

Professional development for the early learning content social studies standards

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Abstract

This article describes early childhood educators' responses to a professional development series aimed at helping them to understand and incorporate early learning standards for social studies. While the primary aim of the professional development was to focus on the social studies content standards, the secondary aim was to introduce early childhood educators to culturally relevant pedagogical strategies that take into account the unique learning needs of diverse children, particularly children of colour, English language learners and children with special needs. The findings suggest that early childhood educators can benefit from sustained professional development that not only addresses content standards but also helps them to understand how to incorporate the standards into their existing curriculum using developmentally and culturally appropriate pedagogy.

Keywords: Early Childhood; Social Studies; Standards; Professional Development

Introduction

Standards of learning for children before they attend kindergarten (ages 2 to 5 years old), typically described as *early learning standards*, started developing in the 21st century (NAEYC & NAECS/SDE, 2002). The need to design standards separate from children in the early elementary years is

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based on “research about the processes, sequences, and long-term consequences of early learning and development” (p.5). Given that young children have unique features of learning, it is important that content standards reflect this uniqueness. Simply modifying the standards for older children is insufficient. The National Association for the Education of Young Children [NAEYC] has called for teachers to design and implement developmentally appropriate practices that promote young children’s cognitive, sensory-motor, communicative and social-emotional development in a manner that is responsive to the cultural and social contexts in which children live. These developmentally appropriate practices focus on ‘what and how young children need to be educated’ and are based on the children’s developmental status. Thus, it is important for early childhood educators to know and understand the relationships between early experience and young children’s development to support their learning appropriately (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009). These practices emphasize the importance of offering children engaging classroom curriculum experiences such as hands-on learning, inquiry-based activity, in-depth exploration, and cooperative learning, all of which support children’s active learning as well as the child’s development within the social context. The beginnings of the early learning standards primarily focused on literacy and math. The National Council of Social Studies has called for teacher educators to take responsibility for designing effective early childhood social studies for preservice and inservice early childhood educators (NCSS, 1994).

A review of the 50 official State Department of Education websites (<http://edstandards.org/StSu/Social.html>) found 18 states that have developed pre-K social studies standards (see Appendix A). Many other states are in the process of developing these subject standards for their preschoolers. In 2004 Ohio developed Early Learning Content Standards in social studies (ODE, 2004). Ohio’s early learning content indicators align to the K-12 indicators, benchmarks and standards. They are the result of quality early learning experiences in all types of settings (e.g. preschool, family childcare, nursery school, etc.). The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate the State of Ohio as an exemplar in preparing early childhood educators to address the Early Learning Social Studies Standards.

The Professional Development and Early Learning Standards

The professional development for the Early Learning Content Standards [ELCS] in Social Studies was sponsored by the Ohio Department of Education, Office for Exceptional Children in cooperation with the Office of Early Learning and School Readiness and presented by The Early Childhood Quality Network through The Ohio State University. The design team consisted of several social studies and early childhood education faculty from three universities in Ohio, consultants from the Ohio Department of Education, and the Q-net staff. The design team designed one module that was presented in three four hour sessions totalling 12 hours.

The modules provided a deeper understanding of the social studies standards through pertinent principles that addressed effective pedagogy for young children (3-5 years of age). Participants learned the definitions and related meanings of the seven social studies standards (one process and six content standards), as well as the associated benchmarks and indicators pertinent to early childhood education settings. The following principles were integrated throughout the modules: Developmentally Appropriate Practices [DAP], Integrated Curriculum, Universal Design for Learning [UDL] (Rose & Meyer, 2002), Multicultural Education (Banks, 1994; 1997), Multicultural Literature (Bishop, 1997; 1999; Harris, 1992). The team designed the modules to not only teach new concepts related to multicultural education, working with exceptional children and social studies content standards, but also to help early childhood educators understand that many of their learning activities were already meeting some of the social studies standards.

Over 400 early childhood educators throughout Ohio participated in some aspect of the professional development program. The participants included preschool general educators and their directors, early childhood special educators, teacher educators in 2 and 4 yr. institutions, family child care providers and other personnel responsible for curriculum in their educational settings. The participants received various levels of state-required certificates, continuing education units and credits. This was especially important for those participants who needed to maintain or upgrade their certification (and even employment) in early childhood settings.

Each module focused on several content standards as a means to illustrate how teachers could attend to issues of culture and diversity, as well as design curricula and lessons that were accessible to all students. The modules incorporated vocabulary related to pedagogical strategies such as culture, intentional teaching and universal design. In addition, in each module, participants had the opportunity to back map the newly introduced concepts; teachers examined how classroom activities and routines already matched some standards indicators. Participants worked primarily in small groups, although facilitators also used whole group discussion to reinforce the concepts and the standards.

