

# Foreword

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The release of the report of Maryland’s Social Studies Task Force coincides with the early discussions on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) known in recent years as the No Child Left Behind legislation (NCLB). The members of the Social Studies Task Force researched the current status of social studies instruction in Maryland and across the country and concluded that marginalization of the social studies disciplines, considered “core academic” subjects in NCLB had occurred. Realizing this was not a State specific issue, Maryland looked to the national organizations for leadership in responding to this unintended consequence of No Child Left Behind.

In 2007 the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) issued a statement that reads in part, “The National Council for the Social Studies believes that social studies is a core subject in American schools on an equal footing with reading, writing, mathematics and the sciences. It is the official position of the NCSS, therefore, that the federal government should enact changes to the NCLB legislation to include core social studies disciplines.” In a position statement on Curriculum Guidelines for Social Studies Teaching and Learning issued in 2008, NCSS stated, “Social studies education should receive vigorous support as a vital and responsible part of the school program. Appropriate instructional materials, time, and physical facilities must be provided for social studies education. A specific block of time should be allocated for social studies instruction for all grades K-12 equivalent to time provided for non-social studies core content areas. Social studies education should receive active support and funding for professional development from administrators, teachers, boards of education, and the community.”

The Common Core Standards, a national state-led effort to develop research-based standards in core content, have also reinforced the importance of social studies instruction by including standards for literacy in history/social studies for grades 6 through high school. Literacy standards specific to history/social studies are predicated on teachers in these areas using their unique disciplinary expertise to help students meet the particular challenges of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language in their respective fields.

The members of Maryland’s Social Studies Task Force emphatically agree that the critical skills and concepts that are a part of the social studies disciplines must receive the appropriate instruction and resources to ensure that our students are well prepared to actively engage in our democratic society. To borrow a quote from our first president, “*A primary object...should be the education of our youth in the science of government. In a republic, what species of knowledge can be equally important? And what duty more pressing...than...communicating it to those who are to be the future guardians of the liberties of the country.*”—George Washington

# Task Force Membership

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## Chairs

**Mrs. Dixie Stack**, Director of Curriculum and Instruction, Maryland State Department of Education  
**Dr. Margaret Burke**, Executive Director, Maryland Humanities Council

## Members

**Dr. Jon Andes**, Superintendent, Worcester County Board of Education  
**Dr. Sari Bennett**, Director, Center for Geographic Education  
**Ms. Patricia Burnett**, Social Studies Team Leader, Harpers Choice Middle School, Howard County Public Schools  
**Mrs. Deborah Cardin**, Director of Education, The Jewish Museum of Maryland  
**Dr. Suzanne Chapelle**, History Professor, Morgan State University  
**Mr. Sylvester Conyers**, Principal, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Prince George's County Public Schools  
**Dr. Rhoda M. Dorsey**, President Emeritus, Goucher College  
**Mr. Patrick Dotterwich**, Teacher/Team Lead, Shiloh Middle School, Carroll County Public Schools  
**Mr. Brad Engel**, Teacher, Kent Island High School, Queen Anne's County Public Schools  
**Dennis A. Fiori**, Director/CEO, Maryland Historical Society  
**Geri Hastings**, Social Studies Department Chair, Catonsville High School, Baltimore County Public Schools  
**Dr. Gary Gerstle**, Professor and Chair, Department of History, University of Maryland, College Park  
**Louise Hayman**, Board President, Preservation Maryland  
**John Hutchinson**, Coordinator, Business Social Science, Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Community College of Baltimore County  
**Dr. Carol Jarvis**, Former Executive Director, Maryland Council on Economic Education  
**Ms. Toni Richardson**, Team Leader, Social Studies, Ellicott Mills Middle School, Howard County Public Schools  
**Ms. Caitlin Robinson**, Student, Anne Arundel County, Maryland  
**Dr. Gerald Scarborough**, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction, Harford County Public Schools  
**Mrs. Madhu Sidhu**, Parent, Kent County, Maryland  
**Mr. A.T. Stevens**, Educational Director, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture  
**Dr. Mark Stout**, Social Studies Supervisor, Howard County Public Schools  
**Dr. Martin E. Sullivan**, Executive Director, Historic St. Mary's City Commission  
**Dr. Bruce Van Sledright**, Social Studies Professor, University of Maryland, College Park  
**Dr. John Wisthoff**, Former Board Member, Maryland State Board of Education  
**Mrs. Barbara Yingling**, Coordinator of Elementary Social Studies, Baltimore County Public Schools  
**Mr. Peter Zimmer**, Principal, Crofton Woods Elementary School, Anne Arundel County Public Schools

## Maryland State Department of Education Staff

**Marcie Taylor-Thoma**, Social Studies Coordinator  
**Donna Olszewski**, Social Studies Specialist  
**Lisa Katz**, Social Studies Specialist

## Consultants

**Anirban Basu**, Chairman & CEO, Sage Policy Group, Inc.  
**Vanessa N. Francis**, Policy Analyst, Sage Policy Group, Inc.  
**Dr. Mary McFarland**, Past-President of the National Council for Social Studies and Consultant  
**Dr. Francene Engel**, Professor of Political Science, UMCP  
**Lois Sanders**, Facilitator, Independent Consultant

- Many Task Force members have changed positions and some have retired since the Task Force work ended. All identified positions were the positions members held during the duration of the Task Force work.

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# Note from the Chairs

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It was our distinct pleasure to serve as co–chairs of the Maryland Social Studies Task Force, convened in November 2004 by State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick. The work has been taxing at times and the discussions spirited, but we believe that should the Task Force’s recommendations be implemented, it will be well worth the time and energy the group put forth. This was a thoughtful, deliberate process—one we clearly hope will result in graduates who are better prepared for work and for active, engaged citizenship.

During its duration, the Task Force saw the importance of its work reflected on the national level, crystallized most powerfully in a front-page *New York Times* article on the curricular and instructional effects of the No Child Left Behind Act. The article, “Schools Cut Back Subjects to Push Reading and Math,” is based on extensive, nationwide research conducted by the Center on Education Policy and succinctly outlines the systematic erosion of high-quality social studies instruction in the nation’s public schools. Clearly, the issue is an urgent one, and we ask our many stakeholders to help us continue the conversation about how to provide students more and better social studies instruction.

## **Task Force Duration**

The first year of the Task Force’s work was dedicated to gathering information. In January 2005, the Task Force began collecting what would become a substantial amount of local and national data on the status of social studies education. The group commissioned two social studies surveys: *Summary of Findings: Survey of the Council of State Social Studies Supervisors* (Mary McFarland) chronicled national trends in social studies standards, instruction, assessment, and resources, while *Final Report of Findings on the Status of Social Studies Education in the State of Maryland* (Francene Engel) illuminated the nature of social studies education in classrooms statewide.

In addition to these commissioned studies, the Task Force invited Susan Griffin, executive director of the National Council for the Social Studies, to speak about social studies advocacy. The Task Force spent a significant amount of time examining the Voluntary State Curriculum and its external reviews. Colleen Seremet, Assistant Superintendent for Instruction, provided invaluable information on the state’s professional development standards, while Gary Heath, former Assistant Superintendent for Accountability and Assessment, briefed the Task Force on Maryland’s system of standardized assessment.

In January 2006, after the accumulation of the research indicated above, the Task Force began its Subcommittee deliberations.

## **Nature of Consensus**

Group norms were established to facilitate respectful consideration of ideas shared among Task Force members. The group recognized the complexity of the issues being addressed and the futility of proposing a simple solution.

There was often animated discussion around a number of topics, but the most contentious topic by far was assessment. The group struggled with the positive and negative consequences of

statewide testing in social studies, knowing the former had to be continually weighed against the latter. Members were keenly aware that local superintendents, in particular, are strongly opposed to any additional mandated exams.

The Task Force decided early on to draft only one report that would reflect the sentiments of the majority, while acknowledging within the text the concerns of participants who disagreed with any of the recommendations.

### **Limitations of the Research**

It is possible that any of the studies conducted on social studies education and used by the Task Force to inform its work might be flawed in some way. However, the preponderance of research available on this topic supports the conclusion that social studies instruction, particularly in elementary schools, has been adversely affected by the No Child Left Behind Act.

Jack Jennings, president of the Center on Education Policy, and Diane Stark Rentner, the Center's director of national programs, published their research on the topic in the October 2006 edition of *Phi Delta Kappan*. In "Ten Big Effects of the No Child Left Behind Act on Public Schools," the authors write:

Test-driven accountability is now the norm in public schools, a result of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, which is the culmination of 15 years of standards-based reform. ... Schools are spending more time on reading and math, sometimes at the expense of subjects not tested. To find additional time for reading and math—the two subjects that are required to be tested under NCLB and that matter for accountability purposes—71 percent of districts are reducing time spent on other subjects in elementary schools, at least to some degree. **The subject most affected is social studies**, while physical education is least affected [*emphasis added*].

### **Acknowledgements**

- First and foremost, the Task Force acknowledges State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick for her leadership, her vision, and her willingness to champion social studies education. We hope that her vocal advocacy of high-quality social studies instruction will inspire other states to follow her example.
- We thank Nan Mulqueen, in MSDE's Office of Academic Policy, for her extraordinary ability to make a cohesive report out of the Task Force's work.
- For their indispensable assistance in coordinating Task Force and Subcommittee meetings, we thank the staff of MSDE's Office of Social Studies, particularly Lisa Katz, Donna Olszewski, and Marcie Taylor-Thoma.
- We thank Lois Sanders for her skillful facilitation of each of our meetings.
- We are grateful to the staff of the Maryland Humanities Council, especially Stephen Hardy and Judy Dobbs, for their expert help with data-gathering and editing.

- We thank all those whose research and briefings shaped the Task Force’s recommendations: Mary McFarland, Francene Engel, Mary Alexander, Colleen Seremet, Gary Heath, and Susan Griffin.
- We thank, as well, all those who responded to surveys and participated in focus groups. The information gleaned through both was critical to the Task Force’s deliberations.

Finally, as the Task Force co–chairs, we are indebted to the Task Force Members, all of whom took on tough issues with honesty and an unimpeachable commitment to finding the best way to support effective social studies education in Maryland’s public schools.

Dixie Stack  
Director of Curriculum, Maryland State  
Department of Education  
Co–chair, Maryland Social Studies Task Force

Peggy Burke  
President, Maryland Humanities Council  
Co–chair, Maryland Social Studies Task Force

# Executive Summary

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In November 2004, State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick convened the Maryland Social Studies Task Force. The Task Force was charged with examining issues related to social studies education and recommending ways to improve social studies instruction in Maryland's public schools.

The Task Force formed four Subcommittees, each examining an area critical to a high-quality education in social studies: 1) curriculum and instruction; 2) assessment; 3) teacher preparation and professional development; and 4) communication and outreach. At their core, the Task Force's nine recommendations are intended to stem the decline in time and attention afforded social studies in the classroom, and to position Maryland as a leader in effective social studies education.

## The Recommendations

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### **Curriculum and Instruction**

A federal focus on achievement in reading and math—and, to a lesser degree, science—has caused schools to reduce the amount of instructional time devoted to non-assessed subjects, including social studies. In high-poverty, high-minority schools—typically, those most challenged to meet reading and math benchmarks—curricular narrowing is most severe.

In a 2005 survey, half of the surveyed Maryland elementary teachers noted a reduction in social studies time, as did one-quarter of middle school teachers. Additionally, 7 in 10 elementary school principals—and nearly 9 in 10 elementary school teachers—said social studies is not a high-priority subject in their schools.

#### **Recommendation 1**

**Establish the expectation that regular instruction in social studies be provided for all students each week in kindergarten through grade 5 in sufficient frequency and length to achieve the objectives of the Social Studies State Curriculum.**

- **Establish minimum instructional times for social studies.**
  - **Early elementary grades (k-3): 2,700 minutes (e.g., 30 minutes a day x 90 days)**
  - **Intermediate elementary grades (4-5): 4,500 minutes (e.g., 50 minutes a day x 90 days)**
  - **Middle school: 9,000 minutes: (e.g., 50 minutes a day x 180 days)**

#### **Recommendation 2**

**Require that social studies be included in each local school system's master plan.**

#### **Recommendation 3**

**Integrate social studies and reading/language arts instruction.**

- **Develop content literacy in social studies.**
- **Incorporate best practices in applying discipline-based strategies.**

### **Assessment**

Given the documented erosion of classroom time devoted to social studies instruction and the larger context of educational accountability that influences curricular time allocations, a state-developed assessment will ensure that social studies remains among the core subjects taught to Maryland's students. The Task Force has seen how testing reading and math achievement has produced schools and school

systems intensively focused on teaching those subjects—and teaching them well. It’s time to do the same for social studies.

**Recommendation 4**

**Create statewide assessments in social studies that will measure student achievement in grade bands at the elementary and middle school levels, with data reported at the student, school, and system levels. Results will not be factored into Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) but will help schools and systems determine the efficacy of local social studies curricula and predict students’ success at the high school level, including the Government High School Assessment.**

**Teacher Quality**

An examination of teacher–preparation programs in Maryland and the nation reveals significant inconsistency in the number and character of social studies courses prospective teachers must take—especially at the elementary level. However, an even bigger issue is the inadequacy of teachers’ preparation in social studies. While most pre–service elementary teachers must complete three to four reading courses and two math courses, many are not required to take even one content–rich, discipline–based social studies course.

Additionally, many Maryland teachers lack adequate access to subject–specific professional development opportunities. In recent years, elementary–level social studies, civics, and geography have experienced an especially large decline in professional development time.

**Recommendation 5:**

**Work with the Division of Certification and Accreditation to assure that Social Studies Teacher Preparation Programs and Certification Requirements adequately prepare teacher candidates for the social studies classroom.**

**Recommendation 6:**

**Establish mentoring programs that support new social studies teachers in both pedagogy and content.**

**Recommendation 7:**

**Establish partnerships among MSDE, local school systems, and other organizations to develop and implement high–quality social studies professional development programs for teachers. These experiences should include online, content–specific academies and ensure school-based follow-up experiences.**

**Communication and Outreach**

One of the chief impediments to reforming social studies education is the lack of awareness among stakeholders that instructional time and focus on the subjects have declined sharply in Maryland’s public schools—thereby weakening students’ citizenship and workplace skills. Were parents to learn that social studies is neglected in many schools, it’s likely that more pressure would be placed on educators and administrators to reinstate social studies and its disciplines in daily instruction.

**Recommendation 8:**

**Establish a Maryland Social Studies Advisory Committee, using the Fine Arts Advisory Panel as a model, to recommend policies; develop partnerships; develop public awareness; and identify integrative and innovative field experiences, professional development opportunities, classroom resources, and curricular models.**

**Recommendation 9:**

**Maximize the opportunities for students to experience Maryland’s rich historical and cultural resources by identifying and publishing them on an easily accessible website.**



# Introduction

## Background on the Social Studies Task Force

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During the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Annual Meeting in November 2004, State Superintendent of Schools Nancy S. Grasmick announced the formation of the Maryland Social Studies Task Force. With the purpose of developing “a shared vision for quality social studies instruction in Maryland schools,” Dr. Grasmick said, “the Task Force will provide [the Maryland State Department of Education] with a roadmap for our social studies programs as we continue Maryland’s educational progress.”

Consisting of 25 members, the Task Force represented various stakeholder groups, including students, teachers, school administrators, parents, and representatives from educational and historical organizations, museums, and postsecondary institutions.

The Task Force convened for the first time in January 2005, and adopted the following mission statement:

Every student should have equal access to high-quality elementary, middle, and high school social studies instruction aligned with the Maryland Voluntary State Curriculum. Full participation in a comprehensive social studies program develops inquiring and reflective learners who have disciplinary understanding and who are capable of informed, engaged civic participation in the affairs of the nation and world. High-quality social studies instruction also ensures students’ success on such tests as the Maryland High School Assessment in Government and Advanced Placement exams in history, government and politics, geography, and economics.

Charged with examining issues related to social studies education—including instruction, assessment, professional development, and partnerships with organizations that help enrich social studies education—the Task Force was asked to address the following concerns:

1. The need for all Maryland students to learn social studies (i.e., economics, civics, geography, history, and political science).
2. The need for a pre-K–12 social studies curriculum (Voluntary State Curriculum) that is broadly supported by stakeholders throughout Maryland.
3. The impact of assessment/accountability measures related to the quality of social studies instruction.
4. The need for professional development and resources for social studies educators.
5. The role of Maryland’s museums, historic sites, and related organizations in providing instructional resources for social studies.

After studying these concerns through months of research and analysis, including the commissioning of both a national and State survey, the Task Force developed recommendations intended to promote high-quality social studies education in Maryland and to establish Maryland as a U.S. model for social studies education.

# Recommendation Development

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The Social Studies Task Force established a two-phase process for developing recommendations. The first phase involved presentations to the Task Force on the status of social studies locally and nationally. The Task Force also reviewed Maryland's State Curriculum, state requirements regarding pre-K-12 social studies instruction, the impact of federal and state legislation on social studies instruction, and additional research from other states' efforts to ensure quality social studies instruction.

