LEFT BEHIND? THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES

Peter William Moran
University of Wyoming

This article argues that the No Child Left Behind Act and the literacy and mathematics assessments required by the law have radically refashioned the elementary school curriculum. In particular, the article maintains that the emphasis on literacy and mathematics has marginalized social studies in the curriculum, diverted resources and professional development opportunities from social studies, and severely undermined the important contributions that the social studies make to elementary education in terms of critical thinking and the development of civic values and virtues.

Since the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) in January 2002, a curious mantra of sorts has circulated among administrators in the central offices of school districts and between teachers in the halls of the nation's schools: "If it ain't tested, it ain't taught" (Hubler, 2002). What is implied in this simple seven word phrase is the essence of how teachers and school officials have interpreted the federal government's position on public education in America. In short, many educators have surmised that because state and federal officials determine whether schools are designated as successful or in need of improvement based upon student scores on a narrow range of standardized assessments, teachers should commit their efforts to those subjects that are tested. In the elementary grades, literacy and mathematics are tested, and there is a great deal at stake for schools and school districts in the results of those tests.

The failure of a school or district to demonstrate adequate yearly progress (AYP) can bring grave consequences. For districts across the country, the sanctions associated with failing test results range from mandated plans for improvement, to the diversion of funds within the school district in order to allow students to choose attendance at a successful school, to a state "take over" and reorganization of some or all of the district's schools, with the concomitant shuffling or termination of teaching faculties. The culture of testing has radically refashioned the manner in which the nation approaches public education, and has clearly prioritized particular subject areas over others.

Furthermore, schools and school districts are required to publish the results of those tests, thereby allowing the citizenry, "the market," to rank, rate and choose among the schools serving their local communities (Apple, 1993, 2006). At the most basic level, in thousands of towns and cities around the country, what community members "know" or perceive to be true about their local schools is derived from the scores that children achieve on standardized examinations in literacy and mathematics. Based on those results, district patrons express either their concern or their satisfaction with their local schools, as if scoring well on the reading, writing and mathematics assessments were the sole aim and purpose of schooling.

Without question the culture of testing currently practiced in schools has dramatically altered public education. One characteristic of the recent reforms in education is the manner in which literacy and mathematics have become prioritized above other subject areas, particularly in elementary schools. Consequently, a great deal of instructional time and additional resources have been devoted to literacy and mathematics. Clearly, such a narrow perspective on public education devalues much of what is taught and learned in school. Indeed, such a perspective completely ignores entire subject areas that have historically been considered critical components of a well-rounded public school education. Presently at the elementary school level, the most notable omissions are perhaps science and social studies – although there will surely be a nationwide "rediscovery" of science as an important part of the curriculum once testing and the reporting of test scores are required

in 2007-2008 (No Child Left Behind, 2002). Beyond social studies and science, this myopic outlook on education devalues the contributions of the arts, music, physical education, health and other subjects in enriching public school curricula. This article will argue that the narrow focus of NCLB and the interpretation of that legislation at the local and state levels have significantly skewed — although supporters of NCLB would perhaps say "reformed"— what is taught in America's elementary schools. In particular, this article explore how NCLB has adversely impacted social studies at the elementary school level.

This article will briefly analyze the history of federal education policy, and will argue that the social studies have never been a priority in federal policy or federal funding for education. Historically, federal funding has favored literacy, mathematics and science, and the NCLB legislation clearly underscores those priorities at the expense of other content areas. The article will further argue that NCLB has been particularly damaging to the teaching and learning of social studies at the elementary school level in three important ways. First, the emphasis on literacy and mathematics has had the effect of paring away at the time and resources committed to teaching social studies. Second, the preoccupation with student performance on standardized, multiple choice assessments has undermined major contributions of the social studies in developing critical thinking skills, exploring values, and promoting civic efficacy. Third, the intensive commitments to literacy and mathematics in elementary schools have had the effect of redirecting materials, resources and professional development opportunities from other content areas, including social studies. Finally, it will be argued throughout that, cumulatively, these impacts have significantly diverted public schools from one of their principal missions – the preparation of students for the many roles and responsibilities of citizenship in a changing world.