We conducted a study to explore how early childhood educators integrated aspects of the ELCS-Social Studies standards, which were presented through a professional development program, into their early childhood settings. In addition, we also explored barriers that prevented participants from implementing aspects of the ELCS-Social Studies into their settings. It is essential to state here that the aim of this interpretivist research is not to evaluate modules or the professional development program, but to interpret the status of early childhood educators' understanding and implementation of the Early Learning Social Studies

Standards in Ohio. More specifically, the following questions guided the research project:

1. What were the participants' knowledge and implementation of the social studies standards related to the following content standards; a) People and Societies, b) Citizens Rights and Responsibilities, c) Government, d) Geography, e) History, f) Economics and g) the process standard- Social Studies Skills and Methods?
2. How did the participants implement developmentally appropriate activities related to the social studies standards?
3. How did the participants use Universal Design Principles within their implementation of the social studies standards?
4. How did the participants integrate multicultural literature into their implementation of the social studies standards?

Method

Participants

Data collection consisted of three parts: a written survey, telephone interview and site visit (see Appendix B, C & D for Survey, Interview & Observation Protocols). Participants agreed to the evaluation project by signing a consent form that was attached to the survey. Although most participants attended the modules, there was a portion that only attended one or two sessions. Thus, our sample only included participants who attended all three sessions. In this study, confidentiality of the participants was accomplished by concealing the real names using pseudonyms, and no information that could be used to identify the participants was included.

Data Collection and Analysis

As consistent with Spradley's method of data collection and analysis, the current research aimed to reach an in-depth interpretation on the topic of interest. Accordingly, we looked for volunteer participants who could spend the time and effort needed to provide deep information. Surveys were mailed with self-addressed stamped envelopes, to 281 people who attended all three sessions. Every participant freely chose to volunteer, and they had two weeks to return the surveys. To conduct the current interpretivist research, a few rich cases were enough to provide deep information (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, 2009). Of the 281 surveys mailed, 24 surveys were completed by the participants to some extent. From the 24 surveys returned, 7 respondents did not complete any part of the survey questions. Participants cited the following reasons for not completing the survey:

1. They were no longer at their early childhood settings;
2. Their programs hadn't been in session from the time they completed the modules to the present;

3. They were not teaching in an early childhood setting and had taken the modules for other reasons.

Since 17 participants were sufficient for an interpretivist research to reach in-depth information, we did not conduct another attempt to reach the participants who did not complete the surveys. All participants who returned the survey were provided with one of the books used in the modules, *We can work it out: Conflict resolution for children* by Barbara K. Polland. In the survey, we asked participants to volunteer for follow-up phone interviews by one of the researchers. The follow-up phone interviews helped us to clarify information on the surveys and to give participants the opportunity to elaborate on their responses. Phone calls were recorded and transcribed. Finally, we did site visits of those participants who participated in the phone interviews. Nine respondents agreed to phone interviews, but due to delays and difficulties in obtaining these phone interviews, only 3 phone interviews were conducted. As a result, we conducted two site visits. One site visit was in the home of a family child care provider and the other was of a preschool teacher in a child care centre program. During the site visits, the teachers were briefly interviewed by two members of the research team who also observed the classroom setting and current activities. Field notes, photographs and artefacts from the setting were collected during this time.

To conduct more focused research, to obtain rich data, and to analyze data, Spradley's Developmental Research Sequence [D.R.S.] Method (Spradley, 1980), an ethnographic method, was utilized in this study. Data collection was conducted in multiple contexts within three main phases. The phases were basically as follows:

Phase 1. Survey with attendees to the modules

Phase 2. Phone interviews with some of those who participated in the survey

Phase 3. Site visits to the selected participants of phone interviews

Spradley's taxonomic analysis was primarily used to develop categories and patterns from the data in addition to triangulating the different types of data to better address the research questions (Spradley, 1980). Researchers conducted a Domain Analysis, which looks for semantic relationships between cover terms (both folk and analytic terms) and included terms under those cover terms, related to a single kind of activity (i.e., social studies) in a social situation (i.e., preschool classrooms of teachers who attended all three sessions). In later steps of the analysis, researchers considered Taxonomic Analysis, "which involves a search for the way cultural domains are organized" (Spradley, 1980, p. 87). Spradley's Semantic Relations analysis through cultural domain analyses gave in-depth interpretive information about some of the social studies activities

and resources embedded in the culture of the preschools that participated in the study.

Findings

Of the 17 participants whose responses we analyzed, two were from family child care centres; six worked in settings predominately with children having special needs; and nine worked in settings with preschoolers who were “typically-developing.” Appendix E provides specific information on each of the 17 participants in terms of their types of centres, children served (typical developing or special needs) and data sources. Findings from the research questions are presented in this section with examples and quotes from participants’ data sources. This information is identified by a number (1-17) and pseudonym of the participant that is referenced in Appendix E. Since we were able to collect three sources of data from two of the participants, (Mary #5 and Rebecca # 6) we provided more detailed information about them. The site visits to their early childhood programs helped us ascertain the extent to which the participants implemented the standards in their particular setting.

Mary was a preschool lead teacher of European-American descent at the Child Development Centre. She had a Bachelors of Science degree in a discipline unrelated to children that she received about 25 years ago. She was working at the centre for about 6 years. She held both a Child Development Associate and an administrator certificate, and continued to participate in educational preschool content modules besides the social studies module. The Child Development Centre was part of a national demonstration model that addressed issues of substance abuse and mental health in conjunction with early education and intervention. The Centre was located in a major urban city near a university and medical centre. There was an infant-toddler room and a preschool classroom. The centre served children of families who received services within the centre as well as families from the local community. These children were primarily from single parent households and of African-American descent. There were a few children from other nationalities including those who were English language learners. Most of the children were considered typically developing except for one child who received speech therapy.

