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## Social studies in the primary classroom: Why they are important

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Katie M. Simkanin

Social studies in the primary classroom: Why they are important

University of Akron

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to focus on the importance of social studies topics taught in the primary classroom. I will examine the main social studies and historical topics teachers focus on under the framework of the Ohio Common Core State Standards (OCCSS). I will also examine a local school district's primary social studies curriculum and interview a primary and high school teacher for their thoughts on the benefits of teaching social studies in the classroom, and what topics they think are the most important to cover for their students' education and success in the higher grades and in the real world. This study will cover defining social studies, defending the many benefits of teaching social studies to primary-grade students, the history and formal adoption of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), the history and formal adoption of the OCCSS, the main goals of the CCSS, the four social studies strands (history, economics, geography, and government) and what they entail, a brief overview of Norton City School district's demographics and social studies curriculum and standards, an interview with a primary and high school teacher regarding the importance and benefits of social studies in the classroom, and a reflection on their replies, and some concluding thoughts. Throughout this paper, I use the terms *effective*, *beneficial*, and *well-rounded history/social studies education* so it is important to define these terms for the reader. These terms encompass an education in history that is practical, covers influential and relevant figures for every notable era, events, and times, as well as interweaves history across content so the student can examine history through a scientific, literary, and mathematic scope.

## Introduction

When one typically thinks of history, images of dusty old textbooks may spring into the mind. Perhaps an arcane teacher or professor standing in front of the class delivering dry lectures on wars of old or faded ancient empires may not scintillate the mind or ignite a desire to learn more. Students' knowledge of history has suffered due to untrained teachers, less stringent content requirements, and bland textbooks that are directed more toward minute details rather than a full overview of the events of the past. (Hoge, 1988, p.1). While this statement is mainly directed toward older students, this statement is certainly applicable in the primary (Grades 1-5) classroom. Hoge's 1988 article serves as a historical reference to demonstrate that the attitudes and perception about history in the classroom have not changed much over the past 40 years. When primary students are presented with facts about the past that are irrelevant to their lives, they may lose appreciation for and the motivation to learn history. In the recent focus on literacy and mathematics with the onset of the Common Core State Standards (CCSS), primary students are not exposed to as much history and social studies as they should, causing them to miss a great deal of useful and beneficial information. History teaches practical lessons; many of which can be applied and are relevant in the lives of primary-age students.

This paper seeks to accomplish numerous objectives. Firstly, I will explore if Ohio's Common Core State Standards (OCCSS) contain enough guidelines yet flexibility for teachers to create social studies curriculum that is effective and beneficial for primary-age students. I will strive to answer if educators, bound by the OCCSS, are delivering a solid history education for their primary students. I will examine Norton City Schools' social studies curriculum and compare it to the OCCSS to discover if the topics taught are important and relate to the real-world. I want to discover the numerous benefits of emphasizing social studies in the primary

classroom. I also am interested in finding out if students are receiving enough practical historical information in the primary grades to prepare them for higher grades and beyond. I will seek to answer some of my queries by working with two teachers from the Norton City School district. One teaches primary school, and the other teaches high school. I will ask each teacher a series of questions pertaining to what historical topics are taught in that particular grade, if the teacher feels the OCCSS provides opportunities to teach relevant curriculum that prepares students for real life, if the teachers feel their students come to their classrooms with substantial historical knowledge, and if the teachers believe that their students are receiving a solid historical education,

This paper encompasses all primary grades (Grades 1-5); however, I will primarily focus on second grade. I have worked in a second-grade classroom in Norton City Schools this past semester for my field hours and have actively participated in the entire school day for much of the semester, so I am well acquainted with the general daily routines and social studies curriculum in the second grade classroom. I will also focus on tenth and twelfth grade, since that is the grade the high school teacher interviewee instructs.

Social studies are an important subject to teach in the primary classroom, as there are many lessons to be learned from the past that explain the present and prepare for the future. In order to ensure students are receiving a diverse, well-rounded education, social studies guidelines must be clearly sanctioned and specifically directed by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through guidelines and included in the regular school curriculum. Teachers today need to be equipped with practical, effective, and relevant historical content (explained below) that will prepare primary students for success in the upper grades, and for real world problems and solutions.

### **The Benefits of Teaching History to Primary Students**

There are many reasons why primary teachers should incorporate social studies into the school day for their students. In order to understand why social studies is vital to a primary student's education, one must first understand the definition of social studies. Teachers can view social studies as a training program by using and integrating information taken from social and human sciences in order to teach students how to become problem-solving, decision-making citizens that can effectively change the country and the world (Yilmaz & Kurtel, 2015, p. 113).

One of the main reasons why primary-aged students should actively learn important social studies concepts is because one of the most important functions of an educational institution is to teach a student how to be a responsible, effective citizen by learning about civic duty and responsibilities (Yilmaz & Kurtel, 2015, p. 112-113). Educational institutions give students the opportunity for socialization interaction with many cultures, and the privilege to learn about the history and institutions within the society they live. Concepts taught in social studies equip students with the opportunity to learn about proper attitudes and opportunities they may encounter (Yilmaz & Kurtel, 2015, p. 112). Most of these skills, including civic responsibility, tolerance, respect for all cultures, and learning about one's surroundings take place through social studies courses. As a primary-age student, children are learning the duty of civic responsibility in their environments, how to be a good citizen of where they live, how to live in a community, and the skill of interaction with all people, usually within the confines of the school.

Social studies serve as a training program for citizens who learn to exhibit responsibility, and form these references by making connections through history, citizenship study topics and skills, and geography. (Yilmaz & Kurtel, 2015, pp. 112-113). The *National Council for Social Studies* states that the purpose of primary school social studies is to enable students to understand more

about their world. Social studies content can allow students to explain relationships with other people and their environments, and equips them with an understanding of the past. (2017).

