

Editor's Notebook

This issue of *Social Education* offers a rich array of current topics, stimulating historical documents, and research-based findings about the kind of teaching that engages students, develops their thinking skills, and prepares them for effective citizenship.

The upcoming U.S. census of 2020 is the subject of a controversy about whether the “short forms” that are sent to all households should include a question about the citizenship status of respondents. This raises the concern that the question might depress the response rate, which would prevent the census from achieving its objective of counting the entire population. Jeffrey Wice’s Lessons on the Law column reviews the purposes and procedures of the census, examines the legal issues surrounding the question about citizenship, and suggests ways of discussing them in the classroom.

Brett Bertucio looks behind the scenes of the Supreme Court deliberations in 1972 on a case that is often of great interest to students because it raised the issue of whether parents can exempt their children on religious grounds from a law mandating school attendance up to the age of 16. In *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, the Court issued a decision in favor of three Amish families in Wisconsin who challenged the state law. Bertucio presents documents that offer a fascinating insight into the Supreme Court’s decision-making process by revealing how Chief Justice Warren Burger redrafted his final opinion to reflect amendments suggested by Justice Potter Stewart.

In our Sources and Strategies column, Michael Apfeldorf introduces a distinctive nineteenth-century slave narrative written in Arabic by Omar ibn Said. Born into a wealthy Muslim family in the region between the Senegal and Gambia rivers, Said became a teacher after receiving Qur’anic schooling, but his life changed dramatically when he was taken prisoner during a military conflict and shipped to the United States as a slave. Apfeldorf suggests ways in which teachers can use Said’s story as a window into the realities of slavery.

Ameena Jandali and Henry Millstein outline the problem of the bullying of students who belong to religious minorities, which has been an increasing concern in U.S. schools since September 11, 2001. Noting that “South Asian, Hindu, Sikh, Arab, and Muslim students have been specifically targeted,” (26) the authors examine the effects of this kind of bullying and offer detailed recommendations for dealing with the problem.

Stefanie Olbrys offers strong evidence that inquiry-based teaching is more effective than traditional methods of teaching social studies. In her Teaching the C3 Framework column, she describes how her “Deliberative Classroom” made history relevant to students who were reluctant learners, and presents data showing that they outperformed a comparison group of students receiving a more traditional form of instruction.

Recently declassified documents have shed new light on the role of the United States in promoting a coup d’état in Iran in 1953 against

the nationalist government of Mohammed Mossadeq. Autumn Magliocca, Anthony Pellegrino, and Joseph L. Adragna present a lesson plan based on a selection of these documents that will enable students to examine the context and consequences of the coup, and to evaluate the nature and purpose of U.S. involvement in Iran during the Cold War period.

Students are fascinated by historical documents relating to their own localities, and the wide online availability of these primary sources offers great opportunities to teach local history. As an example, Scott Scheuerell describes resources for studying Pawnee County, Kansas, between 1877 and 1880. The combination of information from the 1880 U.S. Census and the diary of a young resident of Pawnee County at that time can offer students a vivid portrayal of the “highs and lows of life” in this region of rural America.

In the segregated South in the 1940s and 1950s, there was a need for Mexican workers, who often encountered the same kind of discrimination as that experienced by African Americans. Jarrod Hanson and Ruben Donato investigate the situation that arose in the town of Marked Tree, Arkansas, between 1949 and 1951, when the Mexican citizens working in the town were the victims of discrimination, and the Mexican government objected to the way they were treated. The authors present documents from the investigation of a complaint made by the Mexican Consul in Memphis, Tennessee, about the situation, and suggest an inquiry that will allow students to increase their understanding of issues of race, labor, and civil rights.

Our Research and Practice column presents the results of research into the effectiveness of Project-Based Learning (PBL) in helping elementary students to develop critical thinking skills and democratic values. Anne-Lise Halvorsen, Nell K. Duke, and Stephanie L. Strachan investigate the effects of PBL projects in economics, geography, history and civics on students who participated in them, compared to a control group of students who did not. The data showed that students in classes whose teachers taught the PBL units had statistically significant higher scores in social studies and informational reading than students in classes whose teachers followed the traditional curriculum.

Our opening feature is the address made by NCSS President India Meissel at the NCSS annual conference in Chicago on November 30, 2018, in which she called for the revitalization of civic learning to make students informed, thoughtful citizens who participate in their communities, accomplish public purposes, and work for the common good. She emphasizes that social studies teachers have a unique role to play in accomplishing this goal.

As always, the editors of *Social Education* welcome the comments of readers on any of the contributions to this issue at socialed@ncss.org 