Rebecca had been a family child care provider for about 19 years. She had an associate degree that she completed from a local university. At the time of the research, she was starting her bachelor’s degree via an online program with an emphasis in children from birth – 5 years of age. In addition to completing ELCS in social studies, she had completed the ELCS in English language arts, science, and math. She also enrolled in the Pre-K State Institutes for Reading Instruction [SIRI]. Rebecca was African American descent and cared for 6 children ages of 3 – 5 years old who were of European American descent and from low and middle income families. All of her children were considered “typically-developing” and some of her

children received remedial reading services in their schools. In the past, she visited their schools to coordinate services so she could support their literacy development within her program.

During the site visit, we observed her kitchen and living room area converted into multiple centre areas including science, literacy, and art as well as a puppet stage. She was aware that family childcare providers was stigmatized as “baby sitters” and worked diligently to counter this perspective by providing an educational program. When she started ELCS-social studies, her primary concern originally was its relevancy to family child care providers. She evaluated the modules with the following quote, “I’ve learned from the great facilitators that we’ve had, it’s not going to look any different from a school setting – it’s the way you present it to the children and what you present.”

Findings for the first research question (What were the participants’ knowledge and implementation of the Social Studies standards?) is reported as activities the teachers implemented within each of the social studies content standards. The activities are also aligned with the respective early learning indicators and benchmarks that children should know and be able to perform by the end of second grade. Although the participants didn’t always specifically state the social studies standard indicator, the data supported the participants’ demonstrated knowledge of them. For example, during both of the site visits these standards were visible. Rebecca, as a family child care provider, documented how she addressed the standards in the form of a portfolio with pictures of activities she conducted with the children next to the related social studies standard and indicator. In Mary’s early childhood centre there was a big chart of ELCS located on a wall of the entrance to the centre.

Social Studies Standard: People and Societies

Benchmark: Identify practices and products of diverse cultures.

Indicators: 1: Develop a sense of belonging to different groups
2: Demonstrate awareness of different cultures through exploration of family customs and traditions

Respondents focused on teaching children about themselves in the context of their families as well as the cultures of others. These activities included making “all about me” books, dolls representing each child in the class, and sharing family pictures. Some of these activities helped children appreciate their own and others’ unique physical features such as height, hair texture/style, eyes and skin colour, as well as learning about the uniqueness of other children’s families. Cindy (#2) writes about her doll-making project:

“We started our new school year out with a month-long study of heritage family background. All the children made “paper dolls” of themself[ves], painted them the “right” skin colour, dressed them and then hung them all up and down the hall. We then invited grandparents to come in and help their grandchild make a family tree

to hang up their paper doll. We then took pictures of the grandparent/child together and hung them on the trees. A special time for kids and grandparents.”

Susan (#3) shares her quilt activities, which she relates to the People and Societies standard:

The introductory lesson to this quilt wall hanging was an examination of several quilts and discussion of how people made quilts and why they made them. We discussed famous quiltmaker[s] such as Amish and Appalachian cultures. We discussed family memories because of quilt pieces being cast-off scraps. I feel we hit the ‘people and society’ standard in many areas with this project.

Respondents taught about cultures primarily by focusing on holidays and foods from respective countries. Susan (#3) also shares:

“During the past year, we have observed holidays of various cultures. We’ve celebrated Cincodemayo, Chinese New Year, Tet,(illegible), Boxing Day, Mardigras, Children’s Day, being careful to use authentic cultural foods, games & themes”.

Social Studies Standard: Geography

Benchmark: Identify the location of the state of Ohio, the United States, the continents and oceans on maps, globes, and other geographic representations.

- Indicators:
- 1: Demonstrate and use terms related to location, direction and distance
 - 2: Demonstrate the ways that streets and buildings can be identified by symbols, such as letters, numbers or logos (e.g., street signs, addresses)
 - 3: Demonstrate how maps can be useful to finding places

A few of the respondents appeared to use concepts such as location, direction & distance not in separate activities but in the context of “when working on things in the classroom.”

Many respondents focused on Indicator 2; demonstrating the ways that streets and buildings can be identified by symbols through fieldtrips; e.g. using maps to direct them, drawing maps and reading directional signs. For example, Wendy (#12) states,

“We talk about where we are walking on our field trips on foot. What street and where do we turn? Stopping at STOP signs and traffic lights. Noticing landmarks such as the library, the church, the fire station, the doctor office.”

The majority of the responses focused on their use of maps (Indicator 3). These activities involved a) maps posted in different parts of the classroom where children helped locate (and draw) pictures of their homes on designated locations of the maps, and b) children drawing their own maps of their classroom, bedroom, school and playground. In addition, teachers used maps to help children understand their community in terms of important locations within their lives; e.g. their home, school, parents’ place of employment, local library, stores, restaurants and parks. Judy (#4) writes:

“we use a large wall map of our town and county and find how close or far away from school we live. Each child decorates their own house to place on the map. We create a class map, school and playground map.”