Teaching history can help students recognize major figures from the past, and give them an understanding as to why certain world events have transpired. Teaching and learning history in primary schools is often aimed at building insights into the students' lives and helping them connect the past with the present (Hoge, 1988). By aligning lessons with students' lives, teachers are connecting their lives to historical eras and building on students' background knowledge. Educators also teach history to develop students' knowledge of the American past and to build understanding regarding the concepts of time and chronology (Hoge, 1988). One of the ultimate goals of teaching history is to help students realize their own relationship to the past, and to help them make connections to the fact that their lives will soon become a part of history in the future (Hoge, 1988). Social studies at the (primary) level should provide students with purposeful and meaningful learning experiences that are unique, high quality, challenging, and reflective of the contemporary world and its issues. (*National Council for the Social Studies, 2017*). This idea is especially true with primary students. While students are beginning to delve into basic historical concepts, events, and individuals, they need to hear content that is applicable to their own lives, features key people and events from around the globe to foster a sense of diversity, and engage in productive, hands-on activities to supplement the learning.

There are many benefits to teaching primary-age students historical themes, concepts, individuals, and events that have transpired since the beginning of the world. Even though teachers may feel that he or she is simply reciting facts about past eras to students sitting in the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom, there are major benefits that extend far beyond simply knowing facts about ancient wars, savage tribesman, and long-standing empires. According to the *University of*

*the People: The Education Revolution*, there are eight main benefits of teaching primary students history. The first reason is *Better reading and learning* (2020). Teachers can creatively incorporate social studies across the entire curriculum content. For example, if the primary student is studying famous scientists, a teacher can not only discuss Isaac Newton's life and ideas, but can merge social studies with science by teaching about his theories of gravity. The lesson on this historical figure can be transformed into a math lesson by practicing some extremely basic physics problems. Literacy learning can also occur during a historical lesson on Isaac Newton by asking the students to read stories featuring him, research his life and discoveries, or learn a list of new vocabulary words related to Newton's work. Reading and writing can also play an important role in teaching history. According to *University of the People: The Education Revolution* (2020), students can become better readers when given materials in the learning context. They can increase their thinking skills when asked to analyze, write, and critically think to demonstrate understanding. Denying students opportunities to build an enriched social studies vocabulary and background knowledge can result in lower literacy levels and increase the achievement gap (*National Council for the Social Studies*, 2020). Incorporating social studies in with literacy can make such a huge, positive impact on primary students. Not only are students able to practice reading and writing, but they are learning about a past historical figure and concept that they may find interesting or applicable in their own lives.

The second major benefit of teaching primary students some important historical themes, concepts, and individuals is because social studies instill *Citizen responsibilities and values* (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). It is vital that students are given the opportunity to examine the past to see how people lived, how they worked, and how they interacted within their country and state to follow the rules. In order to positively contribute to

the democratic American society, students need to have exposure to the topics and aspects of history that helped create such an important civil and governmental system. In order to live as a good citizen, students need to understand history, political science, all of the humanities, and numerous cultures. (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). For example, primary students should learn about the American system of government (albeit simplified), provided the curriculum and lessons follow the Ohio Common Core State Standards (OCCSS) and the information is applicable to their own lives. An educator may teach some very general terms for government, such as the names for the three branches in the American government and the main jobs of the three branches. In order to cement this learning, the teacher may explain that the American government system is unique, and then briefly yet succinctly again reinforce the basics every year in primary school so that by the time the students reach the upper grades, they are already equipped with a solid basis on how American government functions before delving into more specific, difficult concepts. By teaching students lessons in history that encourage exemplary citizenship and upholding their country's morals and values, teachers are demonstrating to students that even the most ordinary of people can make a difference in the world by simply being a good citizen.

The third major benefit of instructing students in the discipline of history is *Cultural understanding* (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). Exposure to diverse cultures around the globe at a young age can develop an understanding of and a respect for all cultures through the ages. The world is changing rapidly, creating a far more diverse environment and context for primary education. Primary educators must be prepared to value and serve a diverse group of learners and families, and social studies can be an invaluable tool that exposes young students to different cultures around the world. (*National Council for the Social*

*Studies*, 2017). Incorporating a diverse curriculum while teaching history is not difficult at all. Teachers can discuss what life in Civil War America might be like from the perspective of a newly-freed slave. When studying famous Americans, a teacher may choose to discuss a famous Native American, such as Squanto. There are many benefits for students to have exposure to different cultures, and teachers can enhance this through incorporating a wide variety of materials using people from all countries and cultures. Not only is the student learning about globally-significant historical events, but they are also developing a respect and tolerance for people who are different than themselves.

Not only should a thorough historical education for primary students encompass world cultures, but it should highlight on basic economics, covered within the social studies CCSS. The fourth benefit of teaching social studies to primary students is *Economic education*. By teaching basic economics, students can begin to understand how their financial decisions have an impact on their personal future, as well as the future of society (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). Incorporating something as important as economics into the primary social studies curriculum is fairly simple. For instance, teachers can give math story problems about the Louisiana purchase, an important event in American history. Teachers can ask thought-provoking questions that also incorporate history, such as “Do you think that the Louisiana purchase under Thomas Jefferson’s presidency was a smart decision for the country?” to facilitate an open-ended discussion among students. While students are applying practical math strategies, they are also learning significant events in American history, and the concept of very rudimentary economics. Learning to respect, use, count, and balance money is a practical skill for young students easily accomplished through examples from the past with practical applications now.

A fifth benefit that accompanies teaching social studies is *Critical thinking*. Critical thinking is an important component of social studies. Students learn to evaluate past decisions and make connections between influences and circumstances, as well as learn about mistakes people have made in the past. (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). History provides many examples and situations where students can practice critical thinking to enhance their own lives. Teachers can provide relevant examples to students that foster critical thinking, such as discussing an important historical event, such as the construction of the Great Pyramids in ancient Egypt, and ask students how the workers may have moved the heavy blocks used to construct the pyramids with no modern tools. Teachers may discuss an important law that a president has made and ask students to start a discussion about it, using their own thoughts and words as a conversation bolster. Students can explore world leaders' decisions that have affected the lives of their subjects and critically evaluate world leaders' choices. Social studies provides students with skills and scenarios for problem solving, assessing issues, and making thoughtful judgments about the past (*National Council for the Social Studies*, 2017, p. 1). History is a subject in school in which a variety of perspectives, thoughts, ideas and opinions are welcome. Unlike math, which is objectively-based on numbers with one right answer, learning history can be a little more subjective, as students discuss world events, wars, monarchs, people, and laws that have shaped the world as it is today. Students can engage in meaningful, authentic discussions with their peers over issues that have greatly impacted peoples' lives.

