandate is to promote maximum employment and price stability. In the last year, the tightening of monetary policy by the Fed in response to inflation has resulted in a significant rise in interest rates: for example, 30-year mortgage rates have more than doubled since the fall of 2021. Ihrig and Wolla examine the indicators used by the Fed to determine its monetary policies, and outline the pathway through which these policies influence the economy.

Cryptocurrency prices have been extraordinarily volatile and unpredictable. Kim Holder, Scott Niederjohn, and William C. Wood pose the questions "Is cryptocurrency money?" and, if so, "what does the future hold?" They examine Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies and point out that "even the strongest cryptocurrency cannot match legacy currencies in fulfilling the functions of money." (95) There are, however, significant possible future benefits in blockchain technology, whose applications extend well beyond cryptocurrencies, and have

"the potential to generate faster and more secure transactions across a wide part of our everyday lives." (91)

What are the best personal financial moves for teachers in these uncertain times? Stephen H. Day, John B. Kruggel, and Jennie M. Carr identify some basic principles of personal finance that can help with household budgets and the adoption of sound investment strategies. Building on these principles, the authors round off the special section on economics with a lesson plan for middle and high school students that will help them to learn about the importance of controlling fixed costs and to develop strategies for saving and investing.

Our Sources and Strategies column highlights remarkable photographs taken by Gordon Parks of the daily life of African Americans in Washington, DC in 1942. Caneisha Mills presents a sample of Parks's work that includes photographs of African American children playing in a housing project as well as the iconic photograph of Ella Watson, a Farm Security Administration cleaning worker, standing with her mop and broom in front of the American flag. Mills offers engaging teaching suggestions that invite students to contribute observations, reflections, and questions about the photos and will enhance their understanding of the problems faced by African American communities in Washington, D.C., in the early 1940s.

The Inquiry Design Model (IDM) is widely used to build classroom inquiries based on the C3 Framework. In our Teaching the C3 Framework column, S.G. Grant, Kathy Swan, and John Lee show how to use IDM as an assessment system. They point out that IDM blueprints for inquiries incorporate both formative and summative performance tasks and are constructed so that "curriculum, instructional, and assessment elements of the system work in tandem" (109). They offer specific examples of how IDM facilitates assessment by setting "a consistent and steady set of targets around the skills essential to inquiry." (113)

Editor's Notebook

This issue concludes with a special section on instructional technology that has been prepared by our technology department editors, Michael J. Berson and Meghan Manfra, and focuses on leveraging technology to enhance student engagement in social studies.

In the opening article of the special section, Ilene R. Berson and Michael J. Berson review the much publicized artificial intelligence application ChatGPT, which they view as “a disruptive technology that has the ability to change the way people learn, communicate, and conduct business” (115). They identify ways in which it can help teachers respond to student questions, assess student learning, and monitor student progress. They suggest strategies for using ChatGPT in the classroom in ways that help students to practice their research and writing skills by evaluating content generated by the app.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, at a time when life was stressful for many students, Matthew Stroup developed an AP Psychology class activity in which his students used GIS technology to identify geographic locations that stimulated their emotions. The students were challenged “to reflect on places that caused them to feel happy, sad, relaxed, anxious, bored, and melancholy.” (120) The article by Curby Alexander, Molly Weinburgh, Kristen Brown, and Stroup describes this Mapping Emotions activity, which stimulated a high level of class participation. An important goal was for students to share their happy places and to acquire an understanding of the geospatial patterns of these locations.

Students whose native language is not English often find the study of history difficult, especially if it involves the use of primary sources that are hard for them to understand. In the concluding article of the technology section, Alison M. Turner and Meghan Manfra suggest ways of scaffolding the learning of these students, and point out that they can benefit from the increasing number of online sites

that accompany primary sources with visual resources and assistance in understanding the texts. The authors report the results of research they conducted that showed the positive effects of inquiry kits published by Maryland Public Television that are specially designed to assist students in their exploration of primary sources.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org. ■



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