

**Study of Allocated Social Studies Time in Elementary Classrooms in  
Virginia: 1987-2009**

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*The purpose of this study was to analyze the intended allocation of social studies time based on written timetables provided by elementary classroom teachers to students completing practicum requirements in a teacher education program. The timetables specify how time is prioritized for academic learning time as well as non-academic activities. The data collection spanned a twenty-two year period from 1987- 2009. A total of 72 students' field placement schedules were analyzed; 50 students were in primary classrooms (K-3) and 23 in upper elementary classrooms (4-5). The results indicated curricular priorities, with social studies receiving the least amount of time among the core subjects of language arts, math, science, and social studies. The time allocated to social studies averaged less than two hours per week.*

I once had the pleasure of listening to a Phi Beta Kappa induction speech given by Justice Sandra Day O'Connor, Chancellor of the College of William and Mary. The focus of her speech was the importance of civic education. Justice O'Connor was addressing college-wide inductees, not just future teachers, such as my student. She described the internet site that she created in order to expand civic education, with many engaging activities designed for elementary-aged children. Justice O'Connor was passionate about the need for all adults to take seriously the excessive amount of time spent on non-academic activities by young people. Lamenting the lack of civic knowledge among Americans, she stated "Only about a third of Americans, including young people, can name the three branches of government...That's scary. But 75 percent of young people can tell you at least one of the 'American Idol' judges."

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See Justice O'Connor's website, *Our Courts: 21<sup>st</sup> Century Civics*, at <http://www.ourcourts.org>.

Resources such as Justice O'Connor's website are designed to advance the teaching of civics, either within the social studies curriculum or through public access. McConnell (2008) argues that restoring the civic mission of the schools is a vital imperative. In recent years, teaching civics and other social studies topics seems to be overshadowed by reading and math, primarily as a result of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* (NCLB). This Act, signed into law by President Bush in 2002, calls for states to set standards in reading and math with the expectation that every student should be proficient in those subjects by 2014. Students in grades three through eight are tested yearly.

The Commonwealth of Virginia recently considered the elimination of the social studies assessment at the third grade level. Educators, parents, students, museum personnel, and Virginia legislators gave testimony in support of maintaining the test to ensure that social studies is taught in the primary grades. The present study was conducted to provide further understanding of the status of social studies in Virginia. Reinstating or maintaining the rightful place of social studies in the elementary curriculum is an area of concern that invites further exploration among the fifty states, all of whom are faced with the challenge of addressing state and federal guidelines.

### **Review of Research**

An investigation of the time allocated to all academic subjects and other activities in elementary classrooms reveals the comparative valuation of social studies in relation to other disciplines and activities. Phenix (1964) advanced the notion that "meanings are of many kinds and that the full development of human beings requires education in a variety of realms of meaning rather than in a single type of rationality" (p. xi). Subject-matter distinctions provide a basis for

understanding various realms of meaning in instructional settings. According to Berliner (1990, p. 4), “instructional time allows for understanding, prediction, and control, thus making it a concept worthy of a great deal more attention than it is usually given in education and in educational research.” Berliner explains the complexity of instructional time by differentiating among allocated time, engaged time, time-on-task, academic learning time, transition time, and waiting time.

During the 1980s, researchers acknowledged that there is more to achievement gains than the time on task reinforced by scheduled time. Based on research with secondary students, Stallings (1980) indicated that time on task is one important variable, but student engaged time, distribution of time across activities, interactive instruction, and student achievement levels also influence overall achievement gains. Likewise, Brown and Saks (1986) conducted a study of 25 second-grade and 21 fifth-grade classes, observing student performance in reading and math. Brown and Saks investigated whether the rate at which a student learns can be affected by instruction, achievement levels, measures of allocated time, and measures of how time was used. They analyzed data from the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study (BTES). The BTES (Fisher, Filby, Marliave, Cohen, Dishaw, Moore & Berliner, 1978) was a technical report on teacher behaviors, academic learning time and student achievement, prepared for the California State Commission for Teacher Preparation and Licensing.