While developing critical thinking is certainly a major benefit to primary school history, *Real world understanding* (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020) is another. Studying history can give students an increased understanding of the world around them. Through studying historical topics that are applicable to students' own lives, students gain

understanding about places, cultures, and events throughout the world, and what transpired to shape the world that students know today. Studying social studies gives students a real world understanding that can help them make inferences about how the rest of the world works, using a few solid examples that students can easily understand (*University of the People: The Education Revolution, 2020*). Students need real-world understanding in order to comprehend the way the world is today. They need to hear stories of the past and how certain events have shaped the world they know. Students can learn relevant historical information to apply in their own lives that promotes a respect and tolerance for all people. Social studies are important for gaining those skills. With the proper curriculum, enthusiastic teachers, and willing attitudes from the students, everyone can learn skills to use in the real world under the guise of interesting historical events.

Another benefit for primary students to study history is that they will gain *Political skills* (*University of the People: The Education Revolution, 2020*). Again, there are many practical applications for teaching students in the primary grades political history. Teachers can give their students opportunities to participate in a classroom election, where they learn about the characteristics of a civil servant and a good leader, the basics of campaigning, and the importance of voting and keeping promises. Students can engage also engage in “debates” over a classroom issue to become familiar with how presidential candidates work to win elections. From simplified history classes, students learn information, such as basic government structure, main political ideas, the country’s economy, currency, and resources, and much more. Through information that helps students gain political skills, they are learning to analyze and evaluate existing systems while imagining the future of the places they live (*University of the People: The Education Revolution, 2020*). Processes including debates, problem solving, project-based learning opportunities, role-playing, and simulations are interactive strategies that encourage engagement in

social studies for young students (*National Council for the Social Studies*, 2017). History contains many examples of great political heroes who were strong, consistent leaders, and in an ever-changing and somewhat turbulent world, students need great models and leaders to look up to as they learn to become emerging leaders in their own families, classrooms, and communities.

A final main benefit for teaching primary students history is for students to *Respect history* (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). History is responsible for making the world that students know today, and it is important that primary students have exposure to it to have an appreciation for and understand the way the world works. Primary students in particular may enjoy stories featuring dynamic people from the past and may want to emulate strong leaders that can lead them to find out more about a particular era in history (*University of the People: The Education Revolution*, 2020). Teaching students the ways of the past and the significant people, laws, and events that have shaped the world they know today is a gift that they will not receive anywhere else in the curriculum they will encounter.

### **A Study of Ohio Common Core Social Studies State Standards (OCCSS)**

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) are a curriculum-guiding standard in public schools today, but before 1983, the CCSS did not exist. According to LaVenía et al., 2015, pp. 145-146), in 1983, a document titled *A Nation at Risk* (report on the United States National Commission on excellence in education) called for standards-based reform through intensified coursework requirements for high school graduation as well as expanded assessment programs. These early 1980s reforms did little to change the face of education, since they did not specify what content teachers should put more focus towards. However, the 1990s' view to educational reform gained traction in educational policy. Despite the fact that some general standards were

set into place and agreed upon the in 1990s, teachers were still very much teaching what they felt was important for their students to know from their own experiences, and there were no state or federal guidelines outlining the content, concepts, and ideas that educators should teach in all content areas. There was a need for reform across the curriculum that served both students and teachers, ensuring that students were on track with their education. The *Yearbooks of the Politics of the Education Association* published an influential article which called for a standard-based system to align assessments, curricular materials, and professional developments to the information and knowledge students needed to learn (LaVenía et al., 2015, pg. 146). There were three major components to reform in order for a standards-based system to become widespread and effective. Firstly, rigorous expectations and standards for what students needed to know needed establishment. Secondly, policies required alignment with accountability to the standards, and thirdly, the governance system needed restructuring and the ability to delegate to schools the instructional approaches the schools needed to ensure that the new academic standards were met (LaVenía et al., 2015, pg. 146). Many factors had to come into play before a unified stance was taken regarding consistent, reformed educational content.

In 1991, the concept of educational state standards was further enhanced by a report authored by the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP), which was a panel formed to monitor the progress made toward establishing the state standards (LaVenía et al., 2015, p. 147). The report pushed for world class standards for what students in school should be able to know and do. Congress then formed a bipartisan council to consider the feasibility of establishing national standards and tests. In its report, the National Council on Education Standards (NCEST) recommended that national standards encompass the knowledge, skills, and other understandings that schools should teach in order for students to attain the desired levels of competency in all

subject areas. The council also proposed national content standards to outline all of the knowledge and skills that students must learn, as well as include the necessary supports and resources students many need to achieve the standards outlined by the standards. (LaVenía et al., 2015, p. 147). Eventually, the council concluded that federal educational standards would only impede the progress of establishing standards, and the National Education Summit in 1996 declared that if any standards were to be implemented, it would be at a state level (LaVenía et al., 2015, p. 148). By 2011, all but four states fully adopted Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and aligned curriculum, assessments, and teachers' professional development within the educational framework the state established. The primary purpose of the CCSS is "To define the knowledge and skills students should have within their K-12 education careers so that they will graduate high school able to succeed in entry-level, credit bearing academic college courses and in workforce training programs" (LaVenía, et al., 2015, p. 149). While it has taken the CCSS some time to become the basis on which states place their educational standards, they are now vital for a student's education, as a student's curriculum, assessments, and teacher's professional development is based around these state standards.

Despite the fact that the CCSS all vary from state to state, there are reasons why deciding standards at a state level may be highly beneficial in the long run. According to McHenry (2014, p. 90), the standards implementation is a product of the unique circumstances within a particular educational agency. This can range from the agency's views on standards, to existing conceptions on a certain subject's meaning, and the capabilities of the student body within a certain district or school (McHenry, 2014, p. 90). Demographics (race, culture, ethnicity) vary greatly between states, so it may be better for individual states and school districts to determine standards that tailor to the needs of their communities and families. According to McHenry,

(2014, p. 90), research demonstrates that standards are greatly influenced by local perspectives and ideas of education that are based on the social class and ethnic background of students. Again, this proves that standards, when broken down into a smaller scale, can greatly impact students. Statewide standards as opposed to federal standards make it much easier for educators to teach effective content for students that are more tailored to their needs, rather than one general set of federally-imposed standards. While these standards provide a general framework for the United States' educational system, they do not specifically state what to teach; they only give general guidelines. This can leave room for great discrepancies, confusion, and lack of continuity among teachers.