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT AND THE SOCIAL STUDIES

Historically, public school education in the United States has been the province of the states. The word "education" does not appear in the Constitution and for most of the nation's history the federal government's involvement in public education has been minimal, sporadic and non-intrusive. In fact, until the twentieth century, the federal government's role in public school education was purely in the shape of general aid, typically in the form of land grants, such as in the Northwest Ordinance of 1787. That aid, which was designed to assist territories and states in the creation of public school systems, came with few conditions and virtually no federal oversight. Other instances of federal involvement in public education came in times of crisis. For example, during World War I, the federal government channeled millions of dollars into vocational and agricultural education in response to the perceived manpower and production needs of the war effort. Funding continued for a time after the war but slowly was reduced to the point that it was largely inconsequential to the operation of most school districts' vocational and agriculture programs (Spring, 2005; Urban &Wagoner, 2004). Thus, one could fairly say that for the great majority of the nation's history, the federal government has been largely absent from public education, choosing to respect schooling as the province of the states. During the 1950s, however, the landscape shifted and the federal government's influence in public education has steadily grown over the past 50 years.

The turning point in federal education policy came with the Soviet Union's successful launch of Sputnik in 1957. In response, Congress recognized education as a critical component of national defense and approved the first massive infusions of federal categorical funds earmarked largely for science, math, foreign languages and counseling. From those beginnings in 1958, the federal government has been a constant presence in public education. Federal expenditures on public education grew dramatically in the mid-1960s with War on Poverty education programs, most notably the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and the interest in promoting equity in terms of educational opportunity for all students. The bulk of those funds were devoted to Title I efforts typically aimed at improving achievement in literacy and mathematics among students from impoverished backgrounds. Since

the mid-1960s, other major federal initiatives have focused broadly on the education of children with disabilities, second language learners, and other relatively narrow student populations with unique educational needs (Clinchy, 1997; Spring, 2005). Moreover, federal spending on education has grown steadily grown since the 1960s. Whereas in 1966, federal funding under ESEA programs amounted to less than $2 billion, the federal investment in ESEA was more than $10 billion by 1995. In the latest reauthorization of ESEA, the 2002 No Child Left Behind Act, federal commitments totaled over $20 billion annually (Federal Spending Under the ESEA). From the 1960s forward, the federal government's fiscal commitments to public education have steadily grown and federal influence in public education has expanded.

What is curious about the growing involvement of the federal government in public education is the degree to which federal subsidies have consistently favored particular subject areas. Since the 1950s, the greatest beneficiaries of the federal government's largesse have been literacy, mathematics and science. These subjects have been deemed critical to the nation's international competitiveness in the global economy and essential to the country's national security. It is also important to note that there is some degree of national pride and prestige associated with these subject areas. Literacy, math and science are among the subject areas in which the academic standing and achievement of American students is now measured against students from other countries.

Despite the fact that history and geography are by definition "core" subject areas in federal policy, these subjects have received little attention from Congress. Politicians frequently lament what they perceive to be major deficiencies in American students' understandings of history, both our own and world history, government, and geography, but there has been little will among policy makers to address those subject areas or commit federal money to raising achievement in those areas. This is especially true at the elementary level. Major federal initiatives have been approved in recent years providing substantial infusions of federal funds for teaching traditional American history and improving the teaching and learning of civics, yet those initiatives impact only a small fraction of the nation's school districts and relatively few include elementary schools. The vast majority of the nearly $500 million committed to the Teaching Traditional American History grants has been awarded to proposals focused at the secondary level and less than 5% of the country's school districts have been awarded grants (Teaching American History Grants Abstracts, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005). The consistent lack of concern regarding social studies education in the elementary grades has certainly relegated history and geography to secondary concerns in terms of federal education priorities. Even more troubling is the manner in which federal policies aimed at improving instruction and achievement in literacy and mathematics have further undermined the standing of social studies as an important part of the elementary curriculum. As schools and school districts strive to meet NCLB's mandate of raising student achievement in literacy and math, the act has also compelled, perhaps unintentionally, school districts to re-evaluate priorities within the curriculum. With respect to elementary social studies the results have been less time and fewer resources devoted to social studies, a narrowing of the curriculum which effectively squeezes out many of the most important contributions that social studies makes to a well rounded elementary education, and a reduction in the opportunities for professional development related to social studies education.