Furthermore, the Task Force commissioned two surveys to gain a better understanding of national and local trends in social studies standards, instruction, and assessment. The national survey was conducted by Mary McFarland, former president of the National Council for the Social Studies. Her *Summary of Findings: Survey of the Council of State Social Studies Supervisors* was delivered to the Task Force in March 2005. In December 2005, Francene Engel submitted to the Task Force the results of her local survey: *Final Report of Findings on the Status of Social Studies Education in the State of Maryland*.

During the second phase of the process, Task Force members worked in four subcommittees to tackle specific social studies issues. Subcommittees focused on the following: 1) Curriculum and Instruction; 2) Assessment, 3) Teacher Quality, and 4) Communication and Outreach. All four subcommittees used the McFarland and Engel reports extensively in their deliberations, gathered additional information on their respective topics, and prepared reports discussing key issues and recommendations.

Final recommendations were presented to the full Task Force in June 2006. Ultimately, the recommendations set forth an instructional agenda intended to benefit Maryland's students and establish Maryland as the nation's leader in social studies education.

## Organization of the Report

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### **I National Perspective**

Outlines national trends in social studies education.

### **II Maryland Perspective**

Examines social studies instruction and achievement in Maryland.

### **III Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee Report**

Outlines issues influencing the quantity and quality of social studies instruction in Maryland and offers recommendations to increase both.

### **IV Assessment Subcommittee Report**

Analyzes types of assessments, examines the pros and cons of social studies assessments and recommends an assessment approach for Maryland.

### **V Teacher Quality Subcommittee Report**

Examines the degree to which Maryland teachers are prepared to teach social studies and recommends improvements in the preparation and professional development offered them.

### **VI Communication and Outreach Subcommittee Report**

Discusses the public's perception of the quality and importance of social studies education and recommends ways to influence it.

# National Perspective

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“Thousands of schools across the nation are responding to the reading and math testing requirements laid out by No Child Left Behind ... by reducing class time spent on other subjects and, for some low-proficiency students, eliminating it.”

—Sam Dillion, “Schools Cut Back Subjects to Push Reading and Math,”  
*New York Times*, March 26, 2006

“When the core academic subjects of reading, math, and science are given priority at the expense of the time and resources dedicated to the instruction of other subjects in the curriculum, including social studies, physical education, foreign languages, and the arts.”

—King and Zucker, “Curriculum Narrowing,” Harcourt Policy Brief, (2005)

## No Child Left Behind

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Over the last several years, educators and researchers have examined curriculum narrowing and its effects on education in the United States. Because of the nature of assessment and accountability today, there is a sharp focus on proficiency in reading and math, which has reduced or eliminated instructional time previously set aside for other subjects.

In January 2002, President Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) into law. Under the law, states must test reading and math achievement in grades 3–8 and in high school. Science achievement must be tested once at the elementary, middle and high school levels. If schools and school systems fail to meet established performance targets each year in reading and math,<sup>1</sup> states must intervene.

**“Nine in 10 Americans think civic education is important to a healthy democracy and that policymakers should do more to foster civic education.”**

**—Congressional Conference for the Civic Mission of Schools (2005)**

The Center on Education Policy (2006) published a report describing NCLB’s impact on schools. Among the negative aspects reported was the reduced instructional time in subjects not tested under the provisions of NCLB. Social studies is a content area that was specifically noted as being cut in many schools across the country.

## Changes in Instructional Time

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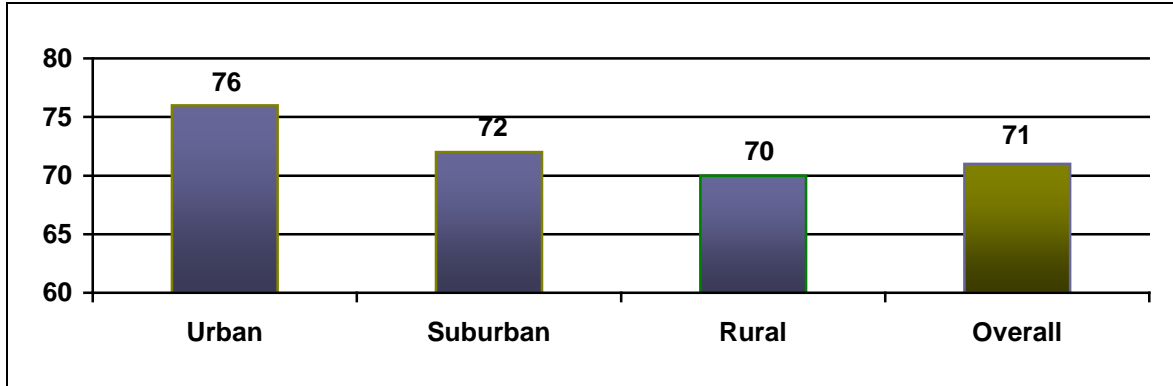
Because of this federal focus on reading, math, and (to a lesser degree) science, instructional emphasis on other subjects has waned. Responding to a Center on Education Policy survey (2006), 71 percent of school districts said that at the elementary level they had reduced instructional time for one or more subjects in order to generate additional time for reading/language arts or math<sup>2</sup> (**Figures 1 and 2**).

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1 While science achievement must be tested under NCLB, states are not held accountable for their science results.

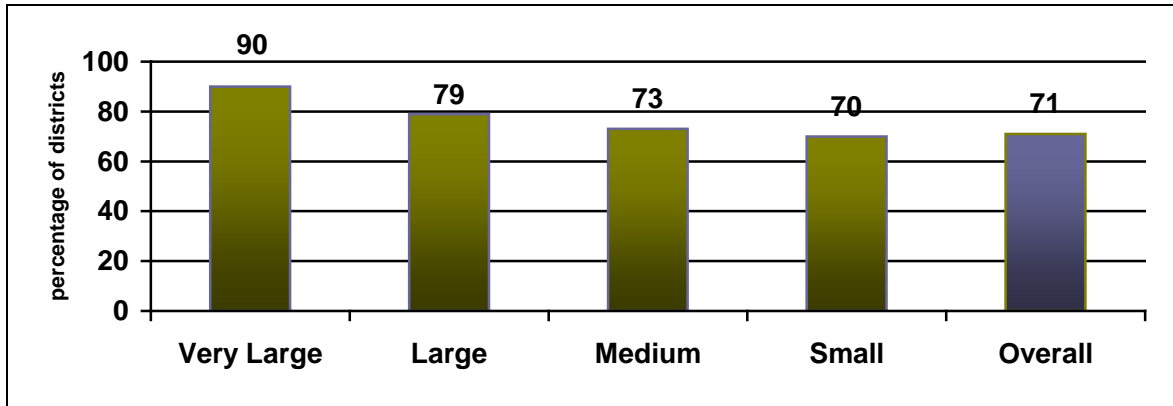
2 CEP surveyed 229 school districts representing 15,000 schools in all 50 states.

**Figure 1 Percentage of districts reporting that elementary schools have reduced instructional time in at least one other subject to make more time for reading/language arts and math, 2005–06, BY DISTRICT TYPE**



Source: Center on Education Policy (2006). "From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act."

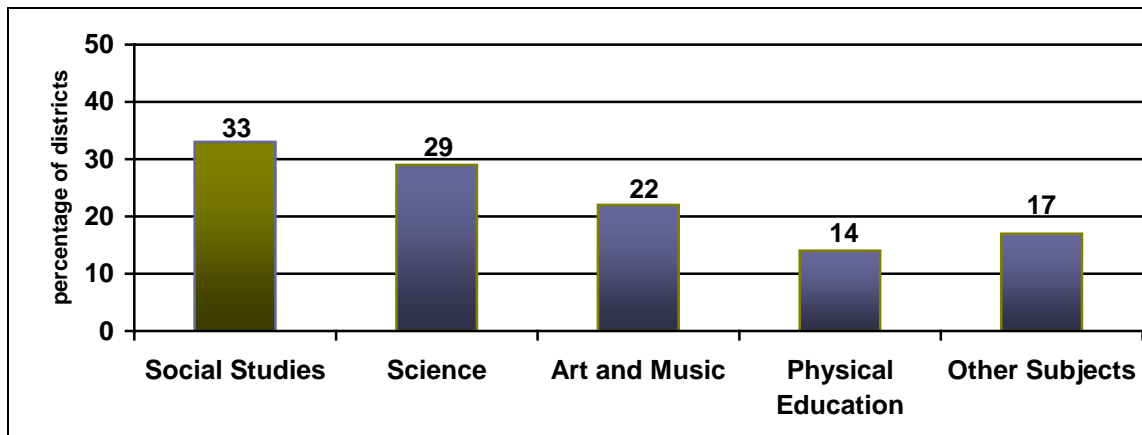
**Figure 2 Percentage of districts reporting that elementary schools have reduced instructional time in at least one other subject to make more time for reading/language arts and math, 2005–06, BY DISTRICT SIZE**



Source: Center on Education Policy (2006). "From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act."

The survey also discussed the extent to which specific subjects, including social studies, have been affected by longer and more frequent instruction in reading and math. Of surveyed districts, 33 percent reported that instructional time for social studies (e.g., history, civics, and geography) had been scaled back to provide for more instructional time in reading and math (Figure 3).

**Figure 3 Percentage of districts reporting that elementary schools have reduced instructional time in some subjects to make more time for reading/language arts and/or math, 2005–06, BY SUBJECT**

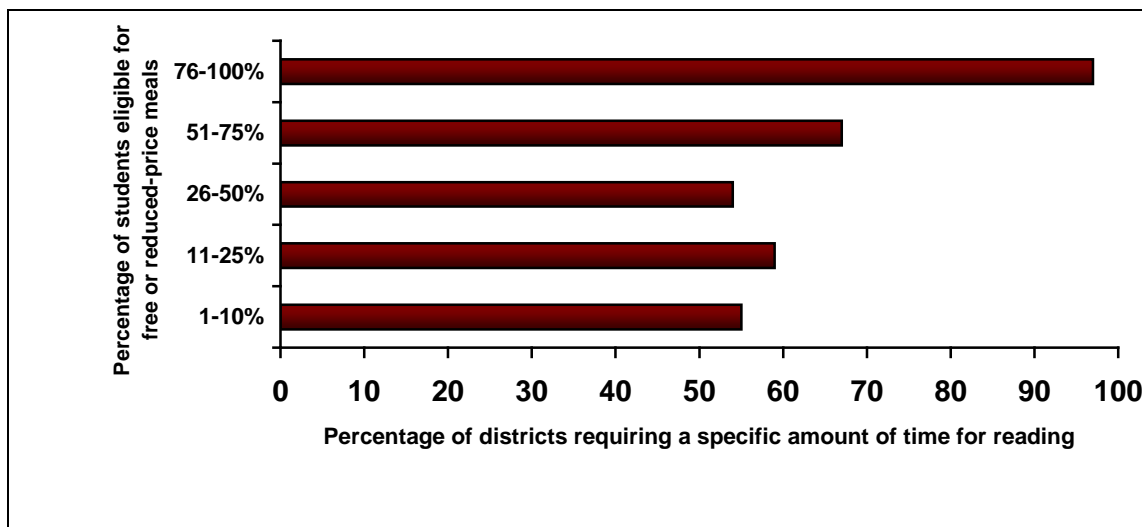


Source: Center on Education Policy (2006). "From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act."

Moreover, among surveyed districts that receive Title I funding and have at least 76 percent of their students receiving free or reduced-price meals, 97 percent reported that they required elementary schools to commit relatively more time to reading/language arts instruction (Figure 4).

This represents a considerably higher proportion than in more affluent districts—the implication being that the poorer the community, the more likely social studies instruction is to be displaced.

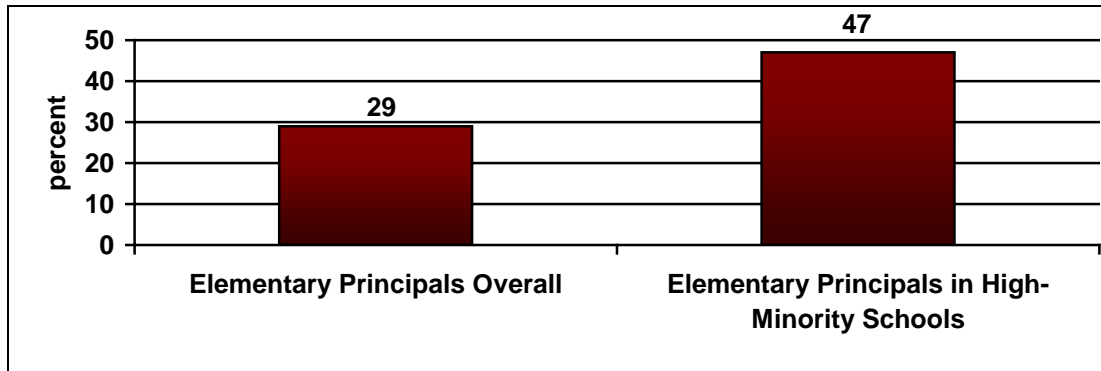
**Figure 4 Percentage of districts reporting that they required elementary schools to devote a specified amount of time to reading/language arts instruction, 2005–06, BY DISTRICT POVERTY**



Source: Center on Education Policy (2006). "From the Capital to the Classroom: Year 4 of the No Child Left Behind Act."

A four-state survey<sup>3</sup> conducted by the Council for Basic Education indicates that minority students are especially vulnerable to diminished liberal arts instruction. While 29 percent of elementary school principals overall report declining time for social studies instruction, that number jumps to 47 percent when only principals of high-minority schools are surveyed (**Figure 5**).

**Figure 5 Percentage of elementary school principals reporting a decrease in the time allotted for social studies instruction, BY MINORITY POPULATION**



Source: Council for Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy* (2004)

## The State of Social Studies in the U.S.

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For additional information on the status of social studies instruction nationwide, the Maryland Social Studies Task Force commissioned Dr. Mary McFarland, an educational consultant and former president of the National Council for the Social Studies, to conduct a state-by-state social studies analysis. Summarized in *Survey of the Council of State Social Studies Supervisors* (2005), findings for 33 states<sup>4</sup> are discussed below.

### Social Studies Content Standards

- All responding states have statewide social studies standards; 52% of states have mandated standards for grades K–12; an additional 27% have mandated standards for some grades along the k-12 continuum.
- 94% of responding states have statewide social studies graduation requirements. The two most common requirements are in history and government.

### Social Studies Assessments

- 55% of responding states have statewide social studies assessments. Of this group:
  - 39% report testing in elementary, middle, and high school.
  - 76% report that social studies testing is mandatory.
- 42% do not have a social studies test. Of this group, 45% say social studies is not integrated into other assessments.

<sup>3</sup> **Participating states:** Illinois, Maryland, New Mexico, and New York

<sup>4</sup> **Responding states:** Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia

## Allocation of Time and Resources

### Time

- 60% of responding states report less time being spent on social studies instruction in *elementary school* than in 2002.
- 24% of responding states report less time for social studies in *middle school*.
- 6% of responding states report less time for social studies in *high school*.
- Some states indicate that social studies is being combined with other subjects and, in one case, has been reduced to one semester.
- While 70% of social studies supervisors report that the amount of time allocated for high-school social studies has not changed, some indicate that social studies teachers are asked to provide instruction in reading and math to help students pass state tests in those subjects.
- In some cases, social studies electives are being dropped to provide remediation in reading and math.

### Funding and Resources

- Of responding states, 18% report less funding for social studies programs at the elementary and middle school levels, compared with 2002.
- 12% report less funding at the high school level, compared with 2002.

## Professional Development

- 64% of responding states maintain professional development standards.
- 30% provide professional development using “best practices”<sup>1</sup> for mandated testing.
- 64% provide support for mandated curriculum and instruction.

## Teacher Certification

- 91% of responding states have state certification standards for secondary social studies teachers (grades 6–12).
  - 45% of these states require a general social studies certificate.
  - 21% have both general and discipline–specific certification available to teachers.
  - 15% require discipline–specific certification.
- 64% require new teachers to take the Praxis test.
- 24% require new teachers to take a state certification examination.
- 64% assign mentors to new teachers.

## Survey Responders’ Comments

- Deteriorating emphasis on social studies
- Lack of support from administrators
- Inconsistent scope and sequence of social studies curriculum and instruction
- Elementary and middle school students not having prior social studies content knowledge to be successful in high school courses
- In general, there is less time, less money, and fewer resources dedicated to social studies. Prior to 2002 social studies was a part of the state assessment program and social studies instruction was evident in elementary classrooms. Social studies is excluded from state improvement plans and assessments and is increasingly incorporated into other subjects (e.g., language arts).
- Lack of assessment
  - Because social studies is often not tested at the state level, survey responders maintain that support for social studies (in terms of time, money, and professional development) is reduced in order to provide more support to the tested subjects for which they are held accountable—most often reading and math.

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<sup>1</sup> Best Practices is a term used by the National Council for the Social Studies to describe purposeful and meaningful learning experiences that are challenging, of high quality, and developmentally appropriate for all children.