The history of the Ohio Common Core State Standards (OCCSS) is extremely important to consider in the context of this paper. This brief overview will specifically focus on the social studies OCCSS covering Grades 1-8, and the recent 2018 updates the OCCSS have received. According to the Ohio Department of Education, Ohio's Learning Standards for Social Studies outline what students should know in the content area of social studies in order to succeed in college, careers, and for their place in the real world. The State Board of Education adopted the first version of the OCCSS in 2010 (2018, p. 3). Despite the fact that state standards were adopted back in the previous decade, Ohio took a while to develop and adopt its own social studies state-approved standards. Within six years, the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) slowly looked to updating the social studies OCCSS with a survey from educators and the general public as feedback (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). Groups of educators experienced in social studies reviewed the comprehensive recommendations for change and made the revisions in a new draft of social studies OCCSS. Next, the ODE posted the revised standards still in draft form for public review in 2017 (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p.

3). The groups continued work on reviewing comments and incorporating suggestions from the public in the draft standards. Ohio's State Board of Education adopted the final, revised social studies standards in February 2018 (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). The main goal was to provide Ohio's teachers with a state-wide, commonly agreed-on set of standards and expectations on which to base the social studies curricula taught in public schools. In order to explain the main goals of the social studies OCCSS, the "Philosophy and Guiding Assumptions" was established. In that, the OCCSS states that the goal of social studies is to promote civic competence, and encourage students to explore knowledge and intellectual processes to become engaged participants in public life. Civic competence is related to social studies more than any other field, and it rests on a commitment to democracy and requires knowledge about one's community, country, and world (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). Social studies are important for students to learn to apply in the real world, as it teaches them civic competence. In a politically, economically, and culturally diverse nation, children are going to grow up amidst a system quite unlike any previous generation has ever seen before. They must exhibit tolerance to all, respect and uphold the law, and serve as strong leaders in their family and community. The OCCSS hopes that by using social studies as an example, today's students can become tomorrow's leaders.

The social studies OCCSS has set forth nine main goals in which they expect the learning standards to achieve. The first goal intends to set high expectations and provide strong support so all students can achieve in the social studies content area (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). The OCCSS has determined social studies standards that will challenge students and require them to think critically, as teachers serve as the more knowledgeable other who will provide support and guide students to conclusions about the past. The second goal desires that

students represent social studies knowledge and skills required to transition successfully to postsecondary education, to the workplace, and to civic life (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). By teaching relevant historical concepts to the students, such as the importance of laws, American history, basics of government, and how to be a responsible citizen, a teacher is modeling for them how to apply what they learn in real life. That is authentic learning, and students enjoy real learning. The third objective of the social studies OCCSS is that they are informed by national standards (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). While this does not appear to make sense in light that the CCSS are state-determined rather than federally determined, this indicates that there are a set of federally-agreed upon general standards that must be followed, then specific standards are determined state-wide. The fourth goal of the OCCSS is for students to learn to balance knowledge, conceptual understanding, and skill development (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). The main objective is for students to learn how to practically apply their knowledge, using the skills they gained from their learning. The fifth goal of the OCCSS is for teachers to address significant understandings that serve as the basis for informed decision making as citizens (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). Again, this is where placing emphasis on real-world issues that can be addressed through social studies come into play. Students need to have the opportunity to learn about civic responsibility and duty, as well as develop a respect for their country. The sixth objective for the OCCSS is to focus on significant social studies topics (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). This is where some of the debate rages over what specific topics educators should teach their students. Social studies instruction should not be neglected or minimized throughout the school day, as it is simple to incorporate the subject cross-curriculum. The important topics taught should emphasize real-world problems using important figures and scenarios from the past that not only

invite students to think critically about solving problems, but about how they can use the past as a model of what to do or what not to do. The OCCSS also must represent a progression of content and main ideas across grades (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). The social studies OCCSS are meant to challenge students and require them to systematically learn important historical concepts that explore in-depth concepts meant to develop the student's mind and enhance their abilities to reason and to think critically. The eighth goal of the social studies OCCSS that they serve as the basis for classroom and state assessments (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). As stated previously, the CCSS serve as a tool for assessments, both in the classroom and for state testing. The standards are intended to provide an outline for teachers' assessments they use in the classroom, but also give the state an idea of what content students are learning in the public classroom. The final objective of the social studies OCCSS is for them to guide the development of local social studies curricula (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 3). Within the confines of the OCCSS, there are certain regulations included in the curricula that teachers must follow in order to ensure that students have exposure to all of the concepts dictated by the standards.

Within the social studies OCCSS, there are four main strands – *History*, *Geography*, *Government*, and *Economics* – within Ohio's primary social studies standards. Each of the four strands will be covered in-depth, such as their primary purpose, the subtopics within the strand, and a description of the subtopics. Tables I-IV are shown below to summarize the particular strand's subtopics, definitions, and how teachers can implement these standards easily in the classroom. To read an in-depth study of these strands, refer to Appendix I (pp. 42-52). Within these strands are several subtopics that teachers must align their lessons, activities, and assessments to ensure they are successfully covering the content mandated by Ohio. While these

standards may appear that they are unifying curriculum and bringing continuity to social studies education in Ohio primary schools, there are many missing elements to these standards. These strands provide a very general guideline of what to teach, but do not actually focus on specific concepts and ideas for primary students to learn. They are not carefully planned out with examples, such as teaching the main ideas of the Civil War (then these would specify the main ideas teachers should teach, while giving these teachers freedom to choose books, videos, and other learning material to present these required concepts) in second and fourth grade. While these standards are beneficial so that there is an overall, general consistency of what students are learning, it can complicate matters because teachers are not given specific concepts to teach, only general ideas. Therefore, do these guidelines give teachers an idea of what to teach, or do they have options? For example, under the *Economics* strand, the subtopic “Scarcity” states that students will learn that there are insufficient resources to produce the goods and services that people desire (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 8). This may leave some teachers absolutely baffled at what to teach their students. Should they focus on food shortages in Europe during the medieval era? Should they discuss the fiscal crisis and unemployment rates of the Great Depression? Should they teach about the different lands that ancient hunters bled dry, having to move on due to lack of resources? All of those examples fit that standard, but the question remains as to what concepts meet the standard, and are the most relatable to the students’ real life situations, and how teaching this concept can set them up for future success in higher grades. These standards may leave teachers even more confused than before if they are not given specific curriculum to fulfill these standards.