Benchmark: Identify physical and human features of places.

Indicators: 4: Navigate within familiar environments, such as home, neighborhood or school, under supervision.

5: Describe and represent the inside and outside of familiar environments such as home and school.

6: Recognize and name the immediate surroundings of home (e.g., homes, buildings, bridges, hills, woods, lakes) following supervised explorations.

Respondents primarily addressed indicators 4 and 5 by taking walks with their children within the building as well as near the vicinity of their building. One classroom was located next to both a park and street. In this context the teacher helped children differentiate between city streets and nature trails. Some children “made” maps with landmarks of these areas to “show how to get to each place.”

Benchmark: Explain how environmental processes influence human activity and ways humans depend on and adapt to the environment.

Indicators: 7: Explore the ways we use natural resources found in our environment (e.g., water to drink, dirt to plant).

Only a few of the respondents focused on this indicator by describing some of their planting activities, such as growing pumpkins, as part of a garden project. Kathy (#17) describes her use of the garden to address a geography indicator:

“Currently using the garden to discuss and document changes (pumpkins) as they grow, change and how this occurs.”

Social Studies Standard: History

Benchmark: Use a calendar to determine the day, week, month and year.

Indicators: 1: Begin to use the language of time

2: Label days by function

The majority of these responses occurred during morning circle time when teachers instruct on specific aspects of the calendar. During this time, children learn how to identify the day(s) of the week use language to denote these days; e.g., yesterday, today and tomorrow. They label days by function by identifying routines and other activities throughout the day, as well as special activities that will occur on specific days; e.g. fieldtrips, children’s birthdays. Past events are also discussed, such as national holidays, an ice storm that occurred last year, and the tragic event of September 11, 2001. For example, Mindy (#11) stated,

“We work on a calendar to allow the children to draw what is going on that day at school, when was yesterday, tomorrow, when are stay-at-home days, etc. We also do

recall with story time and after free-play to remember what happened during the day.”

It’s important to note that one participant, Susan(#3) in her survey seemed to respond inappropriately to the use of this standard:

“During President’s Day observances, our lessons revolved around ‘whose turn was it to be president?’ We talk frequently about history using ‘whose turn’ questions; e.g. It was Mr. Armstrong’s turn to walk on the moon first.”

It’s unclear how this participant connected the use of turn-taking with an historical event.

Benchmark: Compare daily life in the past and present demonstrating an understanding that while basic human needs remain the same, they are met in different ways in different times and places.

Indicators: 1: Share episodes of personal history from birth to present, through personal memorabilia or connected to stories.
2: Arrange sequences of personal and shared events through pictures, growth charts, and other media.

Many respondents focused on sharing episodes of personal family in different ways, such as bringing in pictures of their families and creating a family bulletin. Indicator 2 was addressed by making “all about me” of “family photo books, and putting together a child’s time line through pictures of themselves as babies, 2 years-old and current pictures.” For example, Dee (#1) stated, “We make family photo books & share special family events at circle time.”

Benchmark: Recognize that the actions of individuals make a difference and relate the stories of people from diverse backgrounds who have contributed to the heritage of the United States.

Indicators: 1: Share personal family stories and traditions.

Many respondents shared personal family stories and traditions through various ways, such as family game night and family events. These events encourage and provide opportunities for family history/culture to be seen and discussed. Respondents also stated that parents come in and share what they do for holidays, and children share family pictures with the class. For example, Beth (#10) stated:

“We start each day with what the day is today, what was yesterday and what tomorrow will be. We point out special days coming up and count them down. We also share family pictures of our grandparents, parents, siblings, etc. with the class.”

Social Studies Standard: Economics

Benchmark: Explain how the scarcity of resources requires people to make choices to satisfy their wants.

Indicators: 1: Recognize that people have many wants within the context of family and classroom.

2: Understand how sharing classroom materials will meet everyone's wants (e.g., turn taking at the water table and distributing crayons equitably).

Respondents focused on the Scarcity and Resources Benchmark by teaching concepts of sharing and problem solving. Opportunities arose throughout the daily routines for children to share items or take turns with classroom materials, toys, snacks and riding bikes. Also, respondents designed contexts to teach this concept if they didn't occur within the daily routines. For example, Beth (#10) describes how she addressed this standard:

“(In) small group- have a large ball of blue play dough & a large ball of yellow play dough. Allow students to discuss & problem solve how to *divide* play dough so all friends have 2 pieces for play.”

Moreover, parents baked bake sale items to make money for people with needs, and the children helped them in various ways, such as signs to advertise the bake sale.

Benchmark: Distinguish between goods and services and explain how people can be both buyers and sellers of goods and services.

Indicators: 3: Demonstrate an understanding of the concepts of production, distribution and consumption through play (e.g., food from the farm, to the grocery store) and concrete experiences (e.g., food purchased from the store and cooked at home).

4: Obtain things they want (e.g., goods and services) in socially acceptable ways (e.g., verbalizing, turn taking).