The *Survey of the Council of State Social Studies Supervisors* indicates a general deterioration in the level of investment and interest in social studies education. The increased attention paid to mathematics and reading, given their associated assessments, has prompted educators to relax social studies standards and instruction in order to generate more time and resources for those subjects that are tested and for which they are held accountable.

Despite the importance of social studies in the elementary curriculum (Levstik, 2000; Heafner & et al., 2007); teachers, especially elementary teachers, feel the pressure to focus instruction on the tested subjects (Pedulla et al., 2003). This national trend of cutting back on the teaching of anything not tested echoes from Maryland to Washington State (Perlstein, 2004).

## Maryland Perspective

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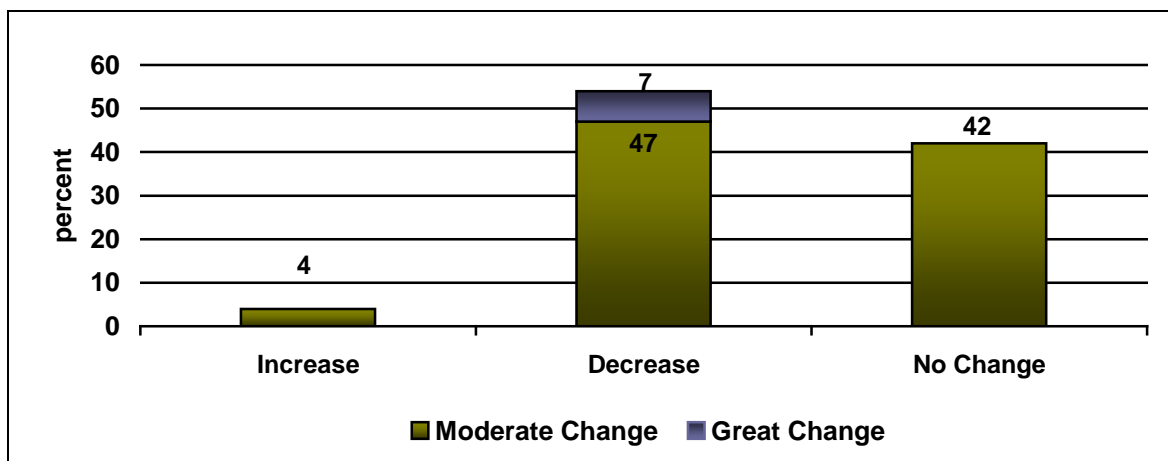
### Changes in Instructional Time

#### Academic Atrophy (2004)

In 2004, the Council for Basic Education (CBE) released *Academic Atrophy: The Condition of the Liberal Arts in America's Public Schools*. The report surveyed principals from four states— Maryland among them—regarding trends in liberal arts instruction, assessment, and equitable access to programs.

The majority of Maryland principals reported a decrease in instructional time for social studies<sup>1</sup> (Figure 6).

**Figure 6** Percentage of Maryland elementary school principals reporting a change in instructional time for SOCIAL STUDIES

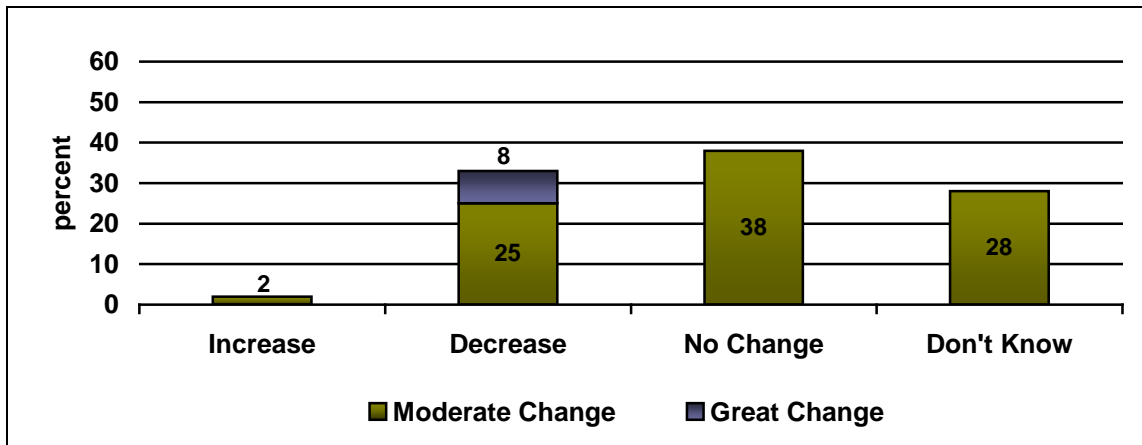


Source: Council for Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy* (2004)

Thirty-three percent of the Maryland elementary school principals who responded reported a moderate to great decrease in civics instruction (Figure 7). 813 principals responded to the survey with 268 reporting a moderate to great increase.

<sup>1</sup> Elementary principals in Maryland (with no social studies testing) were far more likely than elementary principals in the aggregate (four-state) sample to report declining instructional time. Social studies: 54% vs. 29%; Civics: 33% vs. 24%; Geography: 45% vs. 22% (Figures 5–7). Similar proportions foresaw decreases in the coming two years.

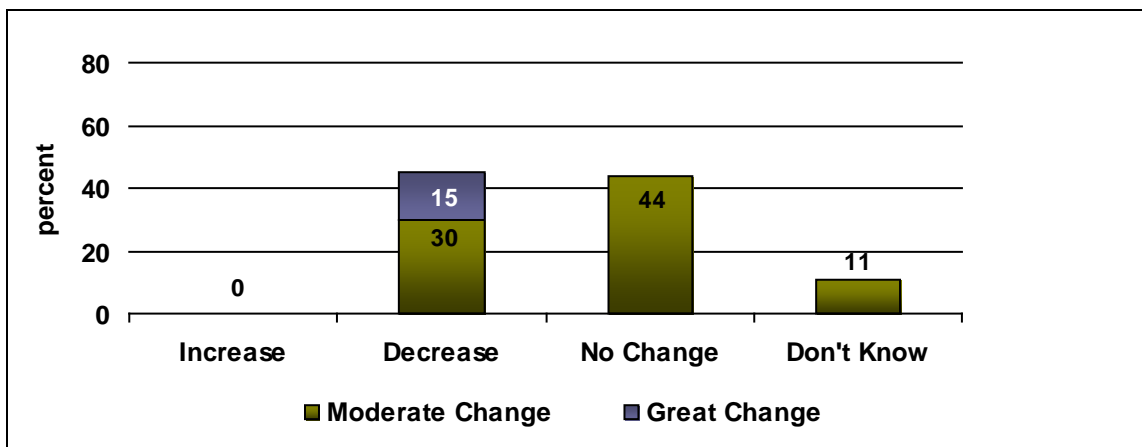
**Figure 7** Percentage of Maryland elementary school principals reporting a change in instructional time for CIVICS



Source: Council for Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy* (2004)

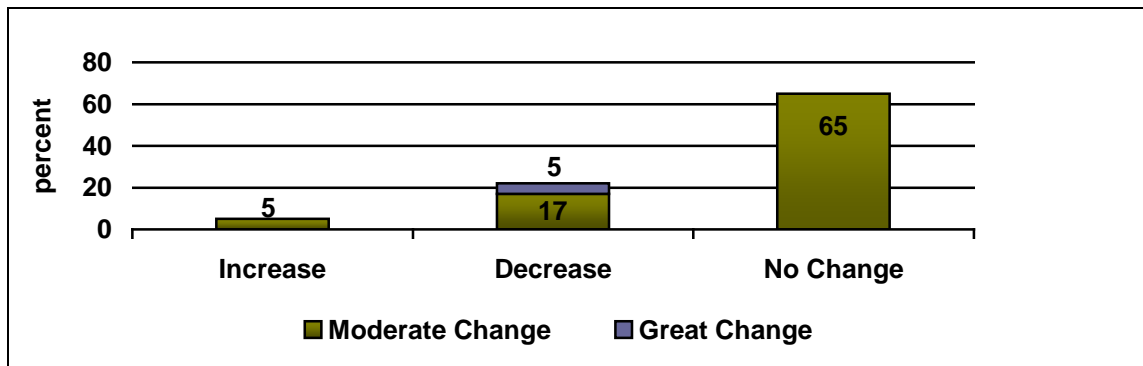
Forty-five percent of elementary principals and 22 percent of middle and high school principals reported a decrease in geography instruction (**Figures 8 and 9**).

**Figure 8** Percentage of Maryland elementary school principals reporting a change in instructional time for GEOGRAPHY



Source: Council for Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy* (2004)

**Figure 9 Percentage of Maryland middle and high school principals reporting a change in instructional time for GEOGRAPHY**



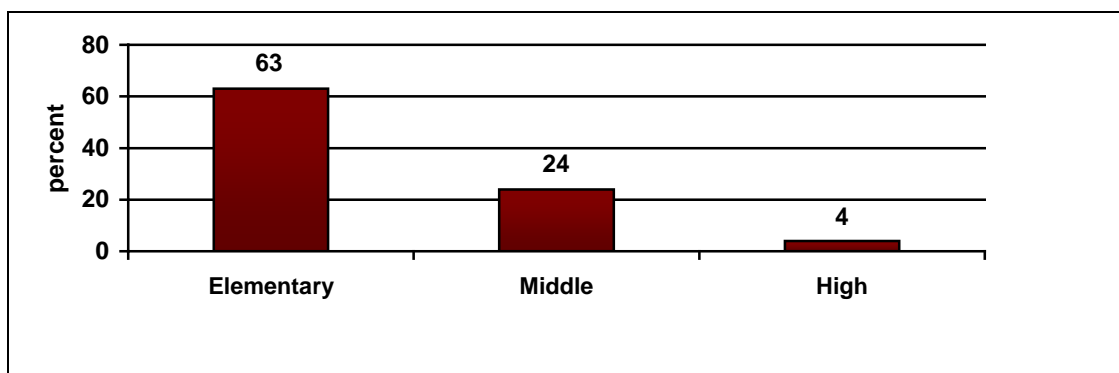
Source: Council for Basic Education, *Academic Atrophy* (2004)

### Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

The *Final Report of Findings on the Status of Social Studies Education in the State of Maryland* (known afterwards as *Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland*) was commissioned by the Social Studies Task Force in 2005. The report, written by Dr. Francene Engel, compiles the survey responses of social studies supervisors, principals, and teachers in each of Maryland’s 24 school systems. Survey questions focused on curriculum and instruction, professional development, and the acquisition of outside resources for enriching social studies education.

Sixty-three percent of surveyed social studies supervisors reported a decrease in social studies instruction in elementary school since 2002,<sup>2</sup> 24 percent reported a decrease in middle school, and 4 percent reported a decrease in high school (Figure 10). Thirteen percent of social studies supervisors reported an *increase* in instructional time at the high-school level—the only school level to see an increase.

**Figure 10 Percentage of Maryland SOCIAL STUDIES SUPERVISORS reporting a decrease in the time allotted for social studies instruction since 2002**

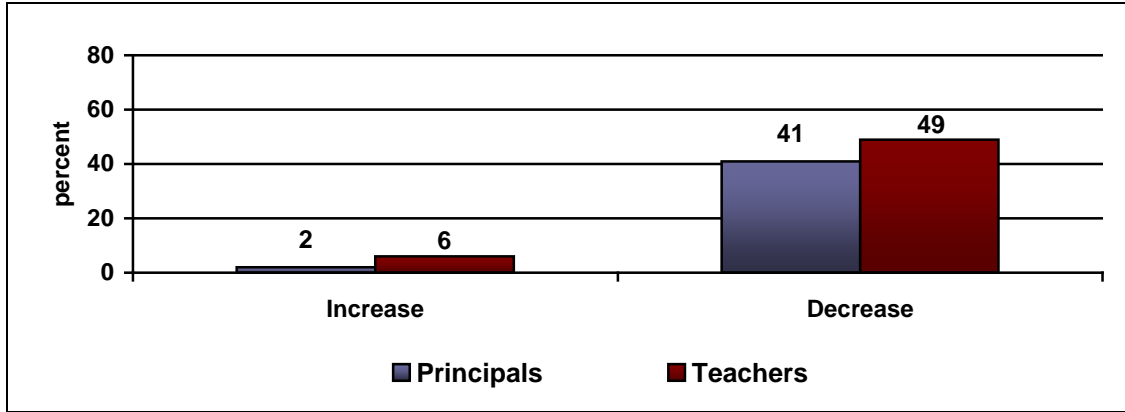


Source: *Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland* (2005)

<sup>2</sup> In 2002, Maryland discontinued its statewide testing program—the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, or MSPAP—in order to comply with the federal testing requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act. While MSPAP tested achievement in reading, writing, language usage, math, science, and social studies, its replacement, the Maryland School Assessment, would focus only on the federal priorities of reading, math, and (beginning in 2007–08) science.

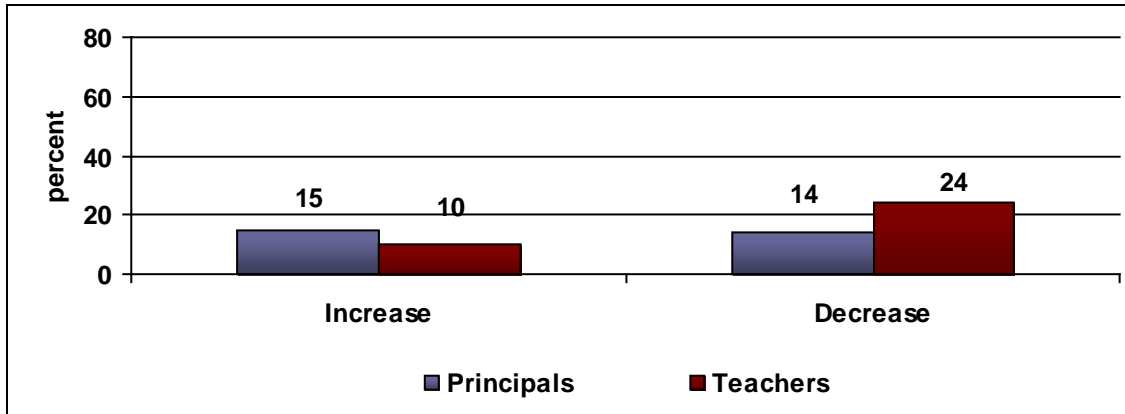
Results of elementary and middle school principal and teacher surveys trend in the same direction (Figures 11 and 12).

**Figure 11 Percentage of Maryland ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS reporting a change in the time allotted for social studies instruction since 2002**



Source: *Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)*

**Figure 12 Percentage of Maryland MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS reporting a change in the time allotted for social studies instruction since 2002**



Source: *Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)*

One-third of all surveyed principals attributed the decrease in social studies instructional time to a focus on improving Maryland School Assessment scores. Thirty-eight percent cited the need to improve reading achievement, and 27 percent cited a need to improve math achievement as reasons for the decline.

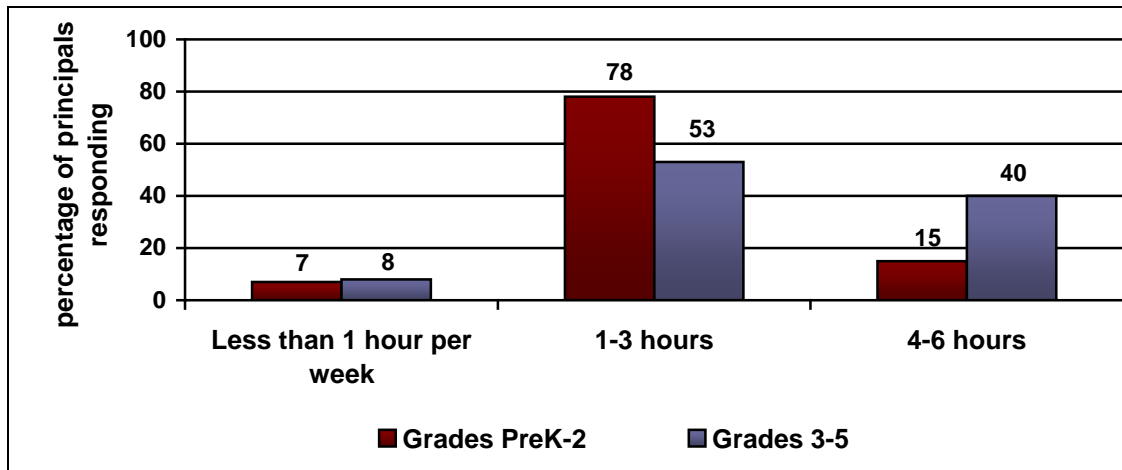
## Hours Dedicated to Social Studies Instruction

### Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

Elementary school principals were asked if teachers (pre-K–2 and grades 3–5) had time to teach social studies. Ninety-four percent responded that pre-K–2 teachers did have time for social studies instruction. When asked how many hours pre-K–2 teachers actually spent teaching social studies, 78 percent responded that most teachers spent 1–3 hours a week on the subject; 15 percent responded that teachers spent 4–6 hours a week on the subject. No principals reported teachers spending more than 6 hours a week on social studies.

Ninety-four percent of principals reported that their 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers had time to teach social studies. Fifty-three percent reported teachers spending 1–3 hours a week on the subject, and 40 percent reported teachers dedicating 4–6 hours a week to social studies. As with pre-K–2, none reported that social studies was taught more than 6 hours per week (**Figure 13**).