Within the *History* strand, there are eight important subtopics. Again, these social studies standards cover Grades 1-8. The subtopics are: Heritage, Early Civilizations, Feudalism and

Traditions, First Global Age, Colonization & Independence, A New Nation, Expansion, and Civil War & Reconstruction. Teachers can focus on significant names that students may need to know for the future and discuss some of the major impacts they had on the world. Students can also explore their own heritage and create family trees. While this provides a great template for teachers to teach significant world events, people, and cultures to students, this standard does not necessarily provide teachers with information on what specific content to teach. What events, cultures, and people shaped the world? The answer will differ from teacher to teacher. The content will become increasingly difficult as the student progresses from kindergarten through eighth grade, but this subtopic serves as a general framework from which teachers can base their lessons.

**Table I: History Strand Subtopics**

**\*These tables are my own creation to provide a brief summary of the strand of social studies, the definition of the strand, and how teachers can implement in class.**

<i>Name of Subtopic:</i>	<i>Definition (According to the ODE):</i>	<i>How Teachers Can Implement in Class:</i>
Heritage	Ideas and events from the past have shaped the world as it is today. The actions of individuals and groups have made a difference in the lives of others.	-Focus on significant names students need for the future  -Explore heritage and make Family Trees
Early Civilizations	The eight features of civilizations are: Cities, well-organized central governments, complex religions, job specialization, social classes, arts and architecture, public works, and	-Compare ancient Egypt and early America and how each of these elements benefitted the country

	<p>writing. Early peoples developed unique civilizations. Several civilizations established empires with legacies influencing later peoples.</p>	
<p>Feudalism &amp; Traditions</p>	<p>Feudalism developed as a political system based on small local units controlled by lords bound by an oath of loyalty to a monarch. The decline of feudalism in Europe resulted from interactions between the Muslim world and European states. These interactions influenced the rise of new ideas and institutions.</p>	<p>-Use simple terms and stories to clearly explain this concept</p> <p>- Make parallels between indentured servants and farm land and feudalism and how this system was ineffective and unfair</p>
<p>First Global Age</p>	<p>The transoceanic linking of all the major regions of the world that led to economic, political, cultural, and religious transformations.</p>	<p>-Teachers can discuss how all the world's cultures interact, trade with, and learn from one another</p> <p>-Students can share their own cultures and traditions with one another</p>
<p>Colonization to Independence</p>	<p>European countries established colonies in North America as a means of increasing wealth and power. As the English colonies developed their own governments and economies, they resisted domination by the monarchy,</p>	<p>-Discuss some of the original colonies, their settlers, and the Revolutionary War through interesting class projects and assignments</p>

	rebelled and fought for independence.	
A New Nation	The United States shifted in governing philosophy from a loosely organized system characterized by strong state powers to a federal system.	<p>-Teach some very basic components of American government.</p> <p>-Hold authentic learning sessions in the classroom with opportunities for students to vote, campaign, and practice “making laws.”</p>
Expansion	The addition of new territories and economic and industrial development contributed to the growth of sectionalism in the United States.	<p>-Role playing and readers’ theater can enhance learning through authentic and meaningful interactions</p> <p>-Board games emphasizing the process of building a land and gaining territory (ex. Monopoly, Settlers of Catan) can be used to explain the concept of expansion</p>
Civil War & Reconstruction	Sectional differences that divided the North and the South prior to the American Civil War. Both the American Civil War and the resulting period of Reconstruction had significant consequences for the nation.	<p>-This information is pertinent and applicable in the real world due to its touchy nature regarding politics and race</p> <p>-The Civil War can be used as an example of the consequences of not treating others with the respect and</p>

		kindness and equality they deserve.

The next strand under the social studies umbrella is *Geography*. This strand states that students apply knowledge of geographic locations and processes to show the relationship between the physical environment and human activity and to explain the interactions that occur in an interdependent world. Students apply their knowledge of perspectives, practices and of cultural, social, and ethnic groups to analyze the impact of their diversity within local, national, and global settings” (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 5). Spatial Thinking & Skills is the main theme within the topic of geography. Spatial thinking, the ODE states, examines the relationships among people, environments, and places through mapping and graphing geographical data. This data is compiled, stored, and organized and is made easily visible by utilizing geospatial and traditional technologies. The main goal is for students to be able to access, read, interpret, and create maps and other geographic pieces as tools for analysis (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 6). Within the geography strand, there are two main subtopics teachers will focus on and base lessons and assessments off of when teaching geography.

**Table II: Geography Strand Subtopics**

<i>Name of Subtopic:</i>	<i>Definition (According to the ODE):</i>	<i>How Teachers Can Implement in Class:</i>
Places and Regions	A place is a location having distinctive characteristics, which give it meaning and character and distinguish it from other locations. A region is an area with one or more common characteristics, which give it a measure of homogeneity and make it different from surrounding areas. Regions and places are human constructs.	-Discuss different places the class may frequent throughout their lives  -Students can draw a map or create a meaningful project that helps them simultaneously learn the concept of places and regions and real-life skills at the same time

Human Systems	Human systems represent the settlement and structures created by people on Earth's surface. The growth, distribution and movements of people are driving forces behind human and physical events. Geographers study patterns in cultures and the changes that result from human processes, migrations and the diffusion of new cultural traits.	-Primary students can learn about how they settle on the Earth and the impact they make  -Discussions on some environmental issues, such as global warming, how to better take care of the earth, can result in students learning more about geography and how to respect the earth
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The third strand under the social studies umbrella is *Government*. This strand states that students apply knowledge of the processes, structures, and purposes of local, state, national, and international political systems to understand that systems of government are created as structures of power and authority to provide order, maintain stability and promote the general welfare. Students use knowledge of citizenship's rights and responsibilities to examine civic ideals and to participate in community life" (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 5). This is a brilliant synopsis of government and how primary students can learn the basics of what constitutes American government, how it is run, and some of the founding principles and ideas for which the founding fathers worked so diligently to implement. Within the topic of government, it is extremely important to focus on the main themes of Civic Participation & Skills, as students need to learn how to become responsible, informed citizens and leaders in their communities. Civic Participation, another main theme, embraces the idea that an individual should take an active interest and engage in their community, state, or even nation for the common good. Students should practice developing communication skills emphasizing negotiation, compromise, and collaboration. Students also need to learn how to access and analyze information, which are essential skills for those living in a democracy (Ohio Department of

Education, 2018, p. 6). Within the *Government* strand, there are two main subtopics on which teachers should emphasize.