NCLB AND SOCIAL STUDIES INSTRUCTION: LOST TIME, LOWER PRIORITY

In the four years since the advent of NCLB there has not been a great deal of research conducted which focuses on the impact of the federal law on elementary social studies. Even so, although the evidence is somewhat fragmentary, from the patchwork of published research there are strong indications that the amount of time devoted to social studies in elementary school classrooms has declined since the passage of NCLB and the higher stakes attached to achievement in literacy and mathematics. Indeed, in some school districts the plight of social studies in the elementary school is rather alarming. For example, the Denver Public Schools have eliminated social studies

at many elementary schools, particularly those at risk of failing to meet AYP. At these schools, the school day is organized around two large blocks – literacy and math – which together comprise about 75% of the instructional day. The literacy block, typically situated in the morning is three to three and one-half hours mandated for all early childhood education through fifth grade classrooms. In the block, lengthy periods are devoted to reading workshop, writers' workshop, skills instruction, and English language development for second language learners (Denver Public Schools, 2005a, 2005b). The mathematics block consists of 90 to 120 minutes devoted to combinations of whole group and small group instruction, skills development, guided and independent practice. In these schools, instruction in social studies competes for time with science, art, music, physical education, health, lunch, recess, library, counseling, the D.A.R.E. program, and other school priorities, and is frequently neglected for weeks at a time. When pressed regarding why the school day is structured in such a manner, teachers and building administrators consistently cite the need to prepare students for the major assessments in literacy and mathematics (Moran, 2006a). Moreover, when asked where social studies fits in the school day, teachers and principals alike maintain that it is not a forgotten subject, rather they argue that students are exposed to social studies content through the books they select at library time each week (Moran, 2006a, 2006b). Nevertheless, in a 2005 survey 80% of Denver's public school teachers conceded that the focus on tested subjects has reduced the amount of time they spend teaching social studies (Mitchell, 2005). For many of these schools, the social studies have been reduced to encouraging students to check out non-fiction books during their weekly library time. The Denver Public Schools do, of course, have social studies standards. They are, however, a clearly designated second class part of the elementary curriculum, and are in fact widely ignored in some elementary schools (Moran, 2006a).

The Denver example is by no means an aberration, similar attention and commitment of time to literacy and mathematics occurs elsewhere in elementary classrooms. A survey conducted by the Council for Basic Education found that 98% of the 956 principals surveyed reported that the amount of instructional time devoted to reading, writing and mathematics had increased moderately or greatly since the advent of NCLB (Von Zastrow & Janc, 2004). In the same survey, more than one-fourth of the principals indicated that time allocated to instruction in social studies, civics and geography had declined. This trend of reduced instructional time for social studies was particularly evident in high minority schools where nearly one-half of the principals surveyed reported decreases. In 2003, a survey of eight of the largest school districts in the state of Maryland revealed that in each district the time devoted to social studies had decreased since the enactment of NCLB (Maryland Humanities Council, 2003). Yet another study of more than 200 North Carolina elementary teachers found similar reductions in the amount of time devoted to social studies, particularly in comparison to the tested subjects of mathematics and literacy. In the North Carolina survey, teachers responded that on average they allocated ten hours each week to literacy (401 minutes of reading and 198 minutes of writing), followed by nearly six hours of mathematics (292 minutes). By contrast, instruction in social studies amounted to an average of 102 minutes weekly, about 20 minutes each day (Jones, Jones and Hargrove, 2003). A smaller scale survey of North Carolina elementary teachers found that a majority taught social studies just 30 minutes per week on average (Burroughs, Groce & Webeck, 2005). Similarly, a study conducted by the Harvard Civil Rights Project in 2004 revealed that more than three-fourths of the teachers surveyed in Richmond, Virginia and Fresno, California reported de-emphasizing or neglecting subjects not tested in state assessements (Sunderman, Tracey, Kim & Orfield, 2004). Furthermore, the study found that, although schools identified as in need of improvement were more likely to devote instructional time to tested subjects, all schools, including high performing schools, conformed generally to this pattern of priorities. Furthermore, in the state of Wyoming, where the vast majority of schools are performing at or above expectations, the rhythms of the school day have shifted in favor of literacy and math at the expense of so-