**Figure 13** Hours per week social studies is taught, according to Maryland ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



Source: *Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)*

## Interruption of Social Studies Instruction

### Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

Survey participants were asked whether students were “pulled out” of social studies—that is, removed from the classroom during social studies instruction in order to participate in other subjects or activities (most often reading or math remediation). Sixty-six percent of elementary school principals and 53 percent of teachers responded that students were pulled out of social studies class.

**“[The biggest problem with social studies] is pull-out programs at the middle-school level, which send students to us with inadequate skills and background.”**

—High School Teacher

This indicates that even when time is provided for social studies instruction, instruction is often interrupted for those students most acutely in need of reading and math support—generally, students in high-poverty, high-minority schools. Of course, the data suggest that these are the very same students who need social studies the most.

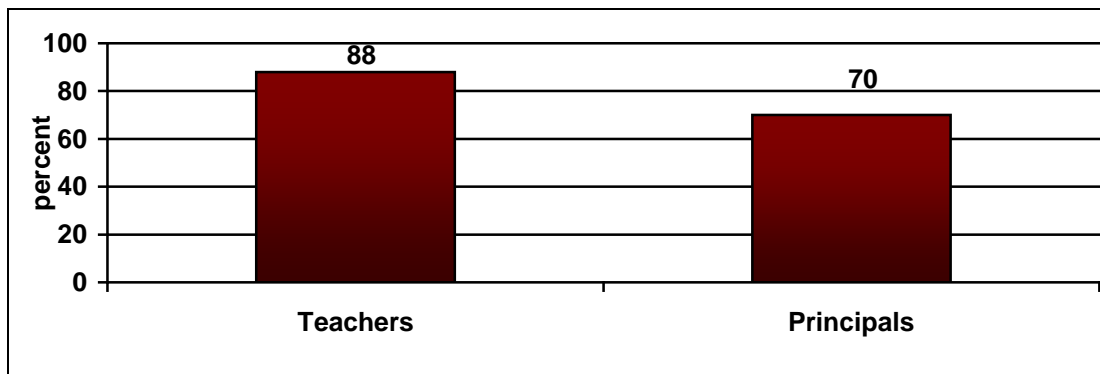
# The Perception of Social Studies as a Low-Priority Subject

## Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

Many of the elementary school teachers and principals participating in study-related focus groups said they believed social studies was a low priority in their schools. (Among principals who reported that social studies was a high priority, many explained that they were able to teach the subject by integrating it into reading instructional time.) On the other hand, three-quarters of Maryland’s middle-school principals consider social studies a high-priority subject.

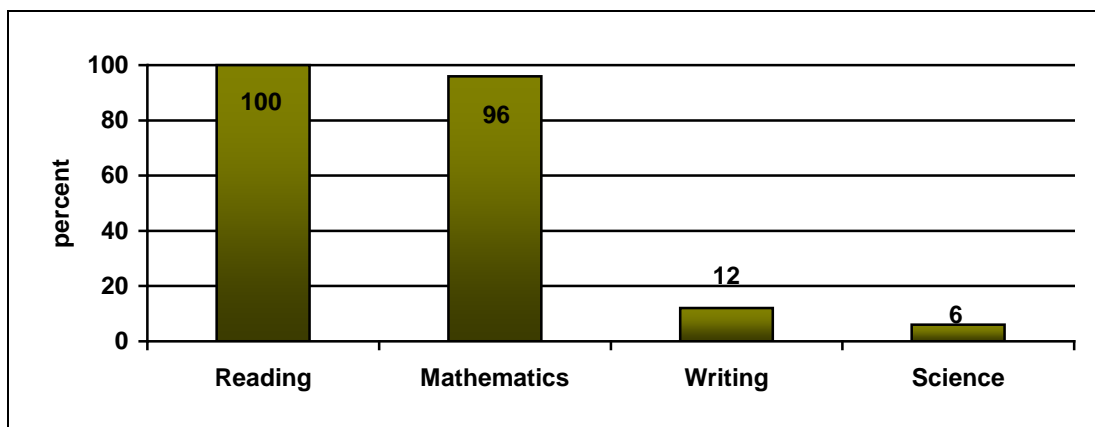
Most principals agreed that “social studies instruction [was] on the decline because of No Child Left Behind and MSA testing.” There was also near-consensus that “since social studies is not an assessed area, schools cannot afford to devote enough time to teaching it” (Figures 14 and 15).

Figure 14 Percentage of Maryland **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS** reporting that social studies is **NOT** a high-priority subject in their schools



Source: Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

Figure 15 Subjects considered a higher priority than social studies, according to Maryland **ELEMENTARY SCHOOL TEACHERS**<sup>3</sup>



Source: Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland (2005)

<sup>3</sup> Because respondents offered more than one response to this question, percentages total more than 100 percent.

**Table 1: Social studies instruction in Maryland schools: Comments from focus group participants**

Teachers	Principals
<p>Social studies is taught probably only one time a month. Social studies is taught whenever there is time or a holiday. We almost never teach anything but reading, writing, math. <i>(elementary)</i></p>	<p>Social studies is not assessed on MSAs. Instructional times were reorganized to focus more on assessed subjects—reading and math. <i>(elementary)</i></p>
<p>We would <u>all</u> love to teach more social studies because the children find it fascinating, but unfortunately, the constant testing of reading and math skills cut[s] into all instructional time in social studies and science. <i>(elementary)</i></p>	<p>Emphasis on MSAs [has] forced us to reduce social studies instruction by about one hour per week. You teach what you test. <i>(elementary)</i></p>
<p>Social studies does not seem to be a priority because it is not a tested area. <i>(elementary)</i></p>	<p>When science becomes a tested area for MSA, this will only get worse. <i>(middle)</i></p>
<p>Social studies is the <u>last</u> area to be scheduled in our daily lesson plans, as reading and math times are prescheduled without teacher input. <u>All</u> assemblies are scheduled in the afternoon, [which] causes social studies to be eliminated from that daily routine. <i>(elementary)</i></p>	<p>The subjects being tested are the subjects getting priority since the penalties for not making AYP are so strict and far-reaching. There had to be some organized abandonment. <i>(elementary)</i></p>
<p>Sixth-graders come to us from elementary school with very little geography knowledge. We have found that social studies is taught in the 5th grade only a few hours a week. <i>(middle)</i></p>	<p>I see social studies taking a “back seat” to reading and math. <i>(middle)</i></p>

## Inequitable Access to Social Studies Instruction

Researcher and political scientist Dr. James Gimpel traveled throughout Maryland with a small group of researchers, surveying over 3,000 students in 29 high schools about various aspects of political learning and engagement. “Our visits revealed the jarring inequalities that differentiate Maryland’s socioeconomic terrain, and create very disparate life experiences for youth” (Gimpel, 2007, p 1). The research compares some of the wealthiest schools in one county to some of the poorest just an hour away. He compared teacher qualities, resources, and school buildings and remarkably did not find the inequitable resource distribution and school buildings one might suspect. His concern was the quality of the teachers and the political and social environment of the school and the community. “One of the major problems we found is that the brightest, most creative, social studies teachers are too often in the places that least need them” (Gimpel, 2007, p. 3). “In our perspective, and the perspective of the book (*Cultivating Democracy: Civic Environment and Political Socialization America*) the environment or setting in which the school is embedded is as important to the student’s development of civic values as anything else. In fact, the school may contribute little over and above the conditioning attitudes students bring in from the outside. This is because schools are commonly a reflection of their neighborhood; show me a supportive and caring community and I will show you students who are destined for a life of civic engagement” (Gimpel, 2007, p. 3).

# Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee

## **Subcommittee Members**

**Patrick Dotterwich**, Shiloh Middle School, Carroll County

**Suzanne Chappelle**, Morgan State University

**Barbara Yingling**, Baltimore County Public Schools

**Peter Zimmer**, Crofton Elementary School, Anne Arundel County

**Jack Wisthoff**, Professor Emeritus, Anne Arundel Community College

**Geri Hastings**, Catonsville High School, Baltimore County

**Gary Gerstle**, University of Maryland, College Park

# Subcommittee Overview

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The primary objectives of the **Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee** were to determine the components of effective social studies education, examine the delivery of social studies content in Maryland schools, and propose changes in the character and frequency of social studies instruction.

## Key Issues

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The Subcommittee identified three major curriculum and instruction issues related to educating students in social studies and its supporting disciplines (history, civics/government, political science, geography, and economics):

- Clarifying the purpose of social studies education.
- Defining effective social studies instruction.
- Designing Instructional Program.

## The Purpose of Social Studies Education

There are several purposes of comprehensive education in social studies (**Table 2**). The key purpose is to help students “make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world” (NCSS, 1994).

In addition to creating a civically-literate population, social studies also prepares students for the workplace. Employers identify key skill areas like “acquiring information and manipulating data; developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories; constructing new knowledge; and participating in groups” (NCSS, 1994). These skills are taught in a quality social studies curriculum.

After reviewing many sources on the definition of social studies, the Subcommittee adopted the definition offered by the National Council for the Social Studies:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and the natural sciences (NCSS, 1994).

**Table 2: The purposes of social studies education**

Purpose	Source
Civic purposes of social studies include developing inquiring and reflective learners who have disciplinary understanding and who are capable of informed, engaged civic participation in the affairs of the nation and the world.	National Council for the Social Studies (2001)
“Social Studies education has multiple purposes, draws on the knowledge and methods of inquiry from various disciplines (including history, political science, geography, and economics), and invites students to express learning in forms that are authentic and age-appropriate.”	McFarland (2005)
“...AP English and social studies courses develop the skills necessary for students to write effectively, think critically, and engage with great minds from the world’s cultures.”	College Board (2006)
“...The civic mission of our schools must be paramount. Civic knowledge was and is the primary reason for public education.”	Garcia (2004)

## Defining Effective Social Studies Instruction

Broadly, effective social studies education is instruction that is “meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active.” It focuses on “authentic intellectual accomplishment so that students realize the goal of deep understanding of what they study—to the level of being able to make flexible applications of knowledge and process” (McFarland, 2005).

Effective social studies instruction, “... draws on history, literature, art, music, drama, philosophy, etc., to enrich the study of what it means to be human in this time and culture as well as other cultures and times past. Content and modes of thinking from the humanities (e.g., inquiry, analysis, critical understanding, creativity, imagination, and interpretation) are integrated in social studies courses or featured in multidisciplinary courses in humanities, especially at the secondary level.”

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994; Alleman & Brophy, 1995) has identified the circumstances associated with and the characteristics of effective social studies instruction.

- **Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are meaningful.**  
In social studies, students learn connected networks of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and attitudes that they will find useful both inside and outside of school. Instruction emphasizes in-depth development of important ideas within appropriate breadth of topic coverage.
- **Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are integrative.**  
Social studies teaching and learning integrate knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, and attitudes.
- **Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are active.**  
Active social studies teaching requires reflective thinking and decision-making as events unfold during instruction ... Powerful social studies teaching emphasizes authentic activities that call for real-life applications using the skills and content of the field.
- **Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are challenging.**  
In social studies students are encouraged to function as a learning community to reflect and struggle with difficult questions and problems that confront society. They are also expected to come to grips with controversial issues, to participate assertively but respectfully in group discussions, and to work productively with peers in cooperative learning activities.

- **Social studies teaching and learning are powerful when they are value-based.** Social studies educators make personal decisions to teach lessons that are value laden but build on the concept of providing for the common good. The teacher includes diverse points of view, demonstrates respect for well-supported positions, and shows sensitivity and commitment to social responsibility and action.

Unfortunately, students often have inadequate opportunities to engage in higher-order thinking and disciplined inquiry—skills acquired in an effective social studies program—and to fully develop their civic capacities. There is insufficient time devoted to: 1) experiencing democracy as a way of life; 2) fostering respect for understanding of individuals and groups with differing values, beliefs, and practices; and 3) identifying social problems, their causes, and possible solutions (C. Kahne, et al, 2000 p.312).

Some instruction in social studies does occur in all elementary and secondary grades. Students in the early elementary grades (pre-K–3) learn social studies through “multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, or integrated units.” Further, the early elementary grades provide the groundwork for upper–elementary programs that may be integrated but draw more heavily on specific disciplines or focus on a single discipline (McFarland, 2005). Some social studies educators have responded by integrating reading or mathematics skills into the teaching of social studies at the elementary level—a course of action recommended by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 1994). In middle and high school, curriculum standards draw heavily on anthropology, history, geography, psychology, sociology, economics, and political science; and courses are generally separate and discipline–based—e.g., U.S. History, World History, Civics/Government, Geography, Economics (McFarland, 2005).

### **Equal Access to a Liberal Arts Curriculum**

Schools serving large numbers of poor and minority students more often struggle to meet the strict reading and math accountability mandates set forth by the federal No Child Left Behind Act. Not coincidentally, they are also more apt to reduce instructional time in social studies and other liberal arts subjects for which they are not held accountable.

Forty-seven percent of principals in the high-minority elementary schools surveyed by Council for Basic Education reported a decline in social studies instruction. In fact, substantially more principals of high-minority schools reported reducing time for social studies than did for the arts (42 percent) or for foreign languages (23 percent) (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004).

According to CBE President Raymond Bartlett:

These findings raise the specter of a new opportunity gap between white and minority students. We’re seeing that low-income minority students are being denied the liberal arts curriculum that their more privileged counterparts receive as a matter of course. In our effort to close achievement gaps in literacy and math, we risk substituting one form of educational inequity for another, denying our most vulnerable students the kind of curriculum available to the wealthy” (“Implementation of NCLB curtails study of history, civics, languages & the arts, while expanding learning time for literacy, math, & science, new study says,” 2004).

Many schools across the nation struggle with serving large numbers of poor and minority students. Maryland serves one of the nation’s most diverse public school populations. According to 2007 enrollment data, white students make up 47 percent of the Maryland’s enrollment, followed by African American students (37.9 percent), Hispanic (9.0 percent); Asian/Pacific Islander (5.6 percent); and American Indian/Alaskan Native (0.4 percent) (MSDE, 2008).

According to “Diplomas Count”, a special report in *Education Week*, June 20, 2006, Maryland does a better job of graduating Hispanic and Asian students than any other state in the nation. However, the *Report of the Task Force on the Education of Maryland’s African –American Males* has identified the social studies classroom as providing a natural opportunity to talk about the African-American experience (*Report of the Task Force on the Education of Maryland’s African –American Males*, 2007, p. 13). In order to have this natural opportunity, time for social studies instruction is essential in all Maryland schools.

### **Maryland’s State Curriculum**

In January 2005, MSDE initiated an external review of its own pre-K–8 social studies curriculum (Maryland’s Voluntary State Curriculum, now known as the State Curriculum (SC) to ensure it could withstand national scrutiny. The Department contracted with Westat to examine content rigor, scope and sequence, developmental appropriateness, and clarity of language.

Westat reviewers determined that the SC’s scope and sequence—within and across grades—were appropriate for essential learning. The curriculum’s vertical articulation made the development of indicators across grade levels logical. New concepts were based on prior knowledge and experiences, and the curriculum was increasingly demanding. The reviewers agreed that the indicators and objectives made clear what students were expected to learn.

Overall, Westat concluded that Maryland’s social studies SC is “a connected body of historical understandings and competencies creating a comprehensive foundation for essential learning in social studies.” Skills for thinking, inquiry, and participation in a democratic society, said the reviewers, are integrated throughout (Westat, 2005).

The Task Force, after considering Westat’s review of the Social Studies Curriculum, concluded there was a solid curricular framework, so the Task Force turned to the issues of curriculum implementation, time and teacher knowledge and skills.

## **Instructional Program Design**

### **Reading Skills**

In addition to stunting students’ knowledge of social studies and its disciplines, reducing social studies instruction could limit students’ capacity to acquire critical skills early on in their schooling—particularly in reading comprehension/language arts. Literature suggest that curtailing content areas such as social studies from the elementary curriculum may have detrimental effect on reading achievement in the upper elementary grades where the students have the most serious reading challenges (Hinde, et al., 2007; Biancarosa & Snow, 2004; Kamil, p.203. Literacy researchers have asserted that reading comprehension is enhanced through instruction in the content areas. McKenna and Robinson (2005) support this assertion by pointing out that content area teachers develop students’ abilities to read and write about content simply by teaching it. Enhancing knowledge of content “improves any subsequent reading and writing germane to the knowledge” (McKenna & Robinson, 2005, p. 168).

The claim that reading instruction in the content areas boosts reading achievement has been posited for decades. As early as 1917, Thorndike argued that “perhaps it is the outside reading of stories and in their study of geography; history and the like that many school children really learn to read” (2005, p. 97). Additionally when the topic has more interest to the students, the students are more stimulated to read. Reducing social studies and the arts may have a negative impact on reading achievement that many administrators and teachers have not considered (Duffy et al., 2003). “If the goal is to improve students’ reading achievement, not teaching these subjects will limit students’ background knowledge of many topics about which they may read. Because having adequate background knowledge is necessary if one is

to comprehend or understand what one is reading, lack of instruction in these subjects may ultimately affect students' reading achievement negatively" (p. 85).