**Table III: Government Strand Subtopics**

<i>Name of Subtopic:</i>	<i>Definition (According to the ODE):</i>	<i>How Teachers Can Implement in Class:</i>
Rules and Laws	Rules play an important role in guiding behavior and establishing order in families, classrooms and organizations. Laws are enacted by governments to perform similar functions.	-Teach about the importance of rules, the function they serve, and why it is important to follow rules  -Practical discussions about some of the rules students follow at home and school and why they need to follow the rules can lead into drawing parallels about laws and rules that the government enforces to ensure all of the people are safe and happy
Roles & Systems of Government	The purpose of government in the United States is to establish order, protect the rights of individuals and promote the common good. Governments may be organized in different ways and have limited or unlimited powers.	-Explore some aspects of American government and the main ideals it upholds  -Teachers can talk with their primary classrooms on how the government, school, community, and home establishes rules and regulations, to make sure people are following the law

The fourth and final strand under the social studies umbrella is *Economics*. This strand states that students learn economic reasoning skills and apply knowledge of major economic concepts, issues, and systems to make informed choices as consumers, producers, investors, savers, citizens, and workers in an interdependent world (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 5). This subject is important for students to learn, even from a young age, to succeed in the real world. Students need to know the basics of the economy in which they live, the value of

American currency, and how to spend and save money. By teaching these habits now, teachers can instill in young primary students a sense of fiscal responsibility that will hopefully translate into the real world for the future. There are two main themes to teach within this strand. The first one is “Economic Decision Making & Skills,” which, according to the Ohio Department of Education (2018, p. 6), effective economic decision making requires students to use logic to reason about important economic concepts that affect their lives as consumers, producers, savers, investors, and citizens. These skills and learning how to make economic decisions engage students in analyzing costs and benefits, collecting and organizing economic evidence and proposing alternatives to economic issues. The second main theme is “Financial Literacy.” This main topic states that financial literacy is the ability of individuals to use knowledge, skills, and wisdom to responsibly manage limited financial resources for budgeting and lifetime security (Ohio Department of Education, 2018, p. 6). These two main topics comprise the *Economics* strand.

**Table IV: Economic Strand Subtopics**

<i>Name of Subtopic:</i>	<i>Definition (According to the ODE):</i>	<i>How Teachers Can Implement in Class:</i>
Scarcity	There are not enough resources to produce all the goods and services that people desire.	-Discuss some vocabulary words relating to the concept of scarcity, what it means, and provide some examples  -Engage in authentic learning through creating a “store” in which they deal with not having enough supplies to give to “customers”
Production & Consumption	Production is the act of combining natural resources, human resources, capital goods and entrepreneurship to make goods and services.	-Teach about what America produces, primarily imports and exports, and some of the main businesses Americans

	Consumption is the use of goods and services.	engage in to maintain the economy
Markets	Markets exist when buyers and sellers interact. This interaction determines market prices and thereby allocates scarce resources, goods, and services.	-Give students a chance to “trade, buy, or sell” homemade, store bought, or creative items in the classroom to bring authentic learning to this concept

**Section IV: Norton City Schools Social Studies Curriculum (Grade 2)**

For the purpose of this paper, I will examine Norton City Schools’ social studies curriculum and standards to compare how consistently they align with the OCCSS, and if there are more specific guidelines on what to teach for social studies. I will specifically focus on Norton Elementary School for an in-depth examination of the primary standards. The Norton City School district is located in Norton, Ohio, in Summit County. The demographics for Norton City Schools are not diverse, with White non-Hispanic students representing almost 93% of the student body. Black non-Hispanic students comprise a mere 2% of the population, with multiracial, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic students representing the remainder of the student body. Over 38% of students in the Norton district are economically disadvantaged, and almost 20% of the students have a disability and receive special education services (District Details, 2020). There are approximately 2,500 students enrolled in the primary, elementary, middle, and high schools, with an average daily attendance rate of 96% (District Details, 2020). All teachers (with the exception of student teachers and aides) in Norton City Schools have earned their bachelor’s degree, and 43% have earned a master’s degree (District Details, 2020). Originally, aspects of the school district such as the Achievement, Performance, Gap Closing, Graduation Rates, Preparedness for Success, and K-3 At-Risk Readers were going to have been

briefly examined to provide some additional background knowledge regarding the Norton school district, but due to COVID-19, the 2019-2020 Report Cards are not recorded nor are they available. Due to the virus, most states skipped the end-of-year testing that these subjects are based upon. Because the Ohio Department of Education updates the statistics every year, there is no 2018-2019 information. Unfortunately, there is no way this can be changed or data for the previous year can be retrieved.

As stated before, a look at Norton Elementary School's social studies standards will greatly aid in the study of the OCCSS and their effectiveness in a school district. Norton Elementary School states that the social studies courses are based on the Ohio Academic Content Standards, which provide clear expectations for all students. The standards are divided into two categories. The first one is the Content Standard. These include the topics of history, people in societies, geography, economics, government, and citizenship rights and responsibilities. The second category is the Process Standard. The main topics included are social studies skills and methods (Social Studies, 2020). Norton Elementary School emphasizes the important of providing clear expectations for all students, and to equip them with the social studies knowledge they need in order to learn about their environment, and most of all develop a sense of citizenship and leadership in their community and beyond. Norton heavily bases the standards for social studies upon the social studies OCCSS and covers important topics for students to learn about while in the primary classroom. The content standards cover what students must learn, while the process standards indicate what practical skills accompanying social studies students learn.