Respondents focused on demonstrating an understanding of the concepts of production, distribution and consumption via play and concrete experiences: setting up a store, playing market games and organizing field trips to restaurant and a farm. During those activities, children requested the items they wanted to purchase in an appropriate manner. Cindy (#2) writes:

“We have a play store they have to use ‘money’ to buy things from. We also have to *share* the money and toys to buy. We do a lot of activities helping the kids learn to *verbalize* what they need and how to ask ‘nicely’ to get what the need.”

Social Studies Standard: Citizen Rights and Responsibilities

Benchmark: Describe the results of cooperation in group settings and demonstrate the necessary skills.

Indicator: 1: Demonstrate cooperative behaviours such as helping turn taking, sharing, comforting, and compromising.

2: Engage in problem-solving behaviour with diminishing support from adults

Eight respondents focused on promoting cooperative behaviours in the classroom. Many of these behaviours were addressed during routine classroom activities, while only one respondent implemented a specific program, ‘character education,’ to teach these behaviours. Kathy's (#17)

quote is representative of how the teachers design their management system to address this indicator:

“Use of management system helps with sharing, and taking turns. Teachers encourage problem solving when situations warrant during play, conflicts and teacher directed activities (How do you...?) Children are asked a question of the day to facilitate decision making.”

Benchmark: Demonstrate personal accountability, including making choices and taking responsibility for personal actions.

Indicator 3: Demonstrate awareness of the outcomes of one’s own choices

Responses focused on Indicator 3 by describing a) voting on activities that the children wanted to participate in the classroom; e.g., singing songs or painting and b) classroom rules that were developed by both the teachers and the students. Susan (#3) describes how she was helping the children take responsibility for themselves and others.

“Our special needs children delight in taking care of one another. We do lots activities using partners or buddies. Our children vote on which books we read, and many activities. Many times I will deliberately suggest an activity to which one of the children will object because not everyone can participate in it. Some of the children are wheelchair users; some are children with multiple physical and mental limitations. The more abled children will reject the activity because ‘our friend ---- can’t go/or do the activity.’ ”

Social Studies Standard: Government

Benchmark: Identify elected leaders and authority figures in the home, school and community and explain reasons for having persons in authority.

- Indicators:**
- 1: Interact with and respond to guidance and assistance in socially accepted way from familiar adults at school and home (e.g., responds to redirection, invites others to play).
 - 2: Interact with familiar and appropriate adults for assistance, when needed.
 - 3: Demonstrate an understanding of the specific roles and responsibilities within a group.

Many of the activities addressed directed specific roles and responsibilities of children to maintain their classroom (Indicator 3) through the implementation of a job chart. The example below is from a site visit in Mary’s preschool classroom. Mary notes that one of the ideas she learned from the professional development program was the expanded use of a job chart. She implemented this idea to establish a better routine with the children, as well as help children assume responsibility for their classroom. The job chart hangs in the classroom and consists of big colour pockets with children’s names placed on each pocket. The colours correspond to specific jobs in the classroom. Mary notes,

“They started to recognize their job and they started to recognize their name. So, every day we have major jobs, like we have to feed the fish, like today is Friday, we’re going to be gone for the weekend, the fish feeder job is really important on

Fridays. The person who cleans up the library books, after lunch we have a time set aside for library time, so I always have to use each job and mention the importance, and so the kids kind of recognize what job they have.... The kids come in and they'll say, 'Can I be snack helper?' 'Can I be computer operator?' You know, it's part of their routine every day to ask what they're doing, can they have that particular job, and then they follow through on it."

Another set of responses from the participants' data focused on understanding the role of people in the community to maintain the government (Indicators 1 & 2). Activities included inviting people into the classroom, such as police officers and fire fighters, to explain their roles in the community to keep them safe. In the school, people were identified to assist in maintaining classroom structure and routine. People available in children's homes and school were also identified to assist them.

Benchmark: Explain the purposes of rules in different settings and the results of adherence to, or violation of, the rules.

Indicators: 1: Participate in creating and following classroom rules and routines.

Benchmark: Recognize and explain the importance of symbols and landmarks of the United States.

Indicators: 1: Recognize the flag of the United States as symbol of our government.

Many of the responses focused on symbols of the United States government such as learning about the country's flag, e.g., representation of the stars and stripes, behaviour that demonstrates respect for the nation's flag (e.g., pledging allegiance to the flag) and the role of the U.S. President.

Activities included: making their own flags, reading about these symbols through books, singing patriotic songs 'God Bless America' and celebrating President's Day. For example, in Valerie's (#7) writes in her survey "Our little school is out in the country. We read a book 'The Pledge of Allegiance.' They looked at the flag in the room. In small groups we walked through school & looked where flags are located. Then we discussed the colours & symbols in our flag. In art, they each created a 'preschool flag' using their own favourite colours & a symbol they liked."

Social Studies Standard: Social studies skills and methods

Benchmark: Obtain information from oral, visual, print and electronic sources.

Indicators: 1. Gain information through participation in experiences with objects, media, books and engaging in conversations with peers.

Benchmark: Predict outcomes based on factual information.

Indicators: 2: Begin to make predictions

Benchmark: Communicate information orally, visually or in writing.