Nationally, social studies material is being dropped from the elementary and middle school curriculum as teachers feel they must concentrate on reading and math skills. However, reading could be taught through social studies. Students who report reading three types of material (stories, magazines, and informational books) score higher on reading tests than those who have read only stories. But as little as 16 percent of second grade reading material is nonfiction (including history and social studies) (Gimpel et al, 2003)

In "The Real Reading Crisis," Manning (2005) discusses how social studies instruction helps develop and refine reading skills. She says, "Increasing prior knowledge and the resulting new vocabulary learned in social studies are necessary for readers to comprehend text ... Students who do well on reading comprehension tests know a lot about the world. They are students who have had a rich curriculum that was more than just memorizing phonics rules and reading with a stopwatch. Therefore, reading comprehension is developed throughout the entire school day, not just during the allotted reading time."

The irony is that many students in elementary and middle school are missing social studies instruction so that teachers may focus time and energy on additional or remedial reading instruction. Rather than engaging in this zero-sum approach, however, students could be exposed to a variety of informational texts during the course of regular social studies instruction. "What students will understand about new content and concepts is heavily dependent on the knowledge they possess prior to encountering the new information" (Reading Quest). Prior or background knowledge allows the students to have more access to fiction or non-fiction giving the students the opportunity to take more away from the written page. For example, having the students understand the history of the Civil Rights Movement creates the context of reading a biography on Rosa Parks. Teachers realize the greater the student's background knowledge of a topic, the easier and more successfully she/he will learn the new content. Reducing social studies from the school day creates difficulty for the teacher who needs to decide how much about the American Revolution is necessary to teach before bringing the student to the page.

But it's not just that the liberal arts enhance students' reading skill and capacity, it's that they boost enjoyment of this and other "core" subjects as well. When wholly separated from the educational context that is provided through "literature, the arts, history, public affairs, or natural science, core subjects such as reading and math appear to be unfulfilling exercises ..." (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004).

The authors outline several ways to counteract declining instruction in the liberal arts:

- integrate liberal arts subjects (e.g., social studies, civics, geography, etc.) into those strategies intended to improve reading and mathematics skills;
- adequately prepare educators to integrate liberal arts into reading instruction;
- develop and incorporate standards and accountability systems into all liberal arts courses; and
- maintain the status of the liberal arts curriculum at the elementary and secondary levels (von Zastrow & Janc, 2004).

"Although integration of subject matter is clearly one strategy in addressing the time and inclusiveness issue, school structures are not designed to accommodate common preparation periods for multidisciplinary planning or allotting time within the teacher contract day for collaboration" (Kidwell, 2005, p. 69).

### **Civic Literacy**

A national literacy movement was spurred onward as a response to NCLB. Alarming statistics inspired national civic/government and law-related researchers, professors, and organizations to organize a new social reform movement, the Campaign to Promote Civic Education. The Campaign introduces citizens, particularly young people, to the representatives, institutions, and processes that serve to realize the goal of government of, by and for the people.

The goals of the national civic literacy movement are to:

- 1) Improve public understanding of representative democracy and encourage Americans to play a responsible role in the government;
- 2) Strengthen classroom teaching about representative democracy;
- 3) Develop mass media programs to inform the public about representative institutions;
- 4) Provide legislators and staff with resource materials to improve public understanding of their institutions; and,
- 5) Support research on public views of Congress and state legislatures.

The Civic Mission of Schools (CMS) Report, published by the Carnegie Foundation and the Center for Information on Research on Learning and Civic Engagement at the University of Maryland, presented research and concerns on the status of civic learning and engagement and recommended steps to improve schools and communities. The Congressional Conferences on Civic Education were designed to help support the national Campaign and further the public's knowledge through state action teams. In doing so, the conferences seek to restore the historic civic mission of the nation's schools. State delegations, including one from Maryland, created action plans at the initial conference to improve public support for civic education at the state and local level. Maryland is one of nine states to have created legislated state Commissions on Civic Literacy.

Another survey released by the Intercollegiate Studies Institute found that U.S. high school students missed almost half the questions on a civic literacy test. Only 45.9 percent of those surveyed knew the sentence 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal...' comes from the Declaration of Independence. According to a recent study by the National Center for Education ...middle schoolers in most states are no longer required to take a government or civics course. Only 29 states require high school students to take a government or civics course, leaving millions of young Americans in the dark about why democracy matters" (Wolf, 2007, p. 1).

A body of rigorous research shows that schools have significant and lasting effects on their graduates' civic participation and civic knowledge—not only through courses on social studies, history, law, and government, but also through extracurricular activities and partnerships with community organizations. The future of the State of Maryland depends on how well we prepare our young people to be active, responsible, competent citizens. We need our youth to contribute to our democracy while they are students and throughout their lives. We need them to develop the skills, knowledge, and values—in short, the 'civic literacy'—that will enable them to address public problems with their energy, ideas, ethics, and passion (MSDE, 2007, Civic Literacy Task Force Executive Summary).

Civic literacy among U.S. students is already widely threatened. On the latest National Assessment of

### What Students Know NAEP Civics Assessment (2006)

#### 4th-graders

- 75% knew that only citizens can vote in the U.S.
- 47% identified the role of the Supreme Court
- 18% evaluated how certain actions can affect the community

#### 8th-graders

- 80% identified a notice for jury duty
- 49% linked religious freedom to the Bill of Rights
- 15% interpreted a phrase from the Gettysburg Address

#### 12th-graders

- 72% could analyze a historical text on the importance of education
- 50% identified the President's role in foreign policy
- 5% explained checks on the President's power

Educational Progress in Civics, less than one-quarter of U.S. 4th-graders scored at or above *proficient*. The news is no better among 8th- and 12th-graders. Just 22 percent of 8th-graders and 27 percent of 12th-graders reached proficiency in civics. According to a 2004 study by the Campaign for the Civic Mission of the Schools and the Alliance for Representative Democracy, Americans give schools a

“C” grade for the job they were doing in preparing students for citizenship, and give young people a C-minus for their civic awareness and engagement (CMS, 2004).

## Civic Literacy and the Government HSA

The prospect of high school students poorly prepared in social studies is a major concern, given that students entering 9th grade in or after 2005 must pass the High School Assessment in Government to graduate. According to C. Hahn (2003), “... students who study social studies (including history, civics, geography, and other civics-related courses) only once or twice a week or less, had lower achievement on all three civics measures (civic content, civic skills, and combined content and skills scores) than did students who studied social studies every day.” (C. Hahn 2003 p.4)

While only 4 percent of Maryland social studies supervisors surveyed reported reduced time for social studies instruction at the high-school level, there is considerable evidence that reducing time in elementary and middle school ultimately affects high-school achievement. Social studies supervisors and high school teachers report that students are ill-prepared in the social studies disciplines (Engel, 2005).

When Maryland high school teachers were asked what they consider the biggest social-studies-related problem, 22 percent said students’ lack of social studies background, knowledge, and skills; 15 percent cited the fact that social studies was viewed as unimportant; 11 percent responded that many students taking AP social studies courses were unprepared for them; and 15 percent cited assessment issues brought about by the No Child Left Behind Act (Engel, 2005).

According to one high school teacher, “Social studies has been neglected at the elementary level in our county for many years now (to focus on reading, writing, and math). Literacy cannot be gauged completely on a person’s ability to read or write. Students are not getting the geography and history background necessary to understand high school social studies” (Engel, 2005). On *Maryland’s* civic literacy measure—the High School Assessment in government—students are faring considerably better. Of the 55,000 students on pace to graduate with the class of 2009,<sup>2</sup> 47,522 (86.4 percent) have already passed the Government HSA.<sup>3</sup>

However, these students were already in middle school when the Maryland School Performance Assessment Program—containing an elementary and middle-grades social studies test—was discontinued. Their elementary years were unaffected by the instructional erosion that accompanies a lack of assessment. Therefore, in terms of Government HSA pass rates, we will not know the true effect of social studies’ marginalization for a few more years.

Newmann, et al, (1995) explain why limited exposure to social studies content in the elementary and middle grades produces students ill-prepared in high school.

Disciplined inquiry requires using prior knowledge to build in-depth understanding through pedagogy aimed at addressing disciplinary concepts that are central ideas of a topic. Discipline-based inquiry builds deep knowledge and engages students in substantive conversation. Such conversation leads to shared understanding.

That is—all things being equal—students will have considerably shallower understanding of social studies topics following high school if their exposure to those topics at the elementary and middle-school levels is deficient.

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<sup>2</sup> The class of 2009 is the first group of students that must pass the HSAs to earn a high school diploma.

<sup>3</sup> The 2009 pass rate on the Government HSA (that is, the pass rate among all those who took the test last school year) is 91.8 percent. The pass rate among African American students is 84.1 percent and among students receiving free and reduced-price meals, 82.4 percent.

# Recommendations

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## Recommendation 1

**Establish the expectation that regular instruction in social studies be provided for all students each week in kindergarten through grade 5 in sufficient frequency and length to achieve the objectives of the social studies VSC.**

Establish minimum instructional times for social studies.

- **Early elementary grades (k-3):** 2,700 minutes (e.g., 30 minutes a day x 90 days)
- **Intermediate elementary grades (4-5):** 4,500 minutes (e.g., 50 minutes a day x 90 days)
- **Middle school:** 9,000 minutes: (e.g., 50 minutes a day x 180 days)

## Recommendation 2

**Require that social studies be included in the state's master plan and in each local school system's master plan.**

The General Assembly enacted Senate Bill 856, the Bridge to Excellence in Public Schools Act, on April 4, 2002. On May 6, 2002, Governor Parris N. Glendening signed the Act into law, restructuring Maryland's public school finance system and increasing State aid to public schools to \$2.2 billion over six fiscal years (FY 2003 - FY 2008).<sup>2</sup> The funding formula adopted by the General Assembly ensures equity and adequacy for Maryland's public school systems by linking resources to the needs of students and distributing 74% of State aid inverse to local wealth.

As a result of this legislation, Maryland has embraced a standards-based approach to public school financing. Under this approach, and consistent with the federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001,<sup>3</sup> the State must set academic content and student achievement standards, ensure that schools and students have sufficient resources to meet those standards, and hold schools and school systems accountable for student performance. In turn, local school systems have developed a five-year comprehensive master plan that includes goals and strategies to promote academic excellence among all students and to eliminate performance gaps that persist based on students' race, ethnicity, socioeconomic circumstances, disability, and native language.

There is a strong connection for accountability for student achievement between the Bridge to Excellence Act and the No Child Left Behind Act. Both Acts signal a commitment to reaching and teaching all children and to closing achievement gaps for students who are English language learners, disabled, economically disadvantaged, or are a member of a racial or ethnic minority.

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<sup>2</sup> The Bridge to Excellence Act provides for \$1.3 billion more in State aid to public schools than required under the previous formula. The General Assembly must affirm its ability to fund the new finance system in fiscal years 2005 through 2008 by adopting a joint resolution. If this resolution is not adopted by the fiftieth day of the session, State aid for each jurisdiction will increase by about 5 percent annually.

<sup>3</sup> The Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA) reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB). The NCLB Act can be found at <http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/>.

### Recommendation 3

#### **Integrate social studies and reading/language arts instruction.**

- Develop content literacy in social studies.
- Incorporate best practices in applying discipline–based strategies.<sup>4</sup> Best practices include interpretation of informational text, use of primary sources, and incorporation of persuasive and informative writing.

### Summary

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A substantial body of research shows that social studies instruction has been dramatically diminished in Maryland and across the nation. Moreover, the erosion of social studies emphasis has been greater in high-poverty and high-minority schools because it is they that struggle most to raise scores on federally mandated reading, math, and science tests. The Task Force therefore concludes that Maryland should establish minimum requirements governing social studies instructional time and frequency and that these requirements should be carefully monitored.

In the October 2006 edition of *Educational Leadership*, Stephanie McConachie, Megan Hall, Lauren Resnick, Anita K. Ravi, Victoria L. Bill, Jody Bintz and Joseph A. Taylor shared the importance of developing content literacy in an article entitled, *Task, Text, and Talk: Literacy for All Subjects*. In the article, they asserted, “Disciplinary literacy is based on the premise that students can develop deep conceptual knowledge in a discipline only by using the habits of reading, writing, talking, and thinking which that discipline values and uses.” They further added that in disciplinary literacy classrooms, students act as historians, (or geographers, economists etc.), readers, and writers as they engage with subject-matter tasks, texts, and talk. “To develop complex knowledge in any discipline, students need opportunities to read, reason, investigate, speak, and write about the overarching concepts within that discipline. Because of time constraints and coverage concerns, many teachers understandably choose to teach either content or process instead of marrying the two. But to build students' literacy in a specific discipline, instruction must do both at once.”

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<sup>4</sup> Discipline–based strategies are those specific to the content of geography, economics, history, or political science, such as debating and map–reading.

# Assessment Subcommittee

## **Subcommittee Members**

**Jon Andes**, Worcester County Board of Education

**Carol Jarvis**, Maryland Council on Economic Education

**Bruce Van Sledright**, University of Maryland, College Park

**Sylvester Conyers**, Eleanor Roosevelt High School, Prince George's County

**Mark Stout**, Howard County Public Schools

**Brad Engel**, Kent Island High School

**Dr. Rhoda Dorsey**, Goucher College

# Subcommittee Overview

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The primary objective of the **Assessment Subcommittee** was to determine the desirability and feasibility of mandated social studies assessments in Maryland.

## Key Issues

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The Subcommittee considered many issues surrounding assessment development, including:

- The inverse relationship between time devoted to Maryland’s assessed subjects (e.g., reading and math) and time devoted to non-assessed subjects
- The possible impact of a social studies assessment on curricular time and emphasis on the subject.
- Elementary and middle school benchmark assessments and their utility in boosting pass rates on the High School Assessment in Government
- The impact of additional testing on students, schools, and school systems
- Equity issues regarding assessment development among local school systems
- The purpose and optimal type of social studies assessment
- Equity issues related to the disproportionate reduction of social studies instruction in high-poverty schools

## The Educational Context of Assessment

One of the four pillars of *No Child Left Behind*, is stronger accountability for results, to ensure that states are working to close the achievement gap and make sure all students, including those who are disadvantaged, achieve academic proficiency. Under NCLB, all students in grades 3 through 8 must be tested annually in reading and math (and in science at the elementary, middle and high school levels). Plus, schools and school systems must demonstrate annual progress toward specific achievement targets (Adequate Yearly Progress, or AYP). If schools or systems fail to make AYP, sanctions may be meted out.

The federal NCLB Act set into place standards for the nation’s schools, but by that point Maryland had already been working with a nationally recognized system of standards and accountability. *Education Week*, the nation’s leading newspaper covering K-12 education, continued to rank Maryland’s accountability system among the nation’s very best, even after the state migrated to the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) program to comply with NCLB. Federal officials have been equally laudatory.

NCLB has had an enormous impact on classroom instruction and curricular balance—that is, how time is apportioned per subject. Because the law (1) drives its accountability reform goals principally through high-stakes assessments (measuring and holding schools to AYP); (2) stipulates testing in only three areas (reading, math, and science); and (3) requires states to comply with these testing demands or risk losing federal funding, subjects like social studies and the arts are vulnerable to getting squeezed out of the curriculum. Simply put, NCLB’s emphasis on reading, math, and science has reduced the classroom time spent on other (i.e., non-assessed) subjects.

This is especially the case among schools with large minority populations and high incidences of poverty, because it is in these schools that the struggle to make AYP is most pronounced. An unintended outcome of NCLB may be that we’ve substituted “one form of inequity for another, ultimately denying our most vulnerable students the full liberal arts curriculum our most privileged youth receive” (von Zastrow &

Janc, 2004). If some groups of children systematically lack the opportunity to study their nation's history, civic traditions, and processes, their achievement will suffer. By the time they reach middle and high school, they will already have fallen behind those classmates who were fortunate enough to have received a more balanced and engaging education.

“Assessment in civic (social studies) education is essential in establishing a place in the curriculum. Although effective assessment methods in civic education remain an issue as long as standardized testing are the exclusive means for assessing student learning, only a portion of knowledge can be measured through the selected response (multiple choice) assessment. State required assessments in civic education would encourage educators at all grade levels to pay attention to the acquisition and development of students' learning in civic/government knowledge, skills and dispositions”(Kidwell, p. 68 – 69).

Maryland, New York and Ohio have received high grades in Francis Kidwell's *“The Relationship Between Civic Education and State Policy: An Evaluative Study”* (2005). Fair and equitable assessment of all students' knowledge was one of the benchmarks of success. These states have civic/government curriculum and assessments that require higher order thinking, writing, and connections to the disciplines with applications to the world outside of school. Schools must provide opportunities for students to develop these and other proficiencies through active learning programs such as project-based learning and simulated congressional hearings. There is inconclusive evidence regarding the effects of NCLB's assessment requirements in reading, mathematics, and science. Reasonable educators would agree that when “high stakes” educational decisions for individual students are made, the decisions should be based on a variety of assessments, rather than on a single test score. Many states across the nation have lost their assessment programs in social studies resulting in a decline in both time in the curriculum and professional development. North Carolina, Michigan, Missouri along with Maryland lost their elementary and middle school assessment programs and consequently report a decline in social studies programs (Taylor-Thoma, 2009).