A look at *Norton City Schools Standards-Based Social Studies Course of Study* indicates that the school intends to incorporate all of the above-mentioned content standards into the social studies curriculum. The theme for second grade is “People Working Together,” and the first page on the *Course of Study* guide indicates each of the content standards and the important vocabulary words and main practical applications that teachers incorporate into their curriculum and social studies lessons. There are also several “Stated Processes and Skills from the Indicators.” This indicates that students are to learn several practical skills during their social studies lessons, such as how to read a timeline, how to read a map, the beginnings of critical thinking, and more. These skills align with the content and process standards, which are the heart of any social studies program. Another goal of the *Course of Study* is to activate students’ prior knowledge by asking them to share information relevant from their own lives to enhance the social studies lesson. Teachers work with students on problem solving sequences, as well as ask students to describe people and events using the concept of detail. Below, the *Course of Study* lists the Ohio Benchmarks K-2, which are the OCCSS. Beside that are the “Grade Level Indicators,” which Norton Elementary School breaks down further by expounding on the standard and introducing different topics relating to the standards. Finally, the “Vocabulary/Strategies” section is where the standards are practically applied in the school. Norton Elementary School lists some of the topics taught, such as learning how to sort artifacts, Venn diagrams, and time lines. Literature corresponding with the standard is included in this particular section, so teachers have a clear indication of what academic literature to utilize in their social studies lessons. There are also additional, supplemental resources listed so parents can enhance their children’s learning, or so teachers can add to the social studies lesson in the classroom. While the OCCSS guide Norton Elementary School’s decisions as to what content

and curricula to include for their social studies program, the school has done their part to unify the literature for teachers to align to the OCCSS. They have developed readings and supplemental activities for each standard to enhance every student's learning, so students are not only learning about social studies but also how to read and think critically, solve problems, and learn how to compare and contrast. These are real-life skills students need to learn that are enhanced and developed through the subject of social studies.

An examination at the "Grade 2 Pacing Guide" indicates that the theme, People Working Together, has a main goal which students are to learn throughout their studies. The theme emphasizes that work serves as an organizing theme for the second grade. Students learn about jobs today and long ago in the United States and all over the world. They learn about people whose work has made a difference in the course of history. Students deepen their knowledge of other cultures and learn how cooperation achieves goals (Social Studies, 2020, p. 16). This goal guides the curriculum design in accordance with the OCCSS. The social studies curriculum is divided into four main grading periods. The first grading period contains the strands Citizenship Rights & Responsibilities, and Government. The second grading periods contains the strands Economics and Geography. The third grading period contains People in Societies, and the final grading period contains the History strand (Social Studies, 2020, p. 16). During these grading periods, most of the social studies topics are based upon these strands. There are several benchmarks according to the OCCSS for each of the strands, as well as some of the beneficial objectives for students to learn while under social studies instruction. These benchmarks then include a list of Study Skills and Methods, which are some critical thinking and problem solving skills for students to develop as they learn. Norton Elementary has adopted the OCCSS, fully integrating them into the curriculum, while providing teachers with materials and objectives on

what to teach their second grade students. The OCCSS has provided general guidelines, but it appears as if the school is providing a consistent, practical, and well-rounded social studies education for their students. While a document may indicate that students are prepared for social studies success in the upper grades due to solid education they are supposedly receiving, interviewing teachers from both the primary and high school level may indicate that the school is on track with achieving all of the lofty goals they have set for themselves, or falling behind and in need of a more enhanced social studies curriculum.

### **Section V: Primary School Teacher Interview**

As the OCCSS are the guiding standards for social studies curriculum in the elementary classroom, they give some guidelines as to what they should cover. According to the Ohio Department of Education, “The standards for Ohio’s Learning Standards for Social Studies for grades K-8 are organized by Strands, Themes, Topics, and Content Statements” (pg. 4). Each of these becomes more specific than the last. In order to examine how closely a standard public school aligns their primary curriculum with the OCCSS, I had the privilege of interviewing a primary school teacher regarding her thoughts on the OCCSS as well as how she used them in her curriculum. Comparing these standards and courses of social studies to the interviewee’s answers was an interesting experience.

The teacher’s name is Kimberly Bruning, and she teaches second grade at Norton Elementary School in the Norton City Schools District. She has had 29 years of teaching experience and has taught fifth grade, kindergarten, and second grade. However, for the purpose of this interview, I asked about her experience with second grade since this applies most to the paper.

Mrs. Bruning teaches a wide variety of historical topics, including: United States landmarks and their meanings, notable people in history and how they changed their time, as well as national holidays that hold historical significance. Some of the people she outlines in her curriculum are individuals such as: the current president, Sally Ride, Helen Keller, Sacagawea, George Washington Carver, George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Ben Franklin, Martin Luther King, Harriet Tubman, and Jackie Robinson for instance. She bases her lessons on the four strands of social studies (Economics, Government/Civic, Geography, and History, with a focus on American history) in accordance with the OCCSS.

Mrs. Bruning said that the Elementary School teachers have a set curriculum, and some choose to develop more in-depth themed units to meet the needs of gifted students and enrich their learning time. Themed units can also spark the interest in some students who usually are not as engaged while learning about different historical moments and people. When asked if she believed her students came to second grade with a firm, well-rounded historical background, Mrs. Bruning said, “The majority of students do not come to Second grade with a firm foundation of historical concepts.” She did not believe that the vast majority of her students have a firm grasp on American history and social studies in general when they first walk into her classroom. The next question asked what topics she felt were important to teach, and she said that she thinks educating young students about United States landmarks, important Americans, and national holidays are the most crucial, as these topics do have application in real life and students need to be informed on these topics. Due to COVID-19 and Norton Elementary School’s schedule, which is half-days right at the present, she does not have enough time to teach social studies. However, she said that she integrates social studies as much as possible in with the students’ reading series, current events (Scholastic News), as well as their Readworks program.

Mrs. Bruning feels that the OCCSS are not restrictive and has enough flexibility to teach a beneficial social studies and history curriculum to her students, and that all the concepts in both the OCCSS and in the curriculum that Norton Elementary School provides is age-appropriate and beneficial for her students. Mrs. Bruning also taught before the OCCSS came into play, and she said that the curriculum was about the same due to age appropriateness and in concepts that she believed her second grade students needed to know. The next question asked if Mrs. Bruning believed that the OCCSS was preparing students for real world and life experiences. She said that “The concept of government-learning about basic government (local and state) and how public officials are chosen and how laws are made are just some of the building blocks to real world and life experiences.” Overall, she feels that the OCCSS are representative of what the students should be learning about at this age and gives the teachers a guide for crafting effective lessons for their students. If given a choice between her own imagination and the OCCSS, she stated that she would use the OCCSS as a guide to construct to her social studies lessons and then sprinkle real life experiences into the lessons. Finally, Mrs. Bruning does believe that about 30 minutes per day is enough time to teach a new concept, idea, person, or monument to her students while incorporating social studies when able into the rest of the curriculum.