cial studies, science and other subject areas. In most Wyoming elementary schools, social studies has not completely disappeared from the curriculum, but in many it is no longer a subject that is taught on a daily basis. Among the more typical arrangements observed in Wyoming elementary schools are alternating social studies and science units on a bi-weekly or monthly basis, or devoting short blocks of time, in some cases as little as twenty minutes, two or three days each week to social studies instruction. In many primary grades classrooms, social studies has become a subject that is only addressed superficially and sporadically as topics appear coincidentally in the literacy curriculum (Moran, 2006b).

Such approaches seem to be consistent with the direction of Wyoming's former state superintendent for public instruction, Dr. Trent Blankenship. During the development of the state's newest assessment system, Blankenship argued that the first priority in all elementary schools should be to focus attention on those subject areas which were tested. In Wyoming's assessment system that meant literacy and mathematics, the only two content areas currently tested. Blankenship further suggested that committing time and resources to other subject areas was optional and essentially a local decision (personal communication, College of Education retreat, Aug 2004). According to Blankenship's logic, although the state has developed elementary standards for social studies and other content areas, teachers are not necessarily accountable for teaching those subjects since they are not among those tested. In other words, retaining social studies as a meaningful part of the school day occurs purely at the discretion of individual teachers with perhaps some administrative leadership from building principals. In such a climate of indifference it is somewhat admirable that teachers have continued to teach social studies at all despite the lack of investment in such endeavors from the highest ranking education official at the state level.

Depending upon one's perspective, the relatively widespread trend of curtailing the amount of time devoted to social studies in elementary schools may or may not be a terribly alarming development. What is important to consider, however, is what is lost when social studies time is reduced (Knighton, 2003; Warren, 2003). In social studies, as is true for other content areas, the learning that occurs in the elementary grades provides the foundation for future learning. Significantly reducing the amount of time devoted to social studies thereby necessarily trims away at the breadth and depth of students' preparation in the different disciplines that comprise social studies (Howard, 2003). In practical terms, this means that students in the elementary grades have little or no experience studying how their local communities function; little or no exposure to the richness and diversity of cultures in other parts of the world; minimal understandings of the history, geography, culture, and government of the United States; few or no opportunities to explore their own family heritage; little time to engage in studying issues of global importance, such as poverty, population growth or resource use; and very little in terms of a foundation for studying any number of other engaging and important social studies topics (Howard, 2003; Risinger, 2006). Essentially, the paring away of social studies in the elementary school implies that is acceptable to put off building the foundation that prepares students for informed citizenship until middle school or the secondary grades. It is ironic that suggesting that it would be acceptable to put off building the foundation in mathematics or literacy would be dismissed as blasphemy, yet school districts across the country have quietly acquiesced to doing just that with social studies. Moreover, school districts have done so without any serious debate concerning whether such decisions are imprudent and contrary to the larger goals of public education.

NARROWING THE CURRICULUM: THE DEMISE OF CRITICAL THINKING AND CIVIC EFFICACY

Among the most commonly voiced objections to the direction of contemporary educational policy is that it results in a narrow curriculum. This criticism is closely related to the reordering of the school day around literacy and mathematics, and the increased emphasis on high stakes assessments. On one hand, the reprioritizing of the school day around literacy and mathematics, and

the inclination to teach a curriculum that is largely devoid of social studies and other important subjects plainly results in a narrower curriculum.