3. Represent ideas through multiple forms of language and expression (e.g. drawing, dramatic play, conversation, art media, music, movement, emergent writing).

All respondents reported the use of a variety of social skills and methods connected with their activities. Each documented the use of visual and oral sources. They reported the use of books, graphs, calendars, lists, photographs and other written materials in social studies classroom lessons. One respondent mentioned music and movement. Overall, the respondents reported the use of a variety of social skills and methods, using not only support materials but also problem solving techniques in child, peer, and teacher led instruction.

In summary, all but one of the respondents addressed all of the seven content standards appropriately. They addressed the standards through a wide range of activities that involved relationships with their peers, teachers, families and local communities.

Developmentally appropriate activities

The second question addressed how the participants implemented developmentally appropriate activities related to the social studies standards.

Most respondents provided descriptions of their activities, but not all were able to identify how the activity was developmentally appropriate. Reasons provided for their activities as “developmentally appropriate” included a) how these activities promoted development within the children’s domains, b) activities that were predictable and incorporated into the routine of the classroom, and c) voluntary verses compulsory participation. Dee (#1) writes how a social studies activity within the geography standard was developmentally appropriate:

“We physically walked the area and identified what to include on the map; we shared ideas and drawings (social-emotional); language dictated, wrote and drew locations. We discussed the importance of maps, local, natural world, and their uses (cognitive). Problem solved on how to follow the map.”

The following example is a description of the accommodation Aida (#14) makes for a student with a “muscle disease” disability, which she thinks is developmentally appropriate:

“It was appropriate, I think, because it’s predictable and routine. The students will learn through the repetition. With one student who has a muscle disease, I “spot” him as he walks by himself, cruises along furniture from place to place in the classroom, or walks to music... and library. During music and movement in the class on the rug, I sit behind him (on a chair) so he can lean against me when needed to do movement. I work with the P.E. (physical education) teacher to give him alternate activities if necessary.”

In this example, she points out that her accommodations are developmentally appropriate because of how she includes him with the other children. Her example is also representative of Universal Design for

Learning [UDL] in terms of her efforts to make the curriculum accessible to a student with a disability. In summary, the respondents implemented developmentally appropriate activities with their children who were typically-developing; as well as with their children having disabilities. Many of these activities involved hands-on experiences where children had opportunities to explore more about themselves, their family backgrounds, and aspects of their communities.

Universal Design for Learning

The third research question addressed the participants' use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) within their implementation of the social studies standards. There are three principles that were taught as part of UDL in the professional development program. The first principle, multiple means of engagement, ensures the presentation of various opportunities for engaging the children's attention, interest, and personal styles in the activity. The second principle, multiple means of representation, ensures instructions, questions, expectations and learning opportunities are provided in various formats that address a range of ability levels and different learning styles. The third principle, multiple means of expression, is the process of a child expressing an idea such as drawing, speaking, writing, acting out, singing and dancing.

Only one respondent specifically mentioned UDL, but approximately 65% of the respondents provided information that reflected knowledge of some aspect of the UDL principles. It is important to note that in several of these responses, more information was needed to fully understand the context of how the UDL was applied.

Many of the examples provided were part of "multiple means of representation." These examples included use of augmentative communication devices (e.g., switches), sign language, pictures, teacher and peer modelling, teacher redirecting, having a child touch items, verbal prompts by the teacher, and words/songs in different languages. A few examples of the multiple means of engagement principle included the use of a wagon to take children to the library and supporting the child's physical condition so he can participate in an activity. The following example from Susan's (#3) survey describes how a teacher constructs a context where peers incorporated a child with a specific disability within their play.

"...a girl in a wheelchair, limited by cerebral palsy. She is nonverbal, had limited fine motor skills. Children willingly give up the chair at the end of the table so she can sit at the end of the table with them. When she indicates she wants a toy, they get it for her and stay beside her to play with her. They place tea party items on her chair tray so she can play tea party, too, even though she will probably knock the cup off the tray if she reaches for it. The playmates just pick the cup up and put it in her hand."

Aspects of UDL were directed towards children considered having "special needs." Nine respondents specifically indicated the type of children with "special needs" in their classrooms as having developmental delays,

behavioural concerns or attention deficit hyperactivity disorders. Other respondents identified specific physical and speech/language disabilities (e.g. nonverbal, cerebral palsy). One person included English learners in their response.

Seven participants (41%) indicated making no changes to any of their social studies activities either because they didn't have children in their classrooms who require any adaptations or that activities were conducted at a level where everyone could participate.

Multicultural literature

The final question addressed how the participants integrate multicultural children's literature within their implementation of the social studies standards.

All respondents reported using multicultural children's literature to support the teaching of social studies in their classrooms. They reported thirteen multicultural titles by name and eight other picture books. There were direct connections to social studies content; one respondent mentions the geography standard (location, direction and distance). Others reported the use of literature that could be directly connected to history, family, culture, and relationships. Rebecca (#6) reported:

"I used the nursery rhyme of Jack and Jill to talk about friendships and cooperative behaviours. I used *Harold and the Purple Crayon* to have children 'demonstrate and use terms related to location, direction, and distance' (Geography standard) on a large sheet of paper."

