## What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

*In today's education landscape, the abundance of digital resources can overwhelm educators. Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe's* The Social Studies FIELD Guide *is an inspiration for social studies teachers, offering clear educational strategies grounded in their extensive classroom experience. It provides effective approaches for engaging students through inquiry-based learning, integrating primary sources, and utilizing technology effectively.*

**—Judith Bee, Director**
**Teaching with Primary Sources, Midwest Region**

*Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe, two of the most knowledgeable educators and leaders in our field, have developed an invaluable tool that should be required reading for all early career (and even veteran) teachers with their new collaboration,* The Social Studies FIELD Guide*. Combining their years of experience both in and out of the classroom as teachers, leaders, and consultants with research-based instructional practices, they have created a resource that shows what quality social studies education can and should look like. Each chapter provides readers with a clear purpose focusing on four main concepts: foundational evidence, inquiry, edtech, and learning design, alongside FIELD Guide "hikes" at easy, moderate, and difficult levels with practical strategies and clear examples of implementation.*

**—Kelly Bellar, social studies educational consultant**
**Region 10 Education Service Center, Texas**

*Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe have created an educators' guide that is a bit of a unicorn: grounded in research and expertise, yet decidedly not boring.* The Social Studies FIELD Guide *elevates student voice and experience; challenges teachers to take risks; and leans on creativity, humor, and brilliant anecdotes to demonstrate the power of deliberately engaging social studies.*

**—Jessica Ellison, Executive Director**
**National Council for History Education**

*In* The Social Studies FIELD Guide, *Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe have provided critical pedagogical insight, effective strategies, and practical tools supported by the right mix of research and real-world examples. The guide will be indispensable to all educators who want to make social studies meaningful and immediately impact student learning in the classroom.*

**—Tim Hall, President**
**North Carolina Council for the Social Studies**

*Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe's must-read book is essential for every social studies teacher. My district recently adopted a teacher clarity initiative incorporating visible learning that provides limited social studies examples, and this guide fills that gap. It offers a step-by-step approach grounded in research-based educational programs, primary sources, inquiry, and edtech, all aligned with standards.* The Social Studies FIELD Guide *meets teachers at their current level, provides reflective opportunities in each chapter, and paves a clear path for professional growth.*

**—Jennifer A. Jolley, social studies content specialist**
**Brevard Public Schools, Florida**

*Have you, fellow teacher, ever had a chat with a smart colleague that left you energized about instruction and with some great teaching ideas?* The Social Studies FIELD Guide *feels like that conversation on steroids. My two new colleagues, Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe, have engaged me in an inspiring dialogue about teaching. I closed the book committed to becoming a better social studies teacher and armed with ideas to make that happen.*

**—Jeff Nokes, Associate Dean**
**College of Family, Home, and**
**Social Sciences, Brigham Young University**

The Social Studies FIELD Guide *is an invaluable resource that provides a well-rounded approach to teaching and learning social studies. Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiese draw from their extensive teaching experiences and share practical insights and lessons learned over the years. This text is a gem because it offers scaffolded examples for each recommended activity, catering to the diverse needs of classroom teachers of various levels of experience.*

**—Virnilisa Printup, EdK–12 coordinator of social studies and President, National Social Studies Leaders Association**

*Joe Schmidt and Glenn Wiebe's* The Social Studies FIELD Guide *offers practical strategies for teachers, inspired by John Hattie's research. It helps both preservice and current educators engage students and foster critical thinking and curiosity. This guide equips teachers to prepare learners for success in today's rapidly changing world.*

**—Liz Ramos, high school history teacher, Alta Loma High School and literacy and methods adjunct, Claremont Graduate University**

# The Social Studies FIELD Guide

*From Joe:*

*This book is dedicated to my wife, Peggy Schmidt. This book (and about a million other things!) would not be possible without your support and love. Thank you for always helping me to find balance. I love you!*

*From Glenn:*

*Maura, nothing I have done, am doing, or will ever do would be possible without you. Love you infinity!*

# The Social Studies FIELD Guide

## Strategies & Tools to Captivate Students, Cultivate Critical Thinking, and Create Engaged Citizens

Joe Schmidt

Glenn Wiebe

*Foreword by Joel Breakstone*

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Visit the authors' companion website at
**https://socialstudiesfieldguide.com**
to access the resources that go with this book.

# FOREWORD

When I started teaching high school history in the early 2000s, I was in dire need of curricular resources. From my predecessor, I inherited a classroom set of the *American Pageant* textbook, a filing cabinet filled with mimeographed worksheets, and little else. After majoring in history as an undergraduate, I wanted my students to understand that history was more than the singular narrative of the textbook, so I set out to develop new lessons. My first year teaching, I spent countless hours searching for materials to use with students. I pored through books from college courses looking for engaging historical documents for my students. Using my glacial dial-up modem, I searched online for resources. Finding relevant documents was just the start, though. Not surprisingly, when I handed my 10th-grade U.S. history students a William Lloyd Garrison speech at 7:50 in the morning, they didn't find it nearly as interesting as I did. In fact, they struggled to even make sense of phrases like "hypocritical cant" and "intemperate zeal." I quickly realized that I hadn't done nearly enough to support them to meaningfully engage with the historical record. Over the next several years, I made headway in developing better materials, but it was a slog.

Social studies teachers today face a radically different reality. There is now an overabundance of resources. Millions of archival sources are instantly accessible online. Countless outlets provide curriculum materials, from textbook publishers to museums to education nonprofits to online teacher communities. A host of organizations offer models for teaching social studies content.

The models often reflect broader shifts in instructional priorities. Across the country, states have adopted new social studies standards that call for inquiry-based approaches to instruction. These new requirements often represent a dramatic departure from previous standards that focused far more on lists of names, dates, and facts. Such changes have often precipitated significant revisions of social studies curricula.

The digital landscape has also been transformed. Students are living online lives. One 2022 study found that nearly half of young people reported being online nearly constantly (Pew Research Center, 2022). Students encounter the world through platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. And if that wasn't enough, powerful new AI tools burst onto the scene and have increased in sophistication at a dizzying pace.

All the while, edtech tools have proliferated. From AI grading platforms to online discussion forums, there is no shortage of resources designed for classrooms. It could be a full-time job just to keep abreast of the latest developments, let alone figure out how to integrate them into the classroom.

Taken together, these various changes can seem daunting, especially since time is in such short supply for educators. That's why this guide is so well suited to the present moment. It provides practical advice about how to address these challenges. The utility of the guide is no surprise, given its authors. Glenn Wiebe and Joe Schmidt's passion for social studies education is hard to match. I first encountered Glenn through his thoughtful, prolific, and laugh-out-loud funny blog about social studies education. I've had the pleasure of working with him in a variety of contexts over the years, and I've always been struck by his commitment to supporting educators and improving outcomes for students. Joe is similarly committed and deeply connected to the social studies community. This guide suggests that educators develop robust professional

networks. Joe is the embodiment of that advice. Having a conversation with Joe at the annual meeting of the National Council for the Social Studies can be a slow affair because he seems to know nearly every other educator that walks by. They both also have a wealth of experience from working in classrooms, schools, and organizations across the country.

Joe and Glenn's depth of knowledge is reflected in the common sense advice they dispense in the guide. They make clear that existing curricula doesn't need to be overthrown. Instead, the process can be gradual. The guide includes concrete examples of various entry points for new approaches to topics ranging from inquiry to edtech. All of the guidance is undergirded by an unwavering belief in the need to support students in order to enhance learning.

This guide would have been indispensable to me as a new teacher. Rather than aimlessly seeking out resources, I could have used the guide to not only find trusted resources but to learn about the research behind those materials and consider how to use them in my classroom. The guide is even more relevant today. In this present moment, we have a crucial opportunity to empower students to be engaged participants in our shared democracy. This guide can help make that a reality.

*Joel Breakstone, PhD*
*Co-Founder and Executive Director,*
*Digital Inquiry Group*

# ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, Joe and Glenn want to thank Corwin for the opportunity to write this book. Thank you to Sharon Wu and Tori Bachman who helped us get started, and to Liz Gildea for seeing us through until the end. Your continued support means the world to us!

We are constantly amazed by the teachers, administrators, and support staff who do the daily hard work in school buildings across the country. Your passion and dedication is an inspiration. Our future is in your classrooms, and it is an absolute privilege to be allowed into your world.

We want to thank the many educators who have supported us during the writing process, and specifically those who have generously allowed their insights, strategies, and resources to be shared within these pages. You are all rock stars!

- Laurel Aguilar-Kirchoff
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Thanks also to Dr. Sam Wineburg, Dr. Joel Breakstone, Dr. Jeffery Nokes, Bruce Lesh, and countless others who have done the work and research, paving the way for the ideas in the book. We also acknowledge the support of the Right Question Institute and Dr. Ruben Puentedura for allowing their materials to be included.

## Joe's Acknowledgments

A special thank you to my wife Peggy. She was smart enough to know how to support me when I needed help and strong enough to insist I stop working for the day when that was needed. Thank you for everything you do to keep our family running strong!

Thank you to my children, Honore, Alex, and Eddie, who have served as constant reminders that people have different passions, skills, and ways that they learn best. I hope you feel you have learned as much from me as I have from you.

Thank you to Keith Long and Dan Kallgren for inspiring my love of social studies that started my path in education and to Deb Foster and Jesse Bradley for helping me get my footing during the early years of my career.

Thank you to Norma Furger, Denise Kalschear, and Tamara Maxwell and the MMSD team for helping me find my voice, and to Shari Templeton, Michelle Mailhot, Morgan Dunton, Janette Kirk, Lee Anne Larsen, and Dee Saucier for helping me to strengthen that voice.

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Thank you to every educator that I am blessed to know, talk to, and work with. The greatest gift I have ever given myself is the willingness to connect with others. Happily, that means that this network of inspirational educators is far too long to list, so I hope you know who you are!

Lastly, thank you to Glenn Wiebe for suggesting that