In short, we have seen how testing reading and math achievement has produced schools and school systems intensively focused on teaching those subjects—and teaching them well. It's time to do the same for social studies.

Education researchers such as Gary Ratner recently criticized the NCLB Act as a way of undermining students' academic proficiency (Ratner, 2007). “To accomplish NCLB's goal of developing all students' intellectual skills to a proficient level would require having students memorize certain facts necessary for understanding and learn certain basic skills of decoding letters and how to carry out certain rote arithmetic computation processes. But proficiency demands more. Students must be taught challenging subject matter in interesting ways that draw on their knowledge and experience and effectively teach them analytical, problem-solving, and other higher-order thinking skills” (Ratner p. 14). Not all researchers agree that state-mandated testing will reverse the current trend. Although one solution to the problem of the reduced instruction time in the elementary and middle school is to include social studies in mandated assessments (Working Task Force of Discipline-Based Organizations, 2007). Although including social studies on standardized tests might have the effect of encouraging reluctant teachers to teach the subject, it does not guarantee that the instruction will be meaningful and relevant (Hinde, et al., 2007). Hirsch (2001) and others (Evans, 2004; Kahne, et al., 2000) note that high-stakes testing may have negative consequences including ineffective instruction and student learning. Some researchers feel that teachers will only address those skills and trite pieces of knowledge that are tested, sacrificing in-depth lessons requiring higher order thinking and application to real world situations which are vital in the learning of social studies and reading (Yeager, 2000, Taylor et al., 2003; Hinde, et al., 2007).

“All 50 states can exclude the test scores of some minority pupils when their schools are measured under the No Child Left Behind Law, but Maryland has the nation's strictest standards for the sizes of a subgroup of student that can be ignored.” Associated Press, April 16, 2006.

## Assessment Options

The research reviewed by the Assessment Subcommittee<sup>1</sup> proves the adage, *If it's not tested, it's not taught*. While the surveys—alone and together—have their limitations, they are remarkable in that they detail the very same patterns. Clearly, social studies is steadily being pushed to the curricular margin, especially at the elementary level, and Maryland's goal of providing a balanced, meaningful, and engaging education for all is consequently threatened.

To redress social studies' increasingly vulnerable place within the curriculum and ensure a balanced education for Maryland's students, the Task Force considered numerous assessment options.

### Option 1: The Status Quo

No new social studies assessment is developed or offered. Under this option, instructional time dedicated to social studies will likely further erode, especially in elementary and middle schools. The addition of a science assessment in grades 5 and 8 may accelerate this decline. The lack of time and effective social studies instruction<sup>1</sup> in the elementary and middle grades may eventually lead to lower pass rates on the High School Assessment (HSA) in Government, as well as related Advanced Placement (AP) exams, which constitute about one-third of all possible AP exams.

Additionally, there is concern that students will receive a more limited background in the social studies disciplines: history, economics, geography, and civics. Given the economic and geopolitical realities of globalization, this is worrisome.

It is also cause for concern that the students who will be most affected by a deteriorating focus on social studies are those in high-poverty, high-minority schools. They, too, deserve to thrive in this modern democracy.

### Option 2: School-level testing

Teachers or teams of teachers develop school-level assessments. This option depends upon administrative initiative at each school or upon a directive from central office staff. Of course, schools typically lack the resources required for rigorous validity, reliability, and correlation analyses of teacher or team-made tests. These analyses are critical to ensuring fairness, accountability, and a relationship to the HSA in Government.

### Option 3: District-level testing

District-level assessments are developed, administered, and monitored by local school systems. The assessments would vary depending on the resources and expertise residing in the school systems developing them. A valid and reliable test requires years of development, training of key staff, field and pilot-testing, and correlation studies to demonstrate a link between the test itself and the State Curriculum (SC) and HSA in Government.

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<sup>1</sup> **Materials reviewed:** [McFarland](#) (*Review of Social Studies Research and Literature, 1995–2005*); [Engel](#) (*Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland*); [Council for Basic Education](#) (*Academic Atrophy*); [Center on Education Policy](#) (*From the Capital to the Classroom*); and [McFarland](#) (*What Principals Should Know*).

demonstrate a link between the test itself and the State Curriculum (SC) and HSA in Government.

#### **Option 4: Program assessments**

State or local school system staff assess districts' or schools' instructional programs by gathering qualitative data from classroom observations, examining student work, reviewing curricula, and analyzing local test scores. While there are potential benefits associated with such an option, it would require additional resources, a clear process, and the involvement of multiple groups of stakeholders. A large team of observers would be needed to collect data and reach conclusions, about accountability measures for schools and/or school systems.

A less rigorous option would involve a smaller group that simply examined school systems' curricular programs, but this would provide neither student data nor information about the quality and effectiveness of classroom instruction.

#### **Option 5: Reliance on Commercial assessments**

Schools administer commercial assessments. The advantage of this option is that these tests have been piloted and field-tested to ensure validity and reliability. The disadvantage is that they would not necessarily match Maryland's SC, upon which each system's curriculum is based. Some of these assessments are also intended to measure advanced content and may not be appropriate for all students. Examples of commercial assessments are Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate, Cambridge,<sup>3</sup> and TerraNova.<sup>4</sup>

#### **Option 6: Low-stakes state testing**

- A. Voluntary assessments are developed under the direction of and with the resources and expertise of MSDE. The assessments would measure student, school, and school system social studies achievement. They would be aligned to the SC and would provide systems the data to help predict students' success on the Government HSA and in completing U.S. History and World History graduation requirements. Data from these assessments would allow schools and school systems to develop early intervention programs for struggling students. But because they would be voluntary, it is likely that inconsistencies among school systems would persist with regard to time spent on social studies instruction.

Reading items on the Maryland School Assessment (MSA) are aligned with SC social studies standards. Under this option, the State would develop MSA reading items that use SC content in social studies and language arts. This would increase relevancy for students and would benefit elementary schools that teach integrated language arts/social studies blocks and middle schools that do not offer separate reading courses.

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<sup>3</sup> Cambridge International Examinations (CIE)—developer of the International General Certificate of Secondary Education

<sup>4</sup> a norm-referenced standardized test

### **Option 7: Medium–stakes state testing**

- A. Schools administer state–developed assessments that are aligned with the Maryland SC, but results are not linked to AYP or to school/school system sanctions. These assessments would help measure student mastery of social studies content and could serve as predictors of student success on the Government HSA, as HSA content is “back-mapped” all the way down to the pre-K SC. Data would be reported at the student, school, and system levels. (The science MSA administered in grades 5 and 8 uses this model.)
  
- B. Reading MSA items are aligned with the social studies SC, and the MSA is then scored for both reading and social studies achievement. Social studies items would be reported out separately at the student, school, and system levels. There are limitations to such a model in that not all testing experts agree that items can be scored for more than one subject, and the types of social studies items that would be tested would be limited.

Additionally, in order to get a reliable result for social studies, most of the items would have to be based on social studies content; otherwise the item pool would be insufficient for scoring purposes.

### **Option 8: High–stakes state testing**

Schools administer state–developed assessments in social studies that are linked to AYP, and data is reported at the student, school, and system levels.

# Recommendations

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The Task Force struggled with the reality of the additional costs—in time and money—that assessments generate for students, schools, and systems. The Task Force recognizes that high-stakes assessments offer no quick-fix for solving educational problems. In fact, a significant amount of evidence suggests that such assessments generate human and resource costs that are not offset by accountability gains. Additionally the mere existence of social studies assessments does not guarantee high quality classroom instruction for students.

However, given the current accountability climate and the data available to this Task Force, *we conclude that a recommendation that neglects social studies assessment also creates significant costs for students.*

## Recommendation 1

**Create statewide assessments in social studies that will measure student achievement in grade bands at the elementary and middle school levels, with data reported at the student, school, and system levels. Results will not be factored into Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) but will help schools and school systems determine the efficacy of local social studies curricula and instruction and predict students' success at the high school level including Assessment in Government.**

Given the documented erosion of classroom time devoted to social studies instruction and the larger context of educational accountability that influences curricular time allocations, a state-developed assessment will ensure that social studies remains among the core subjects taught to Maryland's students. A strong instructional program in social studies—one reliant upon a carefully mapped scope and sequence beginning in elementary school—is especially important given that students must earn three social studies credits for graduation and ultimately pass the High School Assessment in Government.

Social studies skills and content must build from these early years, and key ideas must be taught numerous times in an increasingly sophisticated manner (McFarland, 2000), (McFarland, 2005b), (Maryland Code of Regulations (COMAR 13A.04.08.01)). It is through such repeated and spiraling instruction that students are best prepared to demonstrate the knowledge and skills tested by the Government HSA.

However, administering a social studies assessment in elementary and middle school would not only secure the kind of instruction that enables success on the Government HSA, it would provide the data school systems need to refine their curricula, schools, and their instructional programs accordingly.

Furthermore, in much the same way the Maryland School Assessment provides consistent diagnostic data in reading, math, and science, it would help schools and school systems intervene early with students who are struggling with various social studies concepts. Intervention programs in the early and intermediate grades—programs that are built around the assessment data, that use benchmark indicators linked directly to the Government HSA, and that are focused specifically on students' documented needs—will significantly improve students' chances of passing the HSA on their initial try.

While school systems could develop their own social studies assessments to provide such information—and while some of Maryland's larger school systems have, indeed, done so—it's an unlikely scenario in the state's smaller and/or less affluent districts, given that they typically lack the resources to develop tests that would provide an acceptable degree of validity and reliability.

# Summary

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The Maryland State Department of Education should create statewide assessments in social studies that will measure student performance in elementary and middle-school grade bands. Achievement data should be reported out at the student, school, and system levels. These assessments will have two overarching functions: 1) Ensure that social studies instructional time is adequately allocated. 2) Provide student-, school-, and system-specific data that can be used to refine curricula and instructional programs and intervene early with those students who may struggle with the Government HSA.

# Teacher Quality Subcommittee

## **Subcommittee Members**

**Patricia Burnett**, Harpers Choice Middle School, Howard County

**Toni Richardson**, Ellicott Mills Middle School, Howard County

**Sari Bennett**, Center for Geographic Education/Maryland Geographic Alliance/ UMBC

**Gerald Scarborough**, Harford County Public Schools, retired

**John Hutchinson**, Community College of Baltimore County

# Subcommittee Overview

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The primary objectives of the **Teacher Quality Subcommittee** were to determine the teacher characteristics that positively affect student achievement; to evaluate methods that would produce highly qualified social studies teachers; and, to provide teacher opportunities to continuously develop and refine their knowledge, skills, and abilities over the course of their careers.

## Key Issues

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The Subcommittee focused on three issues that factor into teacher quality:

- Teacher preparation
- Professional development
- Teacher retention

Examining Teacher Quality is not new in Maryland; some progress has been since the *Redesign of Teacher Education* which promoted the collaborative arrangements between higher education and local boards of education through the Pre-K-15 network. In 1995 the *Redesign of Teacher Education* developed a systemic approach to improving education in Maryland through a teacher preparation approach grounded in content knowledge and pedagogy. “As a result of the adoption of the *Redesign*, higher education and local school system partners have come together to create a new environment for professional education: Professional Development Schools (PDS) (MSDE, 2002). Recommendations from the *Visionary Panel for Better Schools* for improved Teacher Quality were based on the underlying belief that “the recruitment, preparation, and retention of quality teachers must be met through Pre-K-16 collaborative structures that provide adequate incentives, support, professional development, and compensation for new and veteran teachers (Achievement Matters Most, 2002).

“In addition, to be deemed ‘highly qualified,’ existing elementary school teachers must have passed a state test or evaluation showing that they have subject matter knowledge and teaching skills in all subjects they teach, or, for middle and secondary school teachers, have an undergraduate academic major or similar university coursework in the subject. New elementary teachers must pass a test; new middle and secondary school teachers may either pass a test or satisfy the requirement with an undergraduate academic major or equivalent in any academic subject they teach (Ratner, p. 10).

“States have set low standards for the literacy level they require from new teachers to earn a license. A study conducted in 1999 by the Educational Testing Service found that if all states set their passing scores on a test of basic skills (reading, writing, and mathematics) to the level of Virginia, the state the highest passing score, the number of candidates in the nation who would pass would drop from 77% to a mere 47%” (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2007).

## Teacher Preparation

During the last decade, research has helped convince policymakers and business leaders of what parents have always known; teachers make the most difference in student achievement. The authors of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 acknowledged this cause-and-effect relationship between teacher performance and student achievement when they coupled rigorous school accountability measures with requirements that try to ensure that all children are taught by “highly qualified” teachers.

The literature on teacher preparation programs at U.S. colleges and universities indicates a significant amount of inconsistency in program course requirements, (National Council on Teacher Quality, 2007).

In Maryland a full and comprehensive review of how elementary and secondary social studies teachers are prepared and certified should be considered. For example, science secondary teacher preparation programs require more discipline-based courses which correlate to the Maryland certification requirements. Secondary science educators must be prepared and certified in the disciplines of chemistry, biology, and physics in order to teach those classes. Secondary social studies educators receive a general social studies pre-service education reflecting the general secondary social studies Maryland certification. Data collected from the participants of the Governor's Academy for American Government reveals that some teachers teaching the Government HSA course have never taken a political science course or civic education course. At the same time, teachers with degrees or minors in political science are teaching a myriad of courses including world history (MSDE, Governor's Academy for American Government, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009).

Of course, with significant variation in the state's and the nation's pre-service programs, the resulting level of teacher preparedness and quality varies considerably as well. This inconsistency is especially pronounced in elementary school. Most pre-service elementary teachers must complete three to four reading courses and two math courses. Some are not required to take a content-rich, discipline-based social studies course. Most programs require their students to take only a half-semester of social studies methods or share the course with science content. Most pre-service secondary teachers are not required to take a course in testing and measurement. [McFarland, 2005]

State curricular standards should be evident in pre-service preparation, licensure exams, curricula, professional development efforts, and teacher performance evaluations. Teachers must be prepared to teach such curricula before their effectiveness is evaluated. Title II of the Higher Education Act includes accountability provisions for the nation's teacher education programs. A key requirement is the annual reporting of the pass rates of each institution's graduates on Maryland state teacher licensure exams. ETS provides the pass rate information to the states using the Praxis series, but believes the issuing of pass rates should not be the only basis for determining the quality of a teacher and a teacher education program, (ETS, 2004). ETS and others support the use of clinical teaching experience as part of a teacher preparation and licensure procedure.

The Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Certification and Accreditation conducts program approval and national accreditation reviews of more than 300 professional educator certification programs at 23 colleges and universities in Maryland. Institutions of Higher Education with 2000 or more full-time equivalent students are required through Maryland statute §11-208 to receive and maintain national accreditation through NCATE in conjunction with state program approval. The state has a partnership agreement with the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for the required national accreditation. The State of Maryland views learning to teach as a developmental process in which there is continuous engagement with research, best practice, and expert opinion. With this perspective, the Essential Dimensions of Teaching identifies ten performance-based standards.

Teacher candidates and teachers will:

1. Demonstrate mastery of appropriate academic disciplines and a repertoire of teaching techniques.
2. Demonstrate an understanding that knowledge of the learner's physical, cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural development is the basis of effective teaching.
3. Incorporate a multicultural perspective which integrates culturally diverse resources, including those from the learners family and community.
4. Demonstrate knowledge of strategies for integrating students with special needs into the regular classroom.
5. Use valid assessment approaches, both formal and informal, which are age appropriate and address a variety of developmental needs, conceptual abilities, curriculum outcomes, and school goals.

6. Organize and manage a classroom using approaches supported by student learning needs, research, best practice, and expert opinion.
7. Use computer and computer-related technology to meet student and professional needs.
8. Demonstrate an understanding that classrooms and schools are sites of ethical, social, and civic activity.
9. Collaborate with the broad educational community, including parents, businesses and social service agencies.
10. Engage in careful analysis, problem-solving, and reflection in all aspects of teaching.

Maryland accreditation standards are based on national standards. The national standards for elementary teachers come from Association for Childhood Education International Elementary Education Standards (2007) 2.4 Social studies—Candidates know, understand, and use the major concepts and modes of inquiry from the social studies—the integrated study of history, geography, the social sciences, and other related areas—to promote elementary students’ abilities to make informed decisions as citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society and interdependent world. National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Special Areas Studies Board has approved national discipline-specific standards for secondary social studies that were developed by the National Council for Social Studies. Teachers may become certified in one or more of the six social studies licensure (certification) areas covered by these standards. These include the broad field or comprehensive social studies, history, geography, civics and government, and economics or psychology.

Noting the inadequacy of many teacher–prep programs, the Governor’s Commission on Quality Education in Maryland (2005) maintained:

Maryland should evaluate the content and efficacy of all four–year teacher preparation programs, too many of which are not adequately preparing teachers for today’s classrooms. A focused study of teacher education pro-grams and their effectiveness in providing well-prepared teachers for the classroom should be implemented immediately.