They also emphasize the importance of the quality of the multi-cultural literature in helping children learn about the many aspects of a culture-its values, beliefs, ways of life, and patterns of thinking. Participants also stated that, in addition, exposure to quality multicultural literature helps children appreciate the other ethnic groups, eliminate cultural ethnocentrism, and develop multiple perspectives. Participants each implemented the social studies standards using culturally diverse materials to reach benchmarks along the way. As they discussed the teaching of social studies, early childhood educators recognized that the use of multicultural literature written for young children can help children understand that beneath the surface differences of colour, culture or ethnicity, all people experience universal feelings of love, sadness, self-worth, justice and kindness (Dowd, 1992).

Discussions and Implications

For over sixty years, NAEYC has worked to promote high-quality early childhood programs for all young children. One major strand of activity to support these goals has been facilitating the professional development of individuals who work for and with children from birth through age eight. The purpose of this study was to evaluate the aspects of program planning and delivery for a social studies standards initiative. This study worked in conjunction with state level efforts to provide professional preparation for

those in early childhood programs, Although the efforts vary considerably from state to state, the exemplar in this study, the State of Ohio, provides a snapshot into what is gained regarding the specialized skills and knowledge needed for effective social studies teaching and learning.

The data support that early childhood educators are implementing many activities/lessons in their settings that correspond to all seven of the early learning social studies standards. Many of the respondents associated the appropriate standard to their corresponding activity(ies) but didn't note the benchmark and indicator to these activities. Even though the respondents didn't specifically address benchmarks and indicators, responses to research questions one and two identify how their activities were aligned with standards, benchmarks and indicators. The two case studies further demonstrate the teachers' use of the social studies standards through "back-mapping" activities and using the standards for planning their curriculum.

While there are no specific barriers indicated to prevent early childhood educators from implementing the early learning social studies standards in their early childhood settings, there are significant barriers to improving early childhood professional development within the system. There is little incentive for those that are paid little more than minimum wage to seek extended day professional development opportunities, due to the type of setting or composition of the children. Some respondents stated their inability to find an opportunity to apply certain standards in their classroom, which may suggest a barrier or a lack of understanding of the specific social studies standard, benchmark or indicator.

Changes made to a social studies activity for a child with special needs were primarily indicated for only those children who had specific disabilities. There was little reference to Universal Design of Learning Principles. There is some indication that early childhood educators are integrating books representing multicultural literature into their settings; however, these books weren't evaluated so it is unclear as to the quality of this multicultural literature. "Multicultural literature must meet the general quality standards applied to all other literature, such as well-developed plots, settings, theme, and characterization, style and point of view" (Kiefer & Tyson, 2008, p.11). In the evaluation of any multicultural literature it is most important that *any* book chosen for use with children be of high literary quality (Lu, 1998; Bishop, 1992). While we have seen an increase in the number of quantity of multicultural literature, in comparison to the overall number of titles published each year, there are relatively few. Therefore, given the limited number of quality multicultural children's books available, the quality of the book selected is even more important to remember since "there may be a greater tendency to accept poor literary quality just to have *something* in the classroom or library" (Bishop, 1992, p. 48).

Overall, professional development for early childhood educators is often sporadic. It is connected to the states' childcare licensing requirements and rarely to the development of curriculum. This approach makes it difficult to provide approaches to curriculum development for a specific content area. Moreover, the brevity of the professional development program might hinder participants from fully bridging their learning from the modules into their classrooms. Professional development that effects change must be conducted over time and with networks of support.

A number of states and communities are beginning to develop professional development plans with social studies content knowledge at the core. There is a need for further research to assess the breadth and depth of content knowledge related to social studies for young children who are at different developmental levels and from a range of socio-economic, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. On the other hand, a simple survey with easy-to-complete Likert-type items can also be conducted in the future to reach more people's opinions and experiences, and to make generalizations to the target group. As response rates to questionnaires of 20-33% are more common (Berends, 2005), about 50-75 participants would be sufficient to gain more general information on their usage of social studies standards in their curricula.



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Appendix A

States with PreK Social Studies Standards

	State	Source	Date
1	Arizona	http://www.ade.state.az.us/	April, 2007
2	District of Columbia	http://www.k12.dc.us/	April, 2007
3	Florida	http://www.fldoe.org/bii/curriculum/SSS/	Oct, 2009
4	Illinois	http://www.isbe.state.il.us/	April, 2007
5	Kansas	http://www.ksbe.state.ks.us/	April, 2007
6	Kentucky	http://education.ky.gov/KDE/	April, 2007
7	Louisiana	http://www.doe.state.la.us/lde/index.html	April, 2007
8	Maine	http://www.maine.gov/education/	April, 2007
9	Maryland	http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/msde	May, 2007
10	New Jersey	http://www.state.nj.us/education/	May, 2007
11	Ohio	http://www.ode.state.oh.us/GD/Templates/Pages/ODE/ODEDefaultPage.aspx?page=1	May, 2007
12	Pennsylvania	http://www.pde.state.pa.us/	May, 2007
13	Rhode Island	http://www.rido.net/	May, 2007
14	South Dakota	http://doe.sd.gov/	May, 2007
15	Tennessee	http://www.state.tn.us/sbe/	May, 2007
16	Vermont	http://education.vermont.gov/new/html/pubs/framework.html	Oct, 2009
17	Virginia	http://www.pen.k12.va.us/	May, 2007
18	West Virginia	http://wvde.state.wv.us/policies/csos.html	Oct, 2009

Appendix B

Sample Survey

Thank you for attending the 3 sessions of the Ohio Early Learning Content Seminars in Social Studies. We are interested in learning how you implemented (or were unable to implement) some of the concepts and ideas from these modules within your preschool setting. Please respond to the following below.