That, however, is only part of the problem. An equally injurious development is more directly related to the types of assessments currently in use in elementary schools. Most states use multiple choice assessments in order to determine student achievement and thereby sanction the practice of conditioning students to believe that for every question there is only one correct answer. Although such an approach results in assessments that can be easily processed and generate reams of data regarding what students know with respect to the items measured, it also conveys the terribly misleading notion that those items are the only ones that are worth thinking about or that those discreet items somehow represent the breadth and depth of what students could and should be learning in school (Mathis, 2003; Popham, 2003). Moreover, in classrooms across the country, school districts have made massive investments in preparing students for these types of assessments, and the production of test preparation materials is now a multi-billion dollar industry.

The widespread use of multiple choice assessments in order to measure students' mastery of discreet facts and skills has also had the effect of changing teacher practice. The literature is rife with studies that document shifts in teaching practices from student centered, constructivist, inquiry-based and exploratory learning toward more teacher centered, drill and practice approaches (Jones, Jones & Hargrove, 2003; Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; McNeil, 2000). Furthermore, the research suggests that many teachers, sensing the pressure to have students perform well on standardized tests, have sacrificed creative methods focusing on higher order thinking in favor of more emphasis on lower order skills and declarative knowledge (Jones, Jones & Hargrove, 2003; Barksdale-Ladd & Thomas, 2000; Perreault, 2000; Gordon & Reese, 1997; Mitchell, 1997). In short, many teachers feel pressure to teach to the test and to utilize teaching methods that align with both the content matter and format of those assessments.

Single answer items in state assessments and narrow curricula that emphasize low order knowledge, comprehension and basic skills development is particularly damaging when one considers social studies. To be sure, in some respects, social studies does involve the learning of discreet facts and concepts, although there is no consensus on a particular list of such items. Beyond any foundation of facts and concepts, however, lies the remarkable complexity of social studies and the myriad of topics and issues that are appropriate for elementary students to study. Whereas elementary grades assessments in literacy and mathematics are more able to focus on a relatively narrow, and widely agreed upon, range of particular skills and abilities, the very nature of social studies defies any comparable range of knowledge, skills and concepts. The National Council for the Social Studies's *Expectations of Excellence* encompasses ten content themes drawn from a broad range of humanities and social science disciplines, and recommends that elementary students have integrated learning experiences that explore each of the themes in depth (1994). Such a broad content area which incorporates the integrated study and exploration of a number of disciplines simply does not lend itself particularly well to the format of a standardized pencil and paper assessment (Risinger, 2006). Nevertheless, these types of learning experiences are absolutely critical to the goal of developing competent and informed citizens.

Virtually all scholars in the field of social studies education agree that the primary goal of social studies specifically, and public education generally, is the preparation of students for the many varied roles and responsibilities of citizenship (for example, see Banks & Banks, 1999; Savage & Armstrong, 2004; Parker, 2005). Although preparation for citizenship and a productive, fulfilling adult life are endeavors that all subject areas promote, social studies makes unique contributions to these overarching goals. Banks and Banks argue that social studies provides the content and context necessary for students "to develop the knowledge, attitudes, values and skills needed to deal effectively with the major social issues and problems in our nation and world" (1999, p. 7). This is the stuff of adult life and it does not translate easily into pencil and paper assessments or readily agreed upon correct answers. Moreover, it

demands the purposeful cultivation of a myriad of abilities and higher order thinking skills in the cognitive and affective domains that are most appropriately developed in the context of social studies (Tuttle, 2003). Participating in civic life as a member of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world requires the ability to locate, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information from multiple perspectives, explore and clarify one's own values; make reasoned and informed decisions; demonstrate and act upon principles of civic efficacy; develop tolerance and respect for others; and nurturing a commitment to democratic and humane values, to name but a few. It requires a growing understanding of past and present, near and far, and the ability to think and act as a member of the local community, the nation, and as a citizen of the world (Banks & Banks, 1999; Parker, 2005; Duplass, 2004; Rabb, 2004).

None of the skills, abilities or virtues noted above can be properly cultivated through the available test preparation materials, nor through curricula that concentrate on developing lower order skills and declarative knowledge. Nor can they be neatly quantified with the types of standardized assessment instruments currently in use (Popham, 2005). Consequently, because these important life-long skills, knowledge and abilities are not among the measures currently used in order to determine whether a school is succeeding or failing, they are deemed to be less worthy of the investment of classroom time. In some respects it appears as though the larger goals of public education have been lost. Thomas Jefferson's vision of educating a virtuous citizenry in order to sustain the democracy has been supplanted by the goal of developing proficient test takers, and whatever connection that goal might have to promoting and preserving a vibrant civic life is negligible at best.