### **Section VI: High School Teacher Interview**

Considering how important it is for teachers to have content standards that promote social studies that are applicable and are interesting to students, I also interviewed a high school instructor using the same questions as the elementary teacher. The Ohio Department of Education states that the revised standards for high school contain main topics for students to study: American History, American Government, Modern World History, Economics and

Financial Literacy, Contemporary World Issues, (and) World Geography. There are no specified grade levels for the courses (p. 4). Comparing these standards and courses of social studies to the interviewee's answers was an interesting experience.

The teacher's name is Danielle Perella-Dutton, and she teaches both tenth and twelfth grades at Norton High School in the Norton City Schools district. She teaches sophomore and twelfth grade history classes. She has had seventeen years of teaching experience. Some of the major historical topics she teaches are different time periods in United States history. Ms. Dutton teaches a sophomore class covering the years of 1877- modern times, and for the senior class, she teaches an Advanced Placement (AP) U.S. History class.

Ms. Dutton teaches a wide variety of topics, including: George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, various influential presidents, Frederick Douglass, Thomas Paine, Teddy Roosevelt, Woodrow Wilson, Harry Truman, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Betty Freiden, Annie Wittenmeyer, the Industrialists, Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Sojourner Truth, Susan B Anthony, Booker Washington, WEB DuBois, Abraham Lincoln, John C. Calhoun, Andrew Jackson, Sitting Bull, Tecumseh, and many more. Besides teaching these historical figures, Ms. Dutton teaches numerous other concepts surrounding the timeframe of the historical eras she teaches such as wars, economics, social history, major movements, and political events, parties, and elections. Ms. Dutton does not have a set curriculum that she uses. She said, "In our district, teachers have the freedom to pace themselves, remembering what fully needs to be covered for the state test and AP exam. It varies from teacher to teacher and it must tie back to the state curriculum." Within the confines of the OCCSS, Norton City Schools has given their teachers freedom to teach concepts they feel are important for students' knowledge while keeping in consideration the needs to cover all the concepts that the state test would require. The next

question asked if Ms. Dutton thought her students came into her classroom with a firm foundation of major historical concepts from elementary and middle school. She said, “I do not think students have a firm grasp on historical events when they come in the room. For me, it is more like awakening some far-gone memory... basically I have to teach it like there is no pre-knowledge.” Perhaps students have not remembered what they have learned, or depending on the teacher, they may not have received a well-rounded education in history covering essential events and people and situations that have real-world implications. Ms. Dutton stated that she “Always wishes there were more time to teach every topic in more detail because I love this content and I always touch on everything. However, I can't go as in depth as I would like due to time constraints.” She has 45 minutes to teach a social studies lesson, and wishes that she could have more time. She also stated that Common Core State Standards are not a consideration at all when she is lesson planning for her high school classes. As previously mentioned, Norton City Schools gives teachers some leeway as long as they hit all of the objectives and benchmarks for testing. Ms. Dutton commented that she preferred her own imagination and creativity to construct lessons and does not use Common Core unless absolutely necessary. Ms. Dutton concluded the interview by mentioning that using her own life experiences to teach these historical concepts helped students make connections from what content she was teaching to real life, and how these concepts from history do have real-life implications.

### **Section VII: Results from Interview**

It is interesting to note some of the key differences between the two teachers. For instance, Mrs. Bruning prefers to use the standards as a guide and believes that for her students

in second grade, what they encapsulate is giving them a firm foundation of what they need to know for real life situations and applications. Ms. Perella-Dutton, on the other hand, enjoys using her own imagination and creativity, stating that she has the freedom to do what she wants, keeping in mind the standards and using the OCCSS as a last resort when it comes to lesson planning. Having a personal relationship with Mrs. Bruning has also led to many interesting conversations about her views on the OCCSS, and she enjoys the framework they provide while Ms. Perella-Dutton believes them to be too restrictive, focusing her lessons on life experiences in context of the historical figure or moment about which she is currently teaching. There are advantages to both viewpoints, as Mrs. Bruning's stance on the standards is mostly about conformity and consistency, and she also believes that the OCCSS provide solid guidelines for providing students with a well-rounded education in history and social studies. Both teachers are passionate about the subjects they teach, and spend much time and preparation in teaching engaging, worthwhile, well-rounded, and applicable lessons in social studies to their students.

### **Section VIII: Conclusion**

Overall, social studies are extremely important to teach in the primary classroom, as there are many lessons to be learned from the past that explain the present and prepare for the future. In order to ensure students are receiving a diverse, well-rounded education, social studies guidelines must be clearly sanctioned and specifically directed by the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) through guidelines and included in the regular school curriculum. Teachers today need to be equipped with practical, effective, and relevant historical content that is not necessarily specified in the CCSS that will prepare primary students for success in the upper grades, and for real world problems and solutions. Even though the two teachers both held a

different view of the OCCSS, they are giving their students age-appropriate lessons to enhance their class' knowledge and application of history. There are so many benefits to teaching primary children history in the classroom. From instilling citizen values and cultural understanding, to economic education and critical thinking, to better reading and learning, to real world understanding and fostering the respect for history, social studies is one of those subjects that should not be ignored and neglected in the classroom, as it teaches valuable real-world concepts to children.

This study was beneficial to my own personal and professional education in many ways. Personally, I found the teachers' interviews quite interesting, as it gave me two differing perspectives and allowed me to form my own conclusions about the benefits and disadvantages of the OCCSS. I also found examining Norton Elementary School's social study curriculum fascinating, as it gave me an idea of the content of what I will be teaching in the primary classroom. Professionally, this study enriched my knowledge of the OCCSS for the primary grades, and studying them helped me understand the importance of a well-rounded social studies curriculum for students, as well as how simple it is to incorporate social studies across curriculum. I also gained a new appreciation for lesson planning and curriculum design which must be tailored to encapsulate the standards and provide students with the information they need to successfully progress through the grades. Overall, it is of the utmost importance to provide students with an education that gives them the skills, information, and foundation they need to make a difference in the world and be the generation that becomes the next great leaders.

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