Extracting data from this study, Brown and Saks utilized linear proportions measuring how allocated time was used so that “a test score in each subject at a point in time depends on the previous score in the subject, the time allocated between test times, variables measuring how time was used, and individual student characteristics” such as achievement levels (Brown & Saks, pp. 483). Elementary students were assessed three different times throughout the year. Brown and Saks found that time had positive effects in both subjects in both

grades, but that the effects varied significantly across teachers in mathematics instruction. This study is unique because of its examination of the relationship between allocated time, achievement, and how time was used, but because of its focus on reading and math there is no data available for understanding social studies time.

Smith (2000) expressed concern for urban education as a result of the shift away from research on instructional time allocations and toward program quality indicators for curricula, pedagogy, and assessment during the eighties and nineties. She argued that the weak and eroded time allocations for instructional time threaten urban school effectiveness. Citing the efforts of scholars who developed *opportunity to learn* theory, Smith supports the hypothesis that “there is a relationship between students’ achievement and the input or process variables that define their learning opportunities...” (Smith, p. 654). After a review of international comparative studies of the Third International Math and Science Study (TIMSS), Smith noted a positive relationship between achievement and the number of hours, days, and years that students are formally required to take instruction in a subject. In her Chicago study, she found that actual instructional time is only 40% to 60% of the district’s (below-average) goal, and lamented the overall erosion of annual instructional time. Smith concludes that the changing nature of urban elementary schools with an emphasis on the many services provided during school hours is overwhelming existing time allocations and structures.

International studies in Sweden and Canada examine the importance of timetables as a means to shape and control the amount of time allocated to various subjects (McDonald, 1983; Waldow, 2004). The broader review of research reported thus far has demonstrated an appreciation for the various contexts and subject areas in which time allocation studies have been conducted. These important studies contribute to an understanding of the relationships

among academic learning time, allocated learning time and student achievement, especially in math and reading (Miller, 2006); yet data for social studies schedules are still very limited.

In recent years, social studies educators in various states have documented the low status of social studies among board members of state education agencies, and among the studies presented here, all cite the impact of NCLB legislation. In Alabama, Bailey, Shaw, and Hollifield (2006) utilized pre-service teachers in a social studies methods block to collect data for a 13 week period in the spring and 14 weeks in the fall. Students were placed in kindergarten through fifth grade classrooms, Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. The pre-service teachers recorded (a) the amount of time allocated for social studies, (b) the instructional strategies used, and (c) the inclusion of technology. The amount of time recorded was not in proportion to the grade level, that is, the amount of social studies time did not necessarily increase with age. Approximate numbers indicate that the fifth grade teachers averaged 148 minutes per week; the third and first grade teachers averaged 130 minutes; the fourth grade teachers averaged 97 minutes; and the second grade teachers averaged 69 minutes per week.

Bailey et al. expressed concern that there was no consistency with regard to a schedule for when social studies was taught and in some instances, weeks passed without social studies teaching. They concluded by recommending that elementary students be tested in social studies “and that the teachers should be held accountable for their students’ success” (Bailey et al., 2006, p. 23).

The research in South Carolina by Vogler, Lintner, Lipscombe, Knopf, Heafner, and Rock (2007) echoes the status of social studies in Alabama. Their study investigated elementary teachers’ beliefs about the role of social studies and their perceptions of time spent on social studies instruction. Based on NCLB and a review of literature that indicated that no more than 20 minutes a day was

devoted to social studies instruction, Vogler et al. concluded that social studies was becoming increasingly marginalized. To test this hypothesis, the researchers arranged for pre-service teacher candidates to administer a survey instrument to elementary teachers using an interview format.

The data collection process focused on three topics: priority and value that elementary teachers and university faculty assign to social studies, relative to other core subjects; amount of time elementary teachers devote to social studies instruction; and if the amount of time devoted to social studies had changed in the past five years. No significant differences were found in relation to the time of data collection (Fall or Spring Semesters) or the place of employment (colleges and universities within South Carolina). The results of the study indicated: “1) a low commitment to the content of social studies as compared to other content areas, 2) a correlation between teachers’ commitment to social studies and grade level, 3) a correlation between time spent on social studies instruction and grade level, 4) and an increase in the time spent on social studies instruction when compared to the time spent five years ago” (Vogler et al., p. 22).

