

## Hawaii Social Studies: A Program Specialist's Viewpoint

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Can social studies become the favorite school subject of a majority of our public school students? Is this an unrealistic goal?

What do parents expect of a social studies program in the public school curriculum? What do teachers perceive as their role in developing and implementing the social studies program in Hawaii's schools?

These are concerns and questions that people responsible for providing the curriculum directions and guidelines are daily grappling with in the Hawaii State and District Offices of the Department of Education. Hopefully, there are evidences today that social studies education is no longer in the doldrums and so unsatisfactory to the many publics it must respond to.

A few years ago, much of social studies instruction in the public schools was conducted via a single textbook, far removed from the social realities of the larger world. In many elementary schools, it was relegated to a couple of afternoons a week, usually spent viewing a film or reading and answering questions. In many secondary schools, it had become a boring, disliked subject, usually identified with the biggest textbook to carry home in the evening. Much of teaching and learning was oriented toward the acquisition of knowledge about the past. Social studies was identified chiefly with the discipline of history and the events that characterized the past.

Today, social studies is viewed in the light of the needs of students, a social reality orientation, and a field of knowledge that encompasses all the social science disciplines of anthropology, sociology, social psychology,

economics, political science, and geography, as well as history. The social studies curriculum for Hawaii has drastically changed its direction in the last two years. However, the task of implementing this "new" program is still in its initial phases, with many more years before we can hopefully begin to see real changes as reflected in our society and citizenry.

### A New Priority of Objectives

A new priority of objectives had to be developed for social studies education in Hawaii. We believe it is no longer sufficient to just impart knowledge of the world as it was and is today, or even to have students grapple with current social problems. More than that, students must develop the competencies needed to deal with the different realities and problems of the future, in addition to understanding the realities and problems of today.

Students today must become proficient in using the concepts and data that are most helpful in studying their own and other societies through mastery of the processes of inquiry that are most useful in studying man and society. New concepts will be developed and existing ones will be changed. Thus, what is important in education today is to help students understand the nature of concepts as tools of inquiry and the processes of inquiry through which such concepts are developed and used in the study of significant topics and problems. (Adapted from *Proposed K-12 Social Studies Education Framework*, Statewide Social Sciences Study Committee, California State Department of Education, October 1968.)

Objectives now focus upon content and process learn-

ing, as well as the process of valuing. We no longer can view objectives simplistically. Rather, inquiry/conceptual objectives are now viewed on two levels. The first level includes overarching objectives consisting of a composite of behaviors that could also be the desired outcomes of other subject areas as well. Examples might be the ability to define issues and problems, interpreting data meaningfully, or to make and test hypotheses and generalizations. The second level of objectives relates directly to the topics and problems selected for study. Examples might be to locate a place on a map where a specific ethnic group came from, or to identify examples of discrimination or segregation from among evidences presented in various instructional materials.

#### Acceleration of Changes

The inquiry/conceptual objectives of the program require a continuing acceleration of changes already going on in the development and use of teaching materials and classroom strategies involving both teachers and students. The student cannot become an effective inquirer by learning only what is in the textbook or what the teacher tells him. Conventional classroom activities must give way to using new kinds of materials and teachers must become even more adept at strategies for eliciting and guiding inquiry.

#### Guidelines for Implementation of the Social Studies Program

Revision of an existing program or implementation of a "new" program (depending upon how a school perceives its position) involves several successive steps. Throughout this process, key decisions must be made by all personnel in a school. The steps are outlined as follows:

##### Step 1: A Self-Appraisal

An assessment of the school's current program is an imperative first step. Unless teachers and administrators alike are convinced that change is needed, efforts toward change will soon bog down and little, if any, progress will be made. Thus self-appraisal might begin with an examination of a number of experimental and innovative programs which are the record of what other groups of teachers, administrators, and specialists believe to represent promising practices. A school might then comparatively look at its overall philosophy, the scope and sequence of the social studies program, the timeliness of topics, provision for student involvement and skill development, meeting individual differences,

and finally how evaluation of progress in social studies is conducted. What can the school learn from the experiences of others to improve its program?

These kinds of considerations should be thoroughly discussed and debated by all teachers.

##### Step 2: A Thorough Understanding of the State Social Studies Framework

Does the State Framework complement the school's philosophy? Does it present sufficient guidelines for changing or revising the current program and for implementing new directions?

##### Step 3: How Much Shall Be Revised?

A decision must now be made concerning how much revision should be undertaken. This could range all the way from a minor change in program, such as selecting a new textbook series or updating reference materials, to building an entirely new program, complete with a written course of study. It might even include an in-service program for all teachers in a school.

##### Step 4: Developing the Course of Study

This phase will occupy the largest amount of time. It involves collecting all available resources and evaluating them for possible use in putting together a series of units that will have meaningful scope and sequence for students in a particular school. If none are satisfactory, it means perhaps that units must be developed by teachers themselves.

##### Step 5: Phasing in the "New" Program

At this point, decisions must be made regarding how the new program is to be phased into the old program. Several alternatives are possible:

1. A "Pilot," "Trial," or "Demonstration" Project  
This alternative involves implementation in a limited number of classrooms in each level. Advantages are that closer supervision is possible, a limited number of materials will be needed and can be carefully evaluated and it does hold promise for in-service visitation by other teachers.
2. Modification of Part of the Year's Work  
This alternative attempt to mesh the "new" program with the "old" by introducing two or three new units for each grade level. This plan has the advantage of getting a broader base for a preliminary evaluation but it may be more costly in terms of materials and it may also be more difficult to make changes if the units become subsumed in the previous program.

### 3. Modification on a Grade-by-Grade Basis

This alternative introduces a new program a grade or two at a time. The advantage is that it permits careful assessment of continuity between grade levels, but at the same time, the changeover from the "old" to the "new" program is slow in comparison with the other alternatives of change.

#### Step 6: Purchasing Appropriate Instructional Materials

If the unit approach to teaching social studies is adopted for the revised program, substantial additional supplementary materials will probably be needed in learning centers or resource centers and school libraries. Special attention should also be given to stocking rooms adequately with maps and globes, as well as other equipment which are used for audio-visual media.

#### Step 7: Continued Evaluation of Program

Once implementation has begun, however minimal in degree, continued evaluation of the program should take place with appropriate modification and further revisions made as necessary.

#### Conclusions

The process of bringing about curriculum change is complex and difficult because it means communicating with many different professional and lay groups and individuals. It entails not only explaining the "new" program, but more important perhaps, assisting all the different individuals who see the program from a wide diversity of viewpoints to *understand* the program. It involves assessment of existing objectives held by both and possibly revising those objectives. It involves making new commitments. Most difficult, perhaps, is to get everyone involved in the process of change to question and clarify the value positions held regarding man and society. Perhaps real change can never come to fruition without each individual's self-analysis and re-commitment to the goal of truly providing the best education possible for the young people of Hawaii.

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