The same report also recommends that “All teacher preparation programs, traditional and alternative, university-based and school-based, face-to-to face and virtual, should be held accountable for the actual performance of the graduates in Maryland’s public school classrooms. That performance should be gauged above all by teacher success in imparting skills and knowledge to their pupils and the students’ demonstration of learning. Programs without a strong track record of producing highly effective teacher graduates should be terminated” (p. 20)

In addition to concerns about teacher quality and teacher retention, some report alternative ways to increase the pool of qualified teacher candidates. Maryland has “alternative certification” options, primarily the “Resident Teacher Certification” (RTC). While the RTC is available in a number of school districts throughout the state, its potential has not been fully realized. According to the National Center for Alternative Certification, during the 2002-2004 school years, Maryland conferred an average of just 66 certificates annually upon “alternative route” teachers. By comparison, in those same years, New Jersey was averaging 2,278 new “alternative certificates,” Massachusetts 3,233, and Colorado 530 (National Center for Alternative Certification) To address the state’s supply and quality needs, Maryland’s “alternative paths” into the classroom need to be simplified, expanded, and widely used with consistency” (Governor’s Commission on Quality Education in Maryland, p. 26).

Beginning with the premise that good teaching requires teachers to have a deep understanding of the subjects that they teach along with a collection of instructional strategies to teach that content, effective pre-service programs and ongoing system-wide support for beginning teachers is essential. To be effective, teachers need more than basic methods classes in social studies; they need pedagogical content

knowledge (Shulman, 1992; Wilson and Sykes, 1989). Van Sledright (1996) agrees: “Teachers with deep subject-specific pedagogical knowledge build on what students bring to the learning context, helping them to extend, clarify, and sometimes reconstruct their understandings of the past. These teachers employ a wide repertory of analogies and metaphors to make their points different ones for different students—multiple pathways to understanding.”

The good news is perhaps a decade of education reform is beginning to produce a greater number of teachers with higher academic qualifications than their counterparts. Researcher Drew H. Gitomer attributes the improvement to policy changes or teacher effectiveness. “The report, released by the Educational Testing Service, says the finding bodes well for greater student learning because of the evidence that teachers’ academic ability is tied to their effectiveness. It also concludes that a host of policy changes aimed at improving teacher quality have shown results...” (Keller, 2007). The research held equally well for men and women but stopped short of the inclusion of a more diverse teaching force, “...the lack of ethnic and racial diversity in the teaching pool, is unchanged from the mid-1990s” (p. 14). Schools of education are failing to attract to the field diverse individuals who would better represent the changing demographics of the nation. “The research looked at 153,000 teachers or prospective teachers who took the Praxis II test as part of seeking licensure in 20 states (including Maryland) in 2002 through 2005 and compared their academic profiles with those of test-takers in the mid-1990s” (p. 1)

## Professional Development

Successful professional development programs should support pre-service teachers, beginning teachers, and teachers in need of “retooling” their content and skills for a number of reasons. “We should connect teacher professional development with teacher preparation standards, student standards, curricula and assessments to achieve an aligned system of preparing and supporting new and in-service teachers.” (Kurt Landgraft, President and CEO, ETS, 2004)

Recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers requires a comprehensive system of professional development.<sup>1</sup> However, insufficient time, support, and incentives mean many teachers lack adequate access to professional development opportunities (Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council, 2005), even as the federal government focuses greater attention on teachers’ career-long development.<sup>1</sup>

When professional development is redefined as a central part of teaching, most decisions and plans related to embedding professional development in the daily work life of teachers will be made at the local school level. Some reformers have recommended that at least 20 percent of teachers' work time should be given to professional study and collaborative work. Instead of being devoted exclusively to discrete in-service days, this time must be part of virtually every school day and must be closely linked to the day-to-day demands of teaching (e.g., collaborative lesson planning, assessment of student work). Schools must [create time for professional development](#) as an integral part of teachers professional life.

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<sup>1</sup> Professional development activities include: (1) participating in study groups, school improvement teams, and committees to review student work and develop new curricula and assessments; (2) getting involved in workshops, seminars, and institutes; (3) taking graduate courses; and (4) attending professional meetings and conferences (Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council, *Helping Teachers Help All Students: The Imperative for High-Quality Professional Development*, 2005)

The Maryland Teacher Professional Development Advisory Council (2004) defined in nine standards what it considers high-quality professional development (**Table 3**). When conscientiously implemented, the standards:

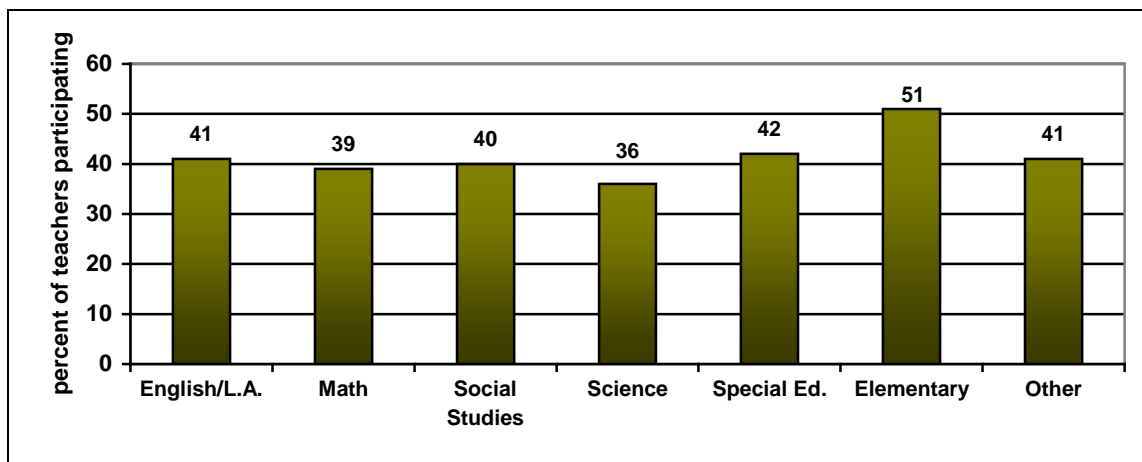
- Provide a clear vision of high-quality professional development that recognizes local needs, priorities, and resources;
- Provide a framework and specific tasks for planning, designing, implementing, and evaluating high-quality professional development;
- Provide a framework for ensuring that professional development is aligned with state, district, and school policies, and with goals for improving student learning;
- Inform allocation of professional development resources; and
- Define responsibility and accountability for ensuring that all professional development is of the highest quality and aligned with school improvement planning and implementation.

**Table 3: Maryland’s professional development standards**

<b>Standard 1 Content knowledge and quality teaching</b>	<b>Effective professional development deepens all teachers’ content knowledge and the knowledge and skills necessary to provide effective instruction and assess student progress.</b>
<b>Standard 2 Research-based</b>	<b>Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and dispositions to apply research to decision-making.</b>
<b>Standard 3 Collaboration</b>	<b>Effective professional development ensures that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to collaborate with others to improve instruction.</b>
<b>Standard 4 Diverse learning needs</b>	<b>Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to meet the diverse learning needs of their students.</b>
<b>Standard 5 Student learning environments</b>	<b>Effective professional development ensures that all teachers are able to create safe, secure, and supportive learning environments for all students.</b>
<b>Standard 6 Family involvement</b>	<b>Effective professional development ensures that all teachers have the knowledge, skills, and disposition to involve families and other community members as active partners in children’s education.</b>
<b>Standard 7 Data-driven</b>	<b>Effective professional development relies on rigorous analysis of data.</b>
<b>Standard 8 Evaluation</b>	<b>Effective professional development employs rigorous evaluation to assess its impact on teaching and student learning.</b>
<b>Standard 9 Design and teacher learning</b>	<b>Effective professional development content and process reflect best practices in workplace learning and in-depth understanding of how and why adults learn.</b>

Unfortunately, participation in professional development activities that meet these standards is low (and comparably so) among teachers of most subjects. According to the *Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development, 2003–2004*, just four in 10 secondary social studies teachers—and just half of the elementary teachers responsible for social studies content—participate in high-quality professional development activities (**Figure 16**).

**Figure 16: Participation in high-quality professional development, BY PRIMARY CONTENT AREA**



Source: Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development, 2003–2004

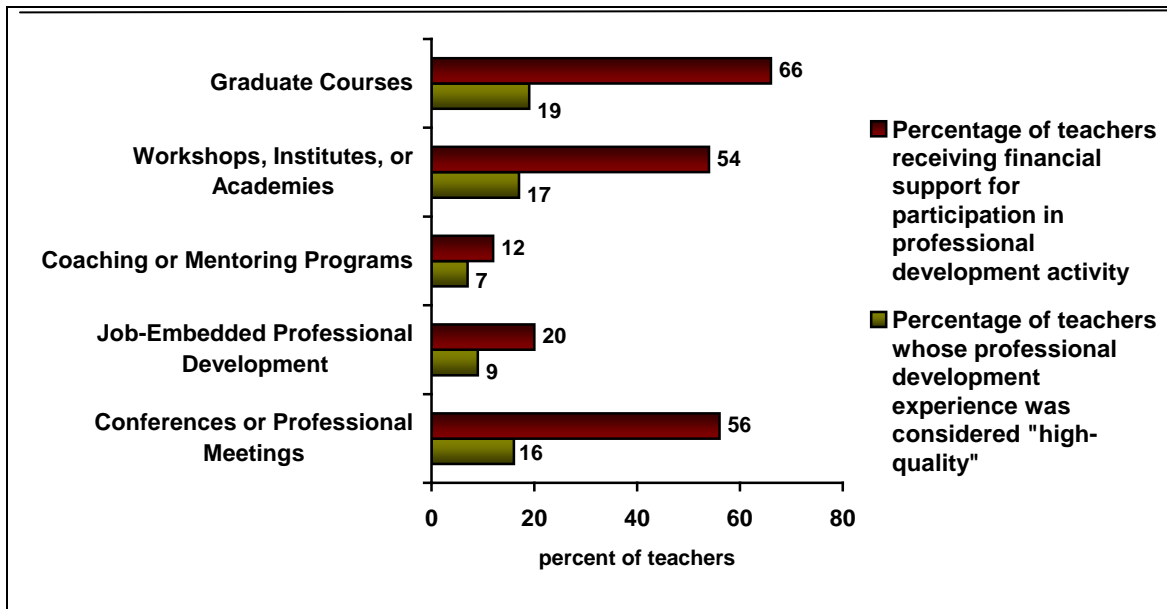
**Table 4** describes the professional development activities available to Maryland teachers. **Figures 17 and 18** indicate the proportion of teachers securing incentives (financial support and release time, respectively) for each category of professional development, and the proportion whose resulting professional development experience was considered “high-quality.” In most cases, the gap between the two is appalling.

**Table 4: Categories of professional development**

<b>Graduate Courses</b>	<b>Courses available at the master’s, doctoral, or advanced–studies level available in any public or private institution of higher education in Maryland or any other state.</b>
<b>Workshops, Institutes, and Academies</b>	<b>Activities that include multiple sessions that add up to at least one day. These activities include events that are planned and scheduled in advance and that may take place during the regular school schedule, after school, on the weekend, or during the summer. They may also be residential programs that last for several days or a few weeks. These events may take place in schools, the district office, some other central facility, or on a college or university campus.</b>
<b>Coaching or Mentoring Programs</b>	<b>A coaching or mentoring experience that is part of a new–teacher induction program, or a formal coaching or mentoring program sponsored by the district or some other entity.</b>
<b>Job-Embedded Professional Development Activities</b>	<b>Professional learning activities that often take place during the regular school day or before or after school. They typically involve working collaboratively with colleagues, including school–based professional development staff.</b>
<b>Conferences or Professional Meetings</b>	<b>Events such as annual meetings of professional associations or other organizations, as well as special–purpose events that may occur only once. In many cases, these events will take place out of the district and perhaps even outside of Maryland.</b>

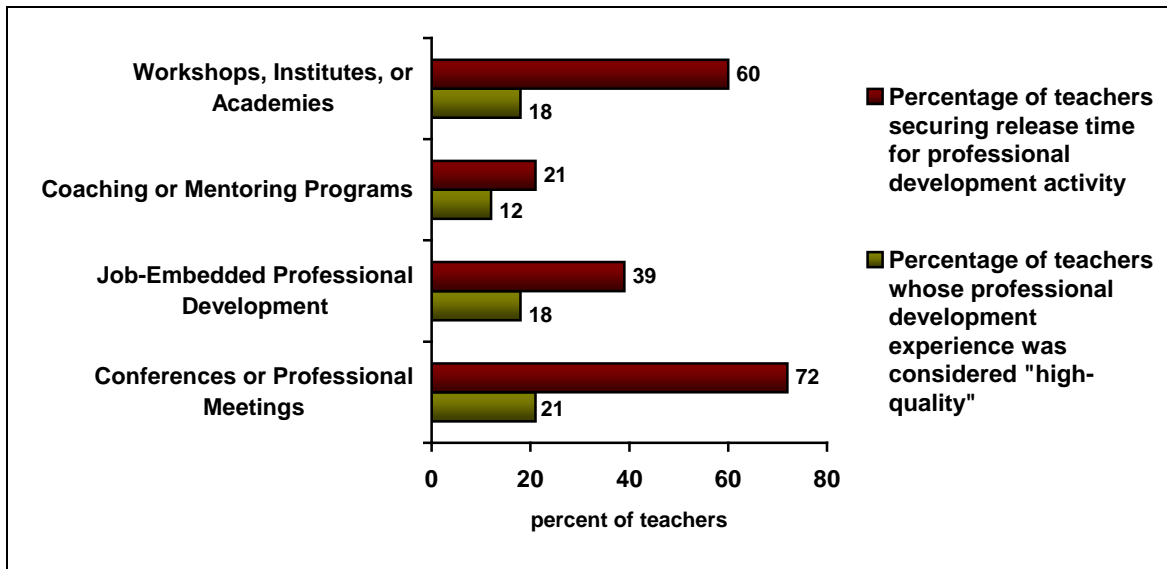
Source: Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development, 2003–2004

**Figure 17: Financial support<sup>3</sup> for participation in professional development, BY CATEGORY**



Source: Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development, 2003–2004

**Figure 18: Release time for participation in professional development, BY CATEGORY**



Source: Maryland Survey of Teacher Participation in High-Quality Professional Development, 2003–2004

<sup>3</sup> all types of financial support (e.g., tuition reimbursement, stipends, reimbursement for travel costs)

## PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS AND OTHER PARTNERSHIPS

“One of the most successful teacher preparation programs in Maryland today uses partnerships between universities and school systems to create Professional Development Schools (PDS). There are currently 350+ sites statewide. They offer a laboratory-style environment in which teacher candidates engage in an internship while gaining course work taught by professors and practitioners at the public school site and/or the university campus. Contrasting with those who have matriculated through the traditional student teaching practicum, educators who have completed PDS training have gained greater success as first-year teachers and have remained for longer periods of time in the profession (The Governor’s Commission on Quality Education in Maryland, 2005).

### Teacher Retention

Unfortunately, a shockingly high attrition rate among new teachers threatens any progress Maryland may make in the area of teacher quality. During the 2002–03 school year nearly half (47 percent) the teachers in the state with five or fewer years’ experience resigned. In 14 of the 24 school systems, at least 4 in 10 teachers with 1–5 years’ experience resigned (**Table 5**).

To strengthen teacher retention, the Governor’s Commission on Quality Education in Maryland (2005) recommended developing a new teacher and administrator compensation system, reforming the present pension system for teachers and administrators, and expanding tuition waivers to attract more college students into teaching. Notably, the Commission also called for an improved system of support and professional development for school-based staff.

**Table 5: Percentage of professional staff terminations in Maryland public schools, BY YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, October 2002 to October 2003**

School System	Years of Experience								TOTAL
	Less than 1	1–5	6–10	11–15	16–20	21–25	26–30	More than 30	
Allegany	0%	14%	14%	5%	7%	9%	12%	40%	100%
Anne Arundel	4%	40%	17%	8%	4%	7%	9%	11%	100%
Baltimore City	1%	64%	9%	3%	2%	2%	8%	9%	100%
Baltimore	6%	50%	31%	7%	3%	1%	1%	2%	100%
Calvert	0%	38%	27%	8%	2%	7%	6%	13%	100%
Caroline	3%	39%	22%	8%	3%	3%	6%	17%	100%
Carroll	11%	41%	16%	8%	7%	4%	4%	9%	100%

School System	Years of Experience								
	Less than 1	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25	26-30	More than 30	TOTAL
<b>Cecil</b>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Charles</b>	12%	42%	12%	7%	4%	4%	8%	12%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Dorchester</b>	0%	52%	11%	9%	7%	2%	0%	18%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Frederick</b>	0%	35%	27%	12%	6%	4%	7%	10%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Garrett</b>	0%	29%	12%	6%	0%	0%	24%	29%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Harford</b>	0%	43%	19%	4%	4%	3%	12%	14%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Howard</b>	1%	42%	26%	8%	7%	4%	6%	6%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Kent</b>	6%	44%	18%	6%	6%	3%	3%	15%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Montgomery</b>	9%	42%	17%	6%	3%	4%	8%	11%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Prince George's</b>	1%	55%	15%	6%	3%	3%	4%	12%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Queen Anne's</b>	3%	43%	25%	13%	5%	5%	5%	3%	<b>100%</b>
<b>St. Mary's</b>	15%	16%	19%	14%	6%	6%	6%	16%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Somerset</b>	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Talbot</b>	6%	45%	25%	10%	2%	0%	10%	2%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Washington</b>	3%	12%	30%	12%	6%	6%	3%	27%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Wicomico</b>	0%	46%	11%	7%	4%	9%	4%	20%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Worcester</b>	0%	21%	26%	8%	0%	3%	13%	29%	<b>100%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>47%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: MSDE Staff File analysis by MSTA Research

# Recommendations

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The Teacher Quality Subcommittee based its preparation and professional development recommendations on certain assumptions regarding the importance, testing, and funding of social studies education:

- Most Americans believe that civic education should be a central purpose of schools.
- Assessment influences not only instruction but also the priority given to teachers' preparation and ongoing professional development.
- Bolstering social studies instruction will not be without cost. However, our long-range goal should be to institutionalize these expenditures and require that all education funds support teaching and learning.

