

Ready-to-Teach Feature

Contributing Author and Editor: Patrice Preston-Grimes



Ready to Teach is a forum for K-16 educators to discuss the issues, challenges, and solutions for the professional preparation of social studies teachers, including pre-service and experienced. In order for students to be well prepared for their roles as responsible, active citizens who value and model equity, fairness, and social justice, we must improve the quality of our collective research and teaching at all levels. This requires that we reflect critically on our own learning and practice and then act on those findings to teach social studies purposely in an increasingly complex world.

As responsible educators, we must identify excellent examples of *research-in-motion* within our field, i.e., programs and methods that help or hinder our ability to teach beyond district, state, and federal mandates. We must gather and present solid evidence from research and professional experiences, acknowledging the traditions of our discipline, while remaining open to new ways of highlighting the relevance of social studies education in today's schools and global society. We must have the courage to ask: Are we (social studies educators) examining the important issues of our field or only addressing the urgent? Do we explore and improve teaching practices that remain true to the profession and ourselves, or do we merely work to satisfy mandates imposed by agencies or groups? In this age of increased educational accountability and competing ideologies, how do we get "Ready to Teach?"

Striving for excellence in social studies research and practice is not a solo effort. It requires collaboration within our profession to reduce the isolation that has long been a feature in academic life. Linking K-12 teachers with educators in colleges and universities for support and sharing our findings beyond staff development and conference meetings are steps in that direction. "Ready to Teach" is one effort of bridging gaps to build a broad learning community that can inform our research and teaching. I welcome submissions that include different perspectives to engage our thinking and actions as we prepare ourselves—and guide our students—in decision-making as educators, researchers, and advocates.

The first article in the "Ready to Teach" feature examines the myths vs. realities of social studies teaching in North Carolina's elementary schools. As the findings indicate, teacher decision-making is a key factor in determining how instructional time is used in the classroom. The article's authors raises questions, as well as offer suggestions, on how to return social studies to the forefront of the classroom teaching and learning.