

Editor's Notes



Linda Bennett, Editor

Last January, when we first invited social studies educators to submit manuscripts on the topic of “children as advocates and activists,” we weren’t sure what, if anything, might arrive. There was no need to worry! This issue of *Social Studies and the Young Learner* offers vibrant examples of how elementary students and their teachers “appreciate the importance of active citizenship.”¹

In the first article, “Young Citizens Take Action for Better School Lunches,” authors Stephanie Serriere, Dana Mitra, and Jennifer Cody describe how they used student’s complaints about limited salad choices in the cafeteria as the focus of a class project. Following steps of the Project Citizen protocol of the Center for Civic Education, the teachers facilitated students’ efforts, which included researching the problem, talking with adult administrators and fellow students, and proposing solutions. Eventually, a greater variety of salads was offered not just in their school, but in all lunchrooms in the district.

When a beloved school psychologist was suddenly required to use a motorized wheelchair for getting around the halls of the school, it forced her colleagues—and the students—to change the perspective from which they viewed their school environment. In the article, “Through Children’s Eyes: Community Collaboration for Social Justice,” Kenneth Sider summarizes a disability awareness unit of study that he designed for his third-grade students. What’s it like to spend a day in a wheelchair?

Tracy Rock and Jill Stepanian outline a unit of study in which third grade students learn about notable agents of change. What common characteristics did these citizen activists share? Then young learners discover that they can be agents of change right in their own community through a service-learning project. The title of the article, “We Are The Future, We Are The Agents Of Change,” sums up the positive attitude engendered by these activities.

The center Pullout, “Getting To Know People with Physical Disabilities,” is a lesson plan provided by the Anti-Defamation League. Through children’s literature and personal connections with people who have a physical disability, students come to under-

stand the capacity of people with disabilities to engage in activities that all people enjoy.

In her article “Social Studies and Service Learning with ‘Third Culture Kids: Preparing an Iftar in Egypt,’” Janie Hubbard describes a service-learning project that connects children at an international school (who are themselves from diverse cultures) with the local community and culture—and with each other.

In “Living in the Global Village: Strategies for Teaching Mental Flexibility,” authors Carol P. McNulty, MaryAnn Davies, and Mary Maddoux lead students in analyzing two works of children’s literature. They use teaching strategies that challenge the young learners to consider multiple perspectives and think creatively about options for “participatory advocacy in the global village.”

In “Structuring The Curriculum around Big Ideas,” Janet Alleman, Barbara Knighton and Jere Brophy summarize a dozen years of research, development, and reflection on teaching content with powerful ideas. This teacher-researcher collaborative team provides examples of classroom dialogue showing how to help students see connections between things, and to think about how knowledge can be applied to their lives.

Sherry L. Field and Antonio J. Castro review an eight-year collection of journal articles in “How Elementary Teachers Teach for Transformative Citizenship: Investigating Articles in *Social Studies and the Young Learner*.” They describe three themes that emerge in these studies (namely, that citizenship education aims for perspective consciousness; for fostering community awareness and global mindedness; or for social action). In each category, they report what teachers and researchers did, and they suggest additional possibilities for future efforts by elementary social studies educators. 📖

Notes

1. From the description of the curriculum theme **CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES** from National Council for the Social Studies, *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Silver Spring, MD: NCSS, 2010).

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On the cover: Secretary of the Pennsylvania Department of Health Everette James praises student leaders in the effort to expand the variety of salads served in the school’s cafeteria. See pages 4-7. Photo by Jennifer Cody.

National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program

National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior



From Hampton to New Bedford: A Network to Freedom

NEW LESSON PLANS!

Schools participating in “From Hampton to New Bedford: A Network to Freedom” will be engaged by curriculum-based activities and materials that bring the past to life. Aimed at students in the 5th grade, these web-based lesson plans tell the compelling story of the Underground Railroad at Hampton National Historic Site (Maryland) and New Bedford Whaling National Historic Park (Massachusetts). The plans also describe the journey of enslaved people of African descent living in America, their lifestyles and reasons for escape from a plantation. Through role play, critical assessment and exploration activities, teachers will lead students to consider the conditions of bondage, desires for freedom that led enslaved people to take great risks, travel difficult journeys, and face significant hardships for a chance at improving their lives, and why others took equal risks to help them.

Hampton tells the story of people—enslaved Africans, indentured servants, industrial and agricultural workers, and owners. It is also the story of the economic and moral changes that made this kind of life obsolete.

New Bedford was the mid-19th century’s preeminent whaling port and for a time “the richest city in the world.” It was a place where people took risks to gain economic, political, and social opportunities and to seek freedom for themselves and/or others.

A collaborative venture between the National Park Service and the Organization of American Historians, these lesson plans are available now and can be accessed through the parks’ website at:



www.nps.gov/nebe (New Bedford Whaling NHP)

www.nps.gov/hamp (Hampton NHS)



National Underground Railroad Network to Freedom Program: www.nps.gov/ugrr

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