Reading/language arts was perceived as the *most important* or *important* content area as reported by 96% of the teachers. Math followed, then social studies, followed by science. Among first through fifth grade teachers there was an ascending level of perceived importance, with the higher the grade level, “the greater the percentage of teachers feeling social studies is most important or important when compared to other core content areas” (Vogler et al., 2007, p. 23). The study also found that there was an increase in the amount of time devoted to social studies over a five year period. The “most frequent reason given by respondents for their increase in social studies instruction... had to do with the addition of social studies in the elementary state-mandated testing

system” (Vogler et al., p. 23). Vogler et al. points out that this convenience sample limits the generalizability to all teachers in South Carolina.

A study by Yendol-Hoppey and Tilford (2004) conducted in central Florida offers additional insight into the marginalization of social studies. While the number of participants and the methodology were not described in detail, the authors reported perceptions expressed by practicing and prospective teachers in a professional development school. Yendol-Hoppey and Tilford reported that teachers felt that the absence of a statewide social studies test moved social studies to a lower status. In addition, they presented explanations for the low status of social studies as differing conceptions of purpose, competing professional development, and differing structures that influence social studies curricular decisions. One common slogan expressed by teachers, curriculum specialists, and administrators was, “If it isn’t tested, it isn’t taught” (Yendol-Hoppey & Tilford, p. 3).

More recently, one study documented both the time allotted to and the nature of social studies instruction. Holloway and Chiodo (2009) acknowledged the challenges facing elementary teachers when social studies is not built into the weekly schedule as often as math and language arts and argued that teachers are still committed to teaching social studies. They surveyed 100 first through fifth grade teacher in a southwestern U.S. school district. In the first phase of their research, they asked teachers how often they taught specific social studies concepts. In the second phase, they interviewed ten of the teachers who had participated in the survey to find out how they taught the social studies concepts. Their study is important because it not only documented what social studies concepts are taught most frequently by the 100 surveyed, but it also documented that social studies is allotted less than two hours per week for 8 of the 10 teachers interviewed. The study also illustrated that elementary teachers demonstrate their support of the field by integrating social studies concepts into

other subjects. Teachers “argued that instead of allotting only 30 minutes to that topic during social studies, it can be integrated into the time slot... allotted for mathematics or other subjects ...” (Holloway & Chiodo, pp. 249-250).

To summarize, a review of research indicates that the field of social studies receives less allotted time and less instructional time in comparison with reading, language arts, math and spelling in a variety of states, primarily in the East (South Carolina), South (Alabama and Florida), and a southwestern district. Studies in Canada and Sweden and TIMSS research also reflect this trend. Educators, primarily in the field of social studies, express concern about the impact of NCLB because of its emphasis on testing reading, math, and science, but not social studies. With social studies already marginalized, there is the chance of further erosion of social studies instruction if the subject is not assessed in individual states or if teachers lack commitment to teaching the content.

#### **Method**

The use of administrative records has been particularly useful in longitudinal studies and historical research because it allows researchers to document educational policies in broader social and political contexts. One such record is the weekly schedule that prescribes allocated time for academic subjects and non-academic activities. These schedules are typically provided by district or school administrators and they structure the instructional calendars for the school year, seldom changing within one school year. For administrators, policy makers, educators, and parents who want to track the support for content knowledge in a particular discipline or the efficient use of instructional time, these records are invaluable. Schedules provide insight into what a school district values when making decisions about the time frames within which



learning can take place and what learning is deemed important within those time frames.