1. Provide an example of an activity where you used a social studies standard in your preschool setting. Please state the standard with the accompanying benchmark and indicator.

2. From this example, explain how this activity was developmentally appropriate (i.e. addressed the physical, social-emotional, cognitive and/or language needs of your children)

3. Provide 1 or more examples of how you planned and implemented developmentally appropriate activities related to the teaching of social studies concepts and skill development. Choose from the following. If you are unable to provide any examples, please describe the reason(s).

Teaching about different cultures

Teaching about citizens rights & responsibilities

Teaching about the government

Teaching about geography

Teaching about history

Teaching about economics

Provide an example(s) of how the children developed social studies skills and methods. How did they get information from oral, visual, print and/or electronic sources to learn about social studies' content.

Describe how you made changes to a social studies activity for a child with special needs. (Briefly describe the child) Please explain your reason(s) if you didn't make any changes.

6. How did you use children's literature as part of your social studies activity (give examples of books)

7. We will be conducting follow-up phone interviews or group meetings to further discuss your social studies activities. Would you be interested in participating?

Underline or circle *yes* or *no*

Thank you for your responses. Please complete the identifying information unless you wish to remain anonymous.

Name: block letters

Name of preschool setting:

Phone number: Home/work

Email address:

Location of modules

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for completing the survey that was sent regarding how you may have used the information from the social studies modules in your early childhood site.

The purpose of this interview is to expand on what you've written on your social studies survey. We are interested in further learning what types of social studies activities/lessons or other resources you are using in your early childhood site that is connected with information presented in the 3 social studies modules. We are also interested in barriers that prevented you from using the information from the modules.

The phone interview will last from about 20-45 minutes.

Interviewee's educational level

Position in the early childhood setting

Describe your early childhood setting (where is your setting housed? Other programs in this building?)

Number, ages, ethnic backgrounds of children in setting

Number of children with certified disabilities (Individual Education Plan or Individual Family Service Plan) (Briefly explain the disability)

You mentioned an activity where you used a social studies standard in your early childhood setting. Will you please elaborate on this activity; provide details about

Materials/ resources used

Literature

People brought into the classroom (family/community members)

Activities outside of the classroom

Explain how this activity addressed the sensori-motor, social-emotional, communication and/or the cognitive needs of your children.

Explain how the children obtained information to complete the activity. Explain how this information was provided orally, visually, print and/or electronically.

Changing the activity to address the needs of a child with a disability.

Describe other activities/lessons that were taught related to the social studies standards that pertain to the following. Use (a-g) with each bulleted topic.

different cultures

different family structures

citizens rights & responsibilities

government.

geography

history

economics

Thank you for your interview. We are interested in making some site visits to learn more about the implementation (or difficulties) in teaching about the social studies standards in early learning settings. Would you be interested in being one of these sites?

Appendix D

Case Study Observation Protocol

General information of classroom population – number of children, ages, ethnic, racial, socio-economic backgrounds, special needs (no identifying information will be needed)

Physical lay-out of the preschool setting (if family provider – what part of house is used for the setting, church, school – other classes in the same building).

Examples of lesson/activity planning related to social studies standards

Children's work – products related to social studies standards

Artifacts – books, materials, other resources (including people from the community) used for the “social studies” activity

Interview with teacher re: how s/he used social studies activities in the classroom or what barriers contributed to problems using any social studies activities in the classroom.

Areas of social studies content: Different cultures, citizen rights & responsibilities, government, geography, history, economics

We won't be taking artifacts from the setting but it would be helpful to take pictures (with permission)

Appendix E

Study Population

Respondents	Type of childcare facility	Data Sources
1. Dee	Family childcare (typically-developing)	Survey
2. Cindy	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
3. Becky	Preschool center (special needs)	Survey
4. Judy	Preschool center (special needs)	Survey
5. Mary	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey, Interview, Site Visit
6. Rebecca	Family childcare (typically-developing)	Survey, Interview Site Visit
7. Valerie	School district (special needs)	Survey, Interview
8. Jackie	School district (typically-developing)	Survey
9. Tina	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
10. Beth	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
11. Mindy	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
12. Wendy	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
13. Jill	Montessori school (typically-developing)	Survey
14. Aida	School district (special needs kindergarten)	Survey
15. Sharon	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey
16. Connie	School district (special needs & typically developing)	Survey
17. Kathy	Preschool center (typically-developing)	Survey

* typically- developing: settings with children who are predominantly “typically-developing”

* special needs: settings with children who are predominately children having special needs

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