As elementary school teachers have pared away at the amount of time they devote to the teaching and learning of social studies, their students' experiences with the content, skills, values and the higher order thinking abilities cultivated through the study of social studies have eroded accordingly. There are strong indications that students are routinely exiting the nation's schools with fewer of the skills, values, civic virtues and habits of mind that allow them to participate fully in a democratic society. Although it is but one measure of civic engagement, it is distressing to note that only about 60% of 18 to 24 year old citizens are registered to vote and fewer than 50% of that demographic cast a ballot in the last presidential election (Lopez, Kirby & Sagloff, 2005).

DIMINISHING INVESTMENT: RESOURCES AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

One final indicator of the declining standing of social studies in elementary schools concerns professional development and instructional resources, and as is true in terms of time allocated to social studies, the outlook is rather grim. Numerous Maryland counties reported decreases in their social studies budgets in the wake of NCLB and the shifting emphasis on literacy and mathematics. In some districts, budgets for social studies books and materials were reduced, others reprioritized their professional development activities curtailing those that are social studies related while budgets for literacy and mathematics were increased (Maryland Humanities Council, 2003). In a nationwide survey conducted by the Council of State Social Studies Specialists (2003), more than a dozen states cited the lack of social studies related professional development opportunities as one of the key issues impacting social studies education, while a number of other states reported anticipated shortcomings in professional development as state education budgets tightened and spending on testing increased (2003).

Tight education budgets have compelled some states to undertake draconian cuts which necessarily curtailed professional development opportunities for all teachers. Such was the case in Ohio where the governor signed an executive order cutting state aid to schools by $90.6 million in 2003 (Sunderman & Kim, 2005). However, in other states, such as Wyoming, where the budget for education has grown dramatically in recent years, that largesse has not benefited elementary social studies to a degree comparable to literacy and mathematics. An examination of elementary schools in one Wyoming school district found that virtually every elementary teachers in the district had extensive training in California Early Literacy

Learning (CELL) or Extended Literacy Learning (ExLL), Dynamic Indicators of Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS), and 6 Trait Writing, while most primary grades teachers also had training in Interactive Writing. The district had also invested in training specialists for Reading Recovery and Math Recovery as well as additional literacy coordinators for each elementary school. Furthermore, each elementary school had in place some combination of supplementary programs for math and literacy, such as Accelerated Reader and Accelerated Math, or Star Reading and Star Math. Moreover, the school based learning communities at each elementary school revolved around literacy and mathematics with all faculty members participating in book study groups that focused upon strategies for teaching reading, writing and mathematics (Moran, 2006a). This is not unexpected. In most school districts, planning for professional development programs emerges from the district's school improvement plan which, in turn, generally revolves around efforts to raise test scores in literacy and mathematics.

As is true in terms of instructional time, social studies is a secondary concern in the professional development and school improvement plans of most school districts, particularly at the elementary school level. Not only has NCLB clearly reordered the school day around literacy and mathematics, it has also reordered the teacher in-service and professional development day as well. This egregious development seems likely to compound the tendency to whittle away at social studies in the elementary school. Furthermore teachers are coping with pressure to devote additional time to literacy and mathematics at the expense of teaching social studies and other important subjects. Their opportunities to grow professionally as teachers of anything other than literacy and mathematics are also being truncated (Howard, 2003; Shapira, 2006).

CONCLUSIONS

The 2002 NCLB Act is arguably the most widely criticized piece of federal education legislation in the nation's history. The most commonly voiced criticisms being that its goals are ultimately untenable, that it is a grossly under-funded federal mandate, that the law unfairly punishes more diverse schools in requiring that test scores be disaggregated along multiple lines, that it violates the principles of federalism and is an unwarranted federal intrusion upon state and local control over education. The manner in which the law has reordered the school day around literacy and mathematics is also clearly a cause for concern, particularly at the elementary school level.

Judging from what is currently available in the research, it seems clear that social studies is withering in the nation's elementary school. It appears reasonable to conclude that in a substantial number of schools the overarching concerns for student performance on literacy and mathematics assessments have winnowed away at the amount of time devoted to social studies, diverted resources from social studies, and limited opportunities for professional development. Furthermore, although more research needs to be conducted, there is also evidence that elementary teachers have begun to change their teaching in favor of the lower order knowledge, comprehension and basic skills that are measured on standardized assessments. Moreover, the prevailing pressures that have persuaded teachers and administrators to trim away at elementary social studies are likely to be exacerbated by NCLB's mandate to report standardized assessment results for science beginning in 2007. Each of these indicators is distressing to teachers, school administrators and scholars who value the contributions of social studies to the elementary school curriculum and who recognize its pivotal place in public education's primary goal of goal of preparing students for the many roles and responsibilities of citizenship in our society. Teachers and academics are not alone in their concern, the 2005 Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll (Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup, 2005) of the public's attitudes toward public schools revealed that more than 80% of parents were concerned that the emphasis on literacy and mathematics testing had resulted in less attention to social studies, music, art, and other subjects.

Given the current state of social studies in elementary schools across the nation, it is not unreasonable for one to reach the same conclusion voiced by Al Frascella, spokesman for the National Council for the Social Studies, that "the

worst thing that has ever happened to social studies has been the No Child Left Behind Act." (quoted in Smith, 2005). What remains to be seen is whether the course that NCLB has charted for school reform in America can be righted. It is encouraging that in the past year an earnest debate has commenced regarding amending and revising NCLB. Perhaps those discussions will result in policy that arrests the on-going marginalization of social studies and reaffirms the important place of social studies in the elementary school curriculum.

REFERENCES

Apple, M. (1993). *Official knowledge: democratic education in a conservative age.* New York: Routledge.

Apple, M. (2006). *Educating the "right" way: markets, standards, God and inequality.* New York: Routledge.

Banks, J.A. & Banks, C.A. (1999). *Teaching strategies for the social studies: Decision making and citizen action.* NY: Longman.

Barksdale-Ladd, M.A. & Thomas, K.F. (2000). What's at stake in high-stakes testing: teachers and parents speak out. *Journal of Teacher Education, 51,* 384-97.

Burroughs, S., Groce, E. & Webeck, M.L. (2005). Social studies education in the age of testing and accountability. *Educational Measurement: Issues and Practice, 24,* 13-20.

Clinchy, E. (1997). *Transforming public education.* NY: Teachers College.

Council of State Social Studies Specialists (2003). National survey of course offerings and testing in social studies kindergarten – grade 12. Retrieved September 30, 2006 from http://www.cs4online.org/swf/survey2003.swf

Denver Public Schools (2005a). Elementary Literacy Block, Grade 1. Retrieved April 24, 2006 from http://csss.dpsk12org/elem_lit_program/lit_bl_sched-grade_1.pdf

Denver Public Schools (2005b). Elementary Literacy Block, Grades 2-5. Retrieved April 24, 2006: http://csss.dpsk12org/elem_lit_program/lit_bl_sched-grade_2-5.pdf

Duplass, J.A. (2004). *Teaching elementary social studies: What every teacher should know.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Federal spending under the elementary and secondary education act. (2006). Retrieved October 8, 2006 from: http://www.ed.gov/about/overview/fed/10facts/edlite-chart.html

Gordon, S.P. & Reece, M. (1997). High-stakes testing: worth the price?. *Journal of School Leadership, 7,* 345-68.

Howard, R.W. (2003). The shrinking of social studies. *Social Education, 67,* 285-288.

Hubler, E. (2002, December 8). Social studies held back. *The Denver Post,* 1B, 8B.

Jones, G.M., Jones, B.D. & Hargrove, T. (2003). *The unintended consequences of high stakes testing.* Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Knighton, B. (2003). No child left behind: the impact on social studies classrooms. *Social Education 67,* 291-295.

Lopez, M.H., Kirby, E. & Sagoff, J. (2005). The youth vote 2004. Retrieved October 1, 2006: Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement, http://www.civicyouth.org/PopUps/FactSheets FSYouthVoting72-04.pdf

Mathis, W. (2005). Costs and benefits. *Kappan 84,* 679-86.

Maryland Council for the Social Studies (2003). History and social studies education in Maryland: A cause for concern. Retrieved November 12, 2003 from: http://www.mdhc.org/documents/paper.pdf.

McNeil, L.M. (2000). *Contradictions of school reform: educational costs of standardized testing.* NY: Routledge.

Mitchell, K.J. (1997). What happens when school reform and accountability testing meet? *Theory into Practice 36,* 262-65.

Mitchell, N. (2005, January 22). Survey: Many DPS teachers unhappy. *The Denver Post,* p. 17A.

Moran, P.W. (2006a). [Field study notes and observations]. Unpublished raw data.

Moran, P.W. (2006b). [Field surveys]. Unpublished raw data.

National Council for the Social Studies (1994). *Expectations of excellence: curriculum standards for social studies.* Silver Spring, MD: NCSS.

No Child Left Behind Act (2002). Public Law 107-110. 115 Stat. 1425.

Parker, W.C. (2005) *Social studies in elementary education*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Perreault. G. (2000). The classroom impact of high-stakes testing. *Education 122*, 705-10.

Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup (2005). 37th annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup poll of the public's attitudes toward public education. Retrieved November 19, 2005 from http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/k0509pol.htm#nclbb

Popham, W.J. (2003, January 8). The debasement of student proficiency. *Education Week 22,* 30.

Popham, W.J. (2005). Tawdry tests and AYP. *Educational Leadership 62*, 85-6.

Rabb, T. K. (2004). What has happened to historical literacy? *Chronicle of Higher Education, 50*, B24.

Risinger, F. (Speaker). (2006, September 17). *Social studies goes to the back of the class.* Weekend Edition Sunday, National Public Radio.

Savage, T.V. & Armstrong, D.G. (2004) *Effective teaching in elementary social studies*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

Shapira, I. (2006, October 1). Social studies dwindling. *Washington Post*. p. PW01.

Smith, D. (2005, January 21). Social studies gets short shrift. *Kansas City Star*. p. B1.

Spring. J. (2005). *The American school, 1642-2004*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Sunderman, G.L. & Kim. J.S. (2005, November 3). The expansion of federal power and the politics of implementing the no child left behind act. *Teachers College Record*. Retrieved December 8, 2005 from: http://www.tcrecord.org.

Sunderman, G.L., Tracey, C.A., Kim, J.S. & Orfield, G. (2004). *Listening to teachers: classroom realities and no child left behind*. Cambridge, MA: The Civil Rights Project and Harvard University.

Teaching American History Grants Abstracts (2002). Retrieved December 4, 2003 from: http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/teachinghistory/2002abstracts/nj.html

Teaching American History Grants Abstracts (2003). Retrieved September 15, 2004 from: http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/teachinghistory/2003abstracts/nj.html

Teaching American History Grants Abstracts (2004). Retrieved October 4, 2005 from: http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/teachinghistory/2004abstracts/nj.html

Teaching American History Grants Abstracts (2005). Retrieved October 10, 2006 from: http://www.ed.gov/print/programs/teachinghistory/2005abstracts/nj.html

Tuttle, T.J. (2003). No child left behind: The impact on social studies classrooms. *Social Education 67*, 291-295.

Urban, W.J. & Wagoner, J.L. (2004). *American education: A history*. NY: McGraw-Hill.

Von Zastrow, C. & Janc, H. (2004). *Academic atrophy: The condition of the liberal arts in America's public schools*. Washington D.C.: Council on Basic Education.

Warren, C. (2003). No child left behind: The impact on social studies classrooms. *Social Education 67*, 291-295.

Peter William Moran is an associate professor of Elementary Education at the University of Wyoming. He teaches humanities methods courses for undergraduates and graduate courses in curriculum and the history of education in America. His research focuses on the history of school desegregation and educational policy.