This study presents records-based data (Hakim, 1987) that documents the amount of time allocated to social studies in three elementary school districts in Virginia. Berliner's definition of allocated time has been utilized: "*Allocated time*, usually defined as the time that the state, district, school, or teacher provides the student for instruction... Sometimes this is called *scheduled time*" (Berliner, 1990, p. 4). The time schedules were collected by the author from pre-service students who she supervised from 1987-2009. Three guiding questions for the inquiry were: 1) How has allocated instructional time changed throughout the twenty-two year period? 2) What is the status of social studies instructional time in relation to that for the other core subjects? 3) Does the amount of allocated time for social studies vary across grade levels 1 through 5? The author predicts that the time allotted to social studies has remained stable over the twenty-two year period, with greater amounts of time allotted to the subjects of reading, language arts, and math. The author also predicts that the time allotted to social studies increases by grade level.

The administrative records used in this study were the designated weekly schedule for classroom teachers to follow throughout the school year obtained from pre-service students placed in the field from 1987-2009. In most cases, the schedules were designed by the principal in consultation with teachers. Classroom schedules are centrally coordinated because of the need to schedule shared space and teachers for activities such as lunch, recess, and special classes including art, music, media/library, physical education, and the computer lab.

The portfolios of seventy-three student teachers, all female, were the source for the documents, fifty in grades 1-3 and twenty-three in grades 4-5, from the period of 1987-2009. These pre-service students had been placed in public elementary and primary schools in three different school districts, with 96

percent in a single district. Altogether, 73 classrooms in 10 schools served as sites for the student teaching placements; 31 students were in one school, while the remaining 9 schools had a range of 1 to 16 students placed. There were, of course, seventy-three teachers supervising, 65 female and 8 male.

To determine the percentages of time, graduate students computed the allocation of time based on a school week of 33 hours. The percentages were calculated year by year, and then averaged over Period A, 1987 to 1992, Period B, 2000 to 2009, and the total period. Due to other teaching, research, or administrative assignments for specific years, the author did not supervise students in the field. Or, the supervision took place at the kindergarten or sixth grade levels, levels for which schedules vary dramatically from grades 1 through 5, hence were not included in this data analysis. Thus, no schedules were analyzed for this study for the following years: 1993-1999 and 2003-2006. In addition, only schedules that accounted for at least 80 percent of the week were utilized, since times listed did not always account for the entire school day.

### **Findings**

The core content areas for the weekly schedules in the elementary schools included social studies, science, math, and a combination of topics called here a reading/language arts block. The reading/language arts block encompasses reading, language arts, spelling, handwriting, story time, creative writing, and any other aspects of literacy that relate to reading, writing, listening, or speaking. In addition to the core content areas were classes considered non-core *academic learning time*, such as physical education, health, art, music, library, media, technology, guidance, and *Response to Intervention or RTI*. *Response to Intervention (RTI)* is an approach that facilitates early identification of learning and behavior problems and strategies for addressing these issues. If the weekly schedule did not provide designations for certain blocks of time, the non-

designated time was categorized as miscellaneous. Non-academic learning time included the categories of lunch, recess, opening, snack, restroom, clean up, and dismissal.

The findings are presented in relation to the three research questions: 1) How has allocated instructional time changed throughout the twenty-two year period? 2) What is the status of social studies instructional time in relation to that for the other core subjects? 3) Does the amount of allocated time for social studies vary across grade levels 1 through 5?

*The Change over Time*

To address the first question regarding change over time, academic and non-academic time will be presented. For the four core content areas, the allocations were as follows:

Reading/language arts—primary 39%, intermediate 31%; math—primary 15%, intermediate 14%; science—primary 5%, intermediate 10%; social studies—primary 4%, intermediate 9%.

For purposes of analysis, the twenty-two year time period has been divided in half to examine whether allocations change in specific areas. Period A denotes 1987 to 1998 and Period B denotes 1998 to 2009. During Period B, there was a greater emphasis upon assessing standards-based curricula. From Period A to Period B, the percentage of time in the reading/language arts block decreases at the primary level, from 40% to 29%, and decreases at the intermediate level from 32% to 28%. Math increases from 15% to 19% at the primary level and from 13% to 15% at the intermediate level. The time allocated to science decreased from 5% to 3% at the primary level and 11% to 6% at the intermediate level. The time allocated to social studies increased from 4% to 7% at the primary level and decreased from 9% to 6% at the intermediate level.