## **Recommendation 5:**

**Work with the Division of Certification and Accreditation to assure that Social Studies Teacher Preparation Programs and Certification Requirements adequately prepare teacher candidates for the social studies classroom.**

## **Recommendation 6:**

**Establish mentorship programs that support new social studies teachers in both pedagogy and content.**

- According to the latest Teacher Staffing Report, 599 Beginning New Hires came from a Maryland IHE, vs. 862 from an out-of-state IHE. In secondary social studies, 100 Beginning New Hires came from MD, and 225 from out of state. It is critical that teachers who have been prepared by a variety of institutions of higher education are all supported in providing the same high-quality social studies instruction to their Maryland students.

## **Recommendation 7:**

**Establish partnerships among MSDE, local school systems, and other organizations to develop and implement high-quality social studies professional development programs for teachers. These experiences should include online, content-specific academies and school-based experiences.**

- All school improvement plans should include high-quality professional development in social studies. That professional development should, in turn, include an examination of best practices.
- Colleges and organizations should align their professional development programs with MSDE's professional development standards and the Voluntary State Curriculum.

NCSS believes that NCLB reauthorization should include some standard of **evaluated clinical practice** and **ongoing professional development** in its definition of a "highly qualified teacher." Although establishing this standard and a mechanism for its enforcement will not occur immediately, it is important to take a stand on the **expectation** of these qualifications. Credentials are not enough to guarantee the effectiveness of a classroom teacher.

# Summary

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Apathy toward social studies education has meant sparse investment in helping teachers teach it, resulting in instruction that's unacceptably poor. The Subcommittee therefore proposes that a reevaluation of current social studies teacher preparation programs be conducted to determine the content and efficacy of those programs. The Subcommittee also recommends that MSDE, school systems, and other organizations work together to develop and implement professional development programs that are of higher quality and genuine relevance.

# Communication and Outreach Subcommittee

## **Subcommittee Members**

**Deborah Cardin**, The Jewish Museum of Maryland

**A.T. Stevens**, Reginald F. Lewis Museum of Maryland African American History & Culture

**Madhu Sidhu**, Kent County

**Louise Hayman**, Preservation Maryland

**Dennis A. Fiori**, Maryland Historical Society

**Martin Sullivan**, Historic St. Mary's City Commission

# Subcommittee Overview

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The primary objective of the **Communication and Outreach Subcommittee** was to determine how to communicate social studies' importance to parents, policymakers, and the public, and develop partnerships that will lead to comprehensive social studies education in Maryland schools.

## Key Issues

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The Subcommittee considered the role of social studies education in preparing students for the workplace, the public's perception of social studies, social studies' place in a balanced education, and the use of associations and organizations (e.g., museums and historical sites) to provide additional instructional opportunities. Museum and historic organization staff believe their focus should be to develop educational programs that revitalize state and national curriculum goals and standards. It is a way to link community resource people, educators, students and their families, and museum staff to the content, technology, and assessment tools that make for a positive learning experience (Hirzy, 1996). The Subcommittee narrowed these discussions to focus on these issues:

- The status of social studies education
- The impact of social studies education on workforce development and preparedness
- Parent and public awareness of social studies' purpose, importance, and place in a balanced school curriculum

## The Status of Social Studies Education

*The Status of Social Studies Education in Maryland*, by political science researcher Francene Engel, (2005) provides an in-depth examination of its perceived status in schools. Seven in ten elementary school principals and nearly nine in ten teachers report that social studies is not considered a high-priority subject. While its status rises considerably at the secondary level, still one-quarter of all middle-school principals surveyed and nearly one-third of all teachers say that social studies is a low priority in their schools. The starkest illustration of social studies' anemic status is the fact that the amount of instructional time dedicated to it has declined significantly in recent years. (Engel, 2005)

Recently, parent and professor Judith Pace wrote an editorial in *Education Week* (2007) regarding the loss of social studies time and attention in the elementary classroom. "We are in danger of losing a generation of citizens schooled in the foundations of democracy—and of producing high school graduates who are not broadly educated human beings (Pace, 2007). Dr. Pace continues to bemoan the loss of social studies instruction in her state of California where social studies anecdotal evidence is disturbing enough to call for a more systematic investigation. "Some large school districts in California and other states have now virtually eliminated social studies instruction from all of their elementary schools, and some middle schools. Many students do not get their first social studies instruction until 10<sup>th</sup> grade" (p.26)

## Social Studies' Impact on Workforce Development

As discussed in the **Curriculum and Instruction Subcommittee** report, the primary purpose of social studies is to instill in students the knowledge, skills, and values necessary for active contribution in society (Ross, 1997). This includes those skills essential to workplace success:

- acquiring and manipulating data;
- developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories;
- constructing new knowledge; and
- participating in groups (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994).

Nowhere is the need for the skills and attitudes acquired through social studies instruction more clearly articulated than in the document, *Partnership for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills* (2007) which states, “A 21<sup>st</sup> century skills initiative is not simply an ‘education’ agenda, but a blueprint for economic, civic and cultural vitality in the coming years. Through public education, we must plant the seeds for thriving, vibrant communities.”

As part of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning report, a framework for learning was developed. This framework outlined student outcomes which embody skills, knowledge and expertise students should master to succeed in work and life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Core subjects include English, reading or language arts, world languages, arts, mathematics, economics, science, geography, history, government and civics. The report further states, “We believe schools must move beyond a focus on basic competency in core subjects: Global Awareness; Financial, Economic, Business and Entrepreneurial Literacy; Civic Literacy, and Health Literacy.”

Several states have identified principles for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learner. These principles include being:

- a clear and effective communicator
- a self-directed and lifelong learner
- a creative and practical problem solver
- a responsible and involved citizen
- an integrative and informed thinker

Other skills developed through social studies instruction include the ability to create and maintain constructive relationships; identify issues, problems, and challenging situations; make decisions; solve problems; and apply findings to daily life situations (Sax, 1997). These are the very same skills most valued by employers. In *Maryland's State of the Workforce Report* (2003) critical thinking, social perceptiveness, and reading comprehension<sup>2</sup> were cited as skills critical to Maryland's leading occupations (**Table 6**).



Increasingly, states worried about the skills of their future workforce and stiffer economic competition from abroad are trying to connect education from birth to adulthood so that students are prepared for further study, work and citizenship.” (Quality Counts 2007)



**Table 6: Most important skills for 25 leading job–creating occupations**

	Percentage of the top 25 job–creating occupations requiring the indicated skill
Active Listening	84%
Reading Comprehension	84%
Speaking	80%
Writing	68%
Service Orientation	56%
Social Perceptiveness	52%
Coordination	44%
Mathematics	36%
Critical Thinking	24%
Equipment Selection	20%
Monitoring	20%
Operation and Control	20%

Source: Maryland Department of Labor, Licensing & Regulation

A report published by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development discusses the unique roles that social studies education plays in the lives of students (and future employees):

... to provide students with awareness of careers directly related to the social sciences (for example: urban planner, sociologist, government administrator, and business economist); to help students reflect on their worker–related experiences (such as analyzing interpersonal relationships and conflicts on the job); to provide students with knowledge that will place in historical and social perspective the role of the worker in U.S. society and the world (knowledge about labor unions, immigration and employment, women in the labor force, and the impact of war on jobs); and to help students analyze and discuss the interrelationships between the worker role and other social roles (the conflicts that often arise between being a responsible member of the family and a conscientious worker (Superka and Hawke, 1982).

Research consistently indicates that a good education in social studies builds students’ capacity for early and long–term professional success. It also suggests the inverse—that is, the lack of strong social studies instruction will leave tomorrow’s workforce less capable of team–building, integrating facts from disparate sources, and understanding the broader context in which organizations operate.

## Parent and Public Awareness of Social Studies’ Purpose, Importance, and Place in a Balanced School Curriculum

While parents’ awareness of the status of social studies instruction was not addressed in the task force surveys, it was apparent from the testimonial comments by task force members who were also parents that parents were not aware that social studies instructional time had decreased in recent years. These parent members expressed dismay over the loss of instructional time and stated that schools had an obligation to inform parents of these decisions.

Although there is no direct correlation between parent/community and social studies educational programs, perhaps if more parent/community members realized the importance of the content, skills, and attitudes support would follow. MSDE has taken major strides over the past two years to implement recommendations from *A Shared Responsibility*, the Maryland Parent Advisory Council’s (M-PAC) report on parent involvement in schools. The five categories of parent engagement recommended by

M-PAC—leadership, accountability, training, partnership, and communication—develop clear channels of communication between community partners and the Department. Looking into the future and considering these implications, parents, teachers, administrators, and community and business members could partner together and involve students in successful social studies activities (MSDE, 2005).

Bruce Boston researched the importance between academics and civic engagement in public schools and highlighted the importance of support from parents and community members. “Those with the largest stake in reshaping civic education at the classroom level—parents—are the ones who have the greatest responsibility—and the most clout. Because the stakes are highest for children, the case for civic knowledge and civic engagement is finally theirs to make. Parents should mobilize to join in alliance-building with policymakers and those who influence policy at all levels (Boston, 2005).

One idea was to replicate a very successful arts education and advocacy group, Arts Education Maryland School Alliance (AEMS) which successfully partners with organizations and MSDE to advance the cause of arts as a basic component of public education—dance, music, theatre and visual arts—for all Maryland school children. AEMS works closely with the Maryland Fine Arts Education Advisory Panel to implement the MSDE Board policy on arts education. In addition, AEMS serves as a resource for local school systems. Another idea is to have members of the Commission on Civic Literacy, SB #492 coordinate with a Social Studies Advisory Committee. Mandates of the commission includes: “build a network of education professionals to share information and strengthen partnerships, consult with organizations represented on the commission, and develop a clearinghouse that shall be available on the internet” (Senate Bill 492, Chapter 160).

MSDE could establish a network of partnerships with museums which could be managed from within MSDE, yet organized from the network, The American Association of Museums strongly endorses these formal and informal relationships. A report, *Museums for a New Century*, published in 1984, forever changed the relationship between schools and museums. Museum educators write about the changes in the perspectives and relationship between school teachers and museums, “...the relationships are improving in light of the quality of education that can be offered by museum educators both on-site and off-site” (Hicks, 1968, Harrison & Naef, 1985; Alexander & Hardy, 2005). Gone are those days of stuffy museum displays off limits to the inquisitive eyes and hands of nine-year olds. Most admit the dilemma is still rooted in the communication between schools and museum educators who desire to offer something more than a field trip and look for creative opportunities to be a resource to students who are interested in delving more deeply into the culture and history of a time using primary sources.

Mary Alexander and Steven Hardy, formerly of the Maryland Humanities Council researched and evaluated museum programs and resources in a report, *Education Programs and Resources Outside the Classroom (2006)*. Maryland’s 248 organizations serve the schools and support social studies education by providing 1) tangible links with the past and 2) the raw materials for the historical investigations model recommended by MSDE for Social Studies.

Of the 248 museums and organizations surveyed, 80% offering schools programs in the subject areas of history, geography, political science, and economics. The types of on-site programs currently offered are: school tours, hands-on activities, primary source research, living history demonstrations, public archaeology, and junior tour guide programs. Off-site programs have become more popular due to the September 11 security concerns, lack of resources, and limitations on time spent out of the classroom.

Off-site programs include; traveling trunks, living history presentations, primary source kits, lesson plans and curriculum guides, web-based recourses, and videos and film. As museums move into the realm of professional development, primarily through the development and implementation of museum collaborative events and web-based resources, teachers are more and more interested (Korteweg, 2002). In summary, Maryland's museums and historical organizations serve over 220,000 every year and, 1) provide comprehensive, high-quality resources, 2) develop school programs directly linked to MSDE, Core Learning Goals, and State Curriculum, 3) have professional staff to support teachers and school programs and, 4) offer professional development opportunities for teachers.

# Recommendations

## Recommendation 8

**Establish a Maryland Social Studies Advisory Committee, using the Fine Arts Advisory Panel as a model, to recommend policies; develop partnerships; develop public awareness; and identify integrative and innovative field experiences, professional development opportunities, classroom resources, and curricular models.**

- Form an alliance that includes representatives of local school systems, the Maryland Council on Economic Education, the Maryland Geographic Alliance, the Maryland Council for the Social Studies, the Baltimore Community Foundation, the Maryland Business Roundtable for Education, and the Maryland State Teachers Association, as well as teachers, parents, students, business and political leaders, board members, and directors/curators of area museums.
- Work with MSDE's Social Studies Content Coordinating Team and the Maryland Council for Social Studies to advocate for better social studies instruction.
- Enlist the support of interested stakeholders, including legislators, local and state board of education members, PTA leaders and members, college faculty, and members of Maryland's business community.
  - Review the role of MSDE's Curriculum Content Team, with an eye toward expanding its membership and purview. The Curriculum Content Team (CCT) is a group that has been in existence for over twenty years consisting of content specific experts, classroom teachers, content supervisors and MSDE staff. The CCT meets quarterly to be informed on recent policy changes or trends in social studies; to review newly created draft documents for input and edits, i.e. assessment item types, public policy statements, and to provide advice and guidance to MSDE policymakers

## Recommendation 9

**Maximize the opportunities for students to experience Maryland's rich historical and cultural resources by identifying and publishing them on an easily accessible website.**

- Expand electronic resources, and include among them: 1) an integrated Web site, offering information on museums, cultural resources, and heritage programs that enhance social studies instruction; and 2) an expanded SC Toolkit in social studies, including electronic field trips and museum and other organizations resources and lesson plans (see [mdk12.org](http://mdk12.org)).
- Work in conjunction with the MSDE Social Studies Advisory Committee.

# Summary

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One of the chief impediments to reforming social studies education is the lack of outcry among stakeholders that instructional time and focus on the subject have declined sharply in Maryland’s public schools. Were parents to learn that social studies is neglected in many schools, it’s likely that more pressure would be placed on educators and administrators to reinstate social studies and its disciplines in daily instruction. Therefore, the **Communication and Outreach Subcommittee** recommends:

**Establishment of a Maryland Social Studies Advisory Committee, using the Fine Arts Advisory Panel as a model, to recommend policies; develop partnerships; develop public awareness; and identify integrative and innovative field experiences, professional development opportunities, classroom resources, and curricular models.**

**Opportunities for students to experience Maryland’s rich historical and cultural resources be maximized by identifying and publishing them on an easily accessible website.**

# Conclusion

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Social studies and its disciplines—history, economics, civics, and geography—have long been valued in American education because of their role in helping students participate meaningfully in the democratic process. Additionally, with the emergence of a post-industrial economy that emphasizes creativity, innovation, life-long learning, and team-building, researchers have come to recognize the central role that social studies instruction plays in the formation of these skills.

However, despite the historic and intensifying relationship between social studies instruction and the smooth functioning of the American republic, social studies has been largely relegated to second-class status. Given the federal government’s legislative emphasis on reading and math, other subjects have been demoted, resulting in students who receive a significantly less balanced education than previous generations enjoyed. Moreover, because schools in the poorest communities often struggle to meet federally mandated reading and math benchmarks, it is they that most often abandon social studies to focus more time and attention on the two subjects for which they’re held accountable.

The Task Force believes that social studies instruction has suffered because subject expertise is not tested at the elementary and middle-school levels. Were the subject assessed, it stands to reason, it would be taught.

It also stands to reason that if parents were made aware of social studies’ deteriorating status in schools—in terms of diminishing instructional time and teachers’ inadequate preparation and development in the subject—state and school system officials might be pressured to refocus the curriculum and establish a more balanced instructional day.

The Task Force has developed a set of recommendations intended to reverse social studies’ decline. Key recommendations include establishing standards governing instructional time; administering a statewide social studies assessment in elementary and middle school; increasing social studies course requirements for prospective teachers; and launching a campaign to gain public support for more and better social studies instruction. If these recommendations and the others are faithfully implemented, Maryland could emerge as a national leader in social studies education.

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