

Social Studies Classroom in the Time of Pandemic

From the Editor:

Dear Readers,

This volume of *Journal of International Social Studies* is different from others. The COVID-19 pandemic has disrupted the lives of millions. It has become a defining moment for governments and civil society all over the world. Schools and universities were among those hit hardest. Unprepared for the new threat, the quickest (and probably most correct) decision was to move all instruction online. This unprecedented step forced all educators to face new challenges in our profession: We have always cherished the ability to communicate with students face-to-face, to have students emotionally involved in important discussions, and to see the passion in students' eyes when addressing controversial issues. Educating good citizens requires a personal touch. The several months of the pandemic have brought myriads of social and ideological issues to light: chaotic official responses in many countries; blatant inequality in regard to access to medical services and healthcare; economic, racial, and ethnic inequalities; naked xenophobia and frightening ignorance. The pandemic became a magnifying glass that made all social problems much more obtrusive and visible than before. Unfortunately, the media report that many schools, particularly elementary schools, plan to reduce time for social studies and even temporarily exclude social studies instruction from their curricula. This is a dangerous move that sadly demonstrates the failure of some politicians and school administrators to appreciate the role of social studies and citizenship education in this trying time.

From the very beginning of the pandemic, we all have faced the question of how to adapt to new extraordinary circumstances. We in the NCSS International Assembly and *Journal of International Social Studies* believe that one of the most efficient ways to help is to exchange experiences and best instructional practices accumulated by social studies professionals during the first months of the pandemic. With this idea in mind, we invited colleagues to share their ideas and practices regarding how to respond to the current challenges. Eleven essays in this special issue involve helpful advice on how to design an online class, develop electronic social studies content materials, establish relations with students in online classrooms, and use the pandemic as a way to educate responsible citizens. The authors of the essays are classroom teachers and university instructors. I would like to thank all colleagues for the very fast and meaningful response – we planned to publish this special issue before the school year starts to make sure our readers can include some advice in their instructional planning.

Corresponding author: bmaguth@uakron.edu

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<http://www.iajiss.org> ISSN: 2327-3585

This issue opens with the article “Cultivating Ordinary Voices of Dissent: The Challenge for the Social Studies” by Graham Pike (Vancouver Island University). This article is based on the address that Dr. Pike delivered last November in Austin, Texas, when he received the NCSS IA Global Scholar Award. The article is the author’s reflection on his 40-year career in global and international education. Despite its success in many areas, the global education movement has yet to deliver on its main principle that our world is a complex, interdependent, and multilayered system. To fully comprehend this complexity requires global collaborative actions on an unprecedented scale by governments, corporations, community groups, and individuals. The critical role for social studies educators is to lay the groundwork for social innovation and cultivate ordinary voices of dissent.

In “Civic Thinking and Public Policy Analysis: A Comparative Approach to Political Decision-Making,” Jason Fitzgerald (Monmouth University) explores the processes that community civic leaders use when thinking aloud about hypothetical civic action scenarios, comparing their processes with the public policy analysis process promoted by a number of action civics programs. The author concludes that while the process of civic action and public policy analysis may be similar, the tones of the processes are somewhat different. Social studies teachers who look for ways to engage their students in communities should focus on having youth interact with the community, making such interaction pre-requisite to direct action.

I hope that you will enjoy this volume and find it helpful for your classroom practice.

Anatoli Rapoport
Editor

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