Non-core activities, including music, art, library, media, technology, guidance, physical education, and health, averaged approximately 12%. In the non-core areas, there is a decrease in health but an increase in physical education. Technology also gains more attention in the second half of the twenty-two year period. And in 2008, the designation of RTI appears. Non-academic time constituted approximately 18% of the time at the primary level and approximately 24% of the time at the intermediate level. See Table 1 for the time allocations.

*The Comparative Time-Share of Social Studies*

In descending order, from highest amount of time allocated to lowest amount of time allocated, the following pattern emerged over the 22 year period: Language arts, non-academic time, math, non-core activities, science, and social studies. During Period A this pattern was relatively stable. However, during Period B, math, science and social studies fluctuated, with math increasing to the same level as language arts in 2000. Science and social studies also traded rankings in 2001 from lowest to the next-to-lowest, with science the lowest. Findings relevant to the second question indicate that the status of social studies is definitely low in relation to the other core content areas, especially reading/language arts and math, as well as non-core activities. This pattern is consistent with the review of literature. The slight increase in primary social studies, from 4% to 7%, after 1994, may be the result of the standards movement and the fact that the Commonwealth of Virginia mandated testing in social studies in grades 3, 5 and 8.

**Table 1: Proportions of Allocated Instructional Time for Four Core Academic Areas: Mathematics, Science, Social Studies, and Reading/Language Arts (1987-2009)**

| Grade              | Weekly Time (hours) | Period A<br>(1987-1998)<br>Proportions (%)     |     |      |     |
|--------------------|---------------------|--|-----|------|-----|
|                    |                     | Math   | Sci | S.S. | R/L |
| Primary (1-3)      | 33                  | 15   | 5   | 4    | 40  |
| Intermediate (4-5) | 33                  | 13   | 11  | 9    | 32  |
| Grade              | Weekly Time (hours) | Period B<br>(1998-2009)<br>Proportions (%)     |     |      |     |
|                    |                     | Math   | Sci | S.S. | R/L |
| Primary (1-3)      | 33                  | 19   | 3   | 7    | 29  |
| Intermediate (4-5) | 33                  | 15   | 6   | 6    | 28  |
| Grade              | Weekly Time (hours) | Total Period<br>(1987-2009)<br>Proportions (%) |     |      |     |
|                    |                     | Math   | Sci | S.S. | R/L |
| Primary (1-3)      | 33                  | 15   | 5   | 4    | 39  |
| Intermediate (4-5) | 33                  | 14   | 10  | 9    | 31  |

*The Grade Variations of the Allotted Time*

Data relevant to the third question indicate that the time allocated to social studies is greater as the grade level goes up. Over the twenty-two year period primary social studies was allocated 4% of the school week, about 90 minutes, in comparison to 9%, approximately 3 hours, of the school week at the intermediate level. See Figure 1 for the comparative time-share and grade variations in social studies.

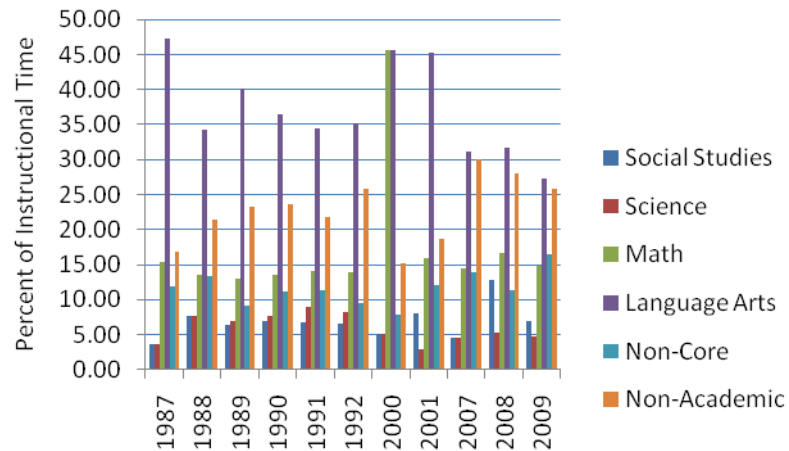


Figure 1. Allotment of Instructional Time of Core, Non-Core, and Non-Academic Classes over Time

**Discussion**

The school documents for allocated time demonstrated continuity and change from 1987- 2009. The schedules demonstrated consistency with regard to the greatest amount of instructional time given to core subjects of reading/language arts, followed by math. In addition, non-core and non-academic activities also received more time allocation than social studies. In the latter half of the period reviewed, from 2000 to 2009, there was variability and

change. Math, science and social studies fluctuated and there was an increase in time set aside for technology and *Response to Intervention*.

These findings are limited by the fact that the majority of the schedules came from one school district, thus the results cannot be generalized to the Commonwealth of Virginia or other states. In addition, the schedules were not obtained through random sampling; rather they were obtained from the teachers who had been identified to work with practicum students and student teachers. Another limitation of schedules of allocated time is that actual time devoted to social studies remains vague. The schedules guide teachers to make decisions about how much time to devote to their teaching, but actual teaching time was not recorded. Interviews with and observations of teachers would provide important supplemental data about the time for and nature of social studies instruction.

Emphasizing democratic principles and the importance of equality in education have been longstanding social studies goals. Citizenship has also been a core component of social studies. These principles, along with curricula in the other social science disciplines such as geography, economics, and history have been the foundation of the social studies curriculum. There are many reasons why the social studies deserve a more respectable place in the elementary program. The social studies provide the following realms of meaning:

- 1) History of the local, state, national and international communities
- 2) Analyses of positive and negative role models among men, women, and children
- 3) Opportunities to embrace pluralism since the U.S. population has rich diversity based on ethnicity, gender, race, class, religion, and national origin
- 4) Spatial orientation through map and globe skills

- 5) Environmental awareness through studies of geography and the impact of humans due to settlement patterns
- 6) Cultural creativity as expressed by humans through their art, dance, architecture, and music
- 7) Civic engagement via voting, human rights, and social justice

Policy makers have argued that many of the principles in the social studies curriculum can be incorporated into the reading/language arts blocks of allocated time. As previously reviewed, Holloway and Chiodo (2009) showed that when allocated time was reduced, teachers felt compelled to integrate social studies concepts into other content areas. There are limitations to this approach. The social studies emphasize historical context, and the insertion of social studies content into a reading/language arts block may limit the understanding of social studies concepts and historical context. For example, I recently observed a pre-service teacher teaching the biography of Benjamin Franklin during language arts. Her emphasis was on differentiating the genre of biography from other genres such as fantasy, fiction, and poetry. Factual information about Benjamin Franklin and his accomplishments appeared secondary to the primary goal of understanding that the biography genre often highlights contributions of the individual.

By contrast, when observing lessons about Benjamin Franklin during allocated social studies time, I saw that students have highlighted the importance of his inventiveness, entrepreneurial spirit, and political leadership in unifying the colonies and drafting the *Declaration of Independence*. The lessons elaborate on the nature of the inventions, his role in influencing the public through his publications, his changing attitudes toward English rule, and the other political leaders with whom he worked when drafting the *Declaration*. This contrast illustrates how social studies content in a historical context can



become marginalized or deleted when presented during the time allocated to another discipline. It is dangerous to assume that the objectives and content focus for one discipline align with the objectives and content focus in another discipline just because the topic might be the same.

The lack of appreciation for knowledge based in the social science disciplines is part of a broader issue that was alluded to in the introductory remarks of Justice O'Connor. Possibly, the elevated concern about the further marginalization of social studies stems from a context characterized by a decline that started long ago. The entertainment industry pervasive in American culture reinforces receptivity to viewing, in contrast to active community and civic engagement. Social studies educators compete to counteract this trend in popular culture.

Inattention to social and political issues has been analyzed by Richard Hofstadter in *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*. Hofstadter (1963) argues that the "battle waged with such enthusiasm by the intellectual generation that flourished between 1890 and 1914 has long since been won: certain esthetic and political freedoms, the claims of naturalism and realism, ...the right to strike out at authority, have been thoroughly established" (p. 418). He argues for the ongoing virtues of a variety of styles of intellectual life as evidenced throughout American history. These intellectual styles in the field of history and social studies can be found in David Harlan's *The Degradation of American History* (1997), Ellen Fitzpatrick's *History's Memory* (2002), Daniel Howe's *Making the American Self* (1997), and Melvyn Stokes's *The State of U.S. History* (2002). These renowned historians provide critical analyses of the ways in which American historians and social scientists have crafted their positions, ranging from claims of *objective* facts to the limits of *presentism*. The arguments have shaped the social studies field and curriculum development in the elementary schools.

Perceptions of cognitive development also influence views regarding what knowledge is important. Another argument that has been promoted during the current effort to eliminate the third grade social studies test in Virginia is that the cognitive capacity of third graders is not fully developed to comprehend and retain social studies content. Anyone who has listened to five-year olds articulate ten varieties of dinosaurs realizes that, when motivated, students can retain factual information. Psychologists have documented that children aged 5-10 are capable of great cognitive growth on topics such as geopolitical space and other social science concepts (Jahoda, 1964). The challenge for teachers is first to find out what information intrigues students and then build content knowledge in relation to their interests and developmental stages.

Interdisciplinary teaching has been offered as a way to ensure that social studies content is taught, particularly when not tested. If done effectively, this can be an excellent way to provide curricula that is integrated rather than discrete. Incorporating non-fiction, biography and autobiography can make events of a given time period come alive. If done poorly, however, certain content areas such as social studies can be left out entirely. A student teacher once indicated that she was doing an interdisciplinary science and social studies unit on the rainforest. When asked what the social studies content was, she was only able to point out that *habitat* was relevant to geography. With additional work she was successful in building social studies content about the Karubo people who lived in the rainforest, how they survived, their economy, and the differentiated roles among men, women, and children. The initial lack of familiarity with the social studies content that was appropriate for the grade level resulted in obvious (e.g., *habitat*) but uninformed content selections. The danger of interdisciplinary teaching if done poorly is the lack of articulation of key content in a particular discipline.

Popular culture, anti-intellectualism, perceptions of cognition, and ineffective interdisciplinary teaching all contribute to the marginalization of social studies teaching. These conditions are all the more reason that social studies should be given adequate time to be taught and tested. An examination of the social science content in history and social studies books reveals a field that is rich in concepts from history, geography, economics, sociology, anthropology, political science, and psychology. American history, state and local history, and world history inspire young people by informing them that there are environmental events, heroes, and heroines who have shaped their communities, and that they can take an active part in contributing to society. Any time allotment that is removed from social studies and redistributed to other areas is time that would ordinarily be devoted to the development of meaning of social science concepts and historical events. The risk in this shift is that the study of important leaders in American and World History may be reduced to a study of the biography genre; significant historical events may be reduced to skill development in creating timelines; and civic engagement may be reduced to navigating the internet.

Studies report that NCLB legislation and the lack of testing of social studies adversely effects social studies teaching by cutting in half the amount of time previously devoted (Heafner et al., 2007). These studies demonstrate that educators and policy makers cannot assume that reducing the amount of allotted social studies time and advocating the infusion of social studies content into other areas will result in the development of social studies content. The allotment of an adequate block of social studies time sends an appropriate message to teachers that the social studies curriculum is valued for its unique content.

As the current study indicates, social studies in three districts in Virginia is already the lowest valued core content area based on time allotment. Based on

the records collected in a central and southeastern region in Virginia, the non-academic and non-core subjects receive more allocated time than social studies. Policy makers should protect time allotment to ensure that there is greater parity among the four core content areas. To paraphrase the sentiments expressed by Ernest Boyer (1991) in support of a framework for civic education—public and professional apathy for civic, social, and historic knowledge “cannot go unchallenged” (Boyer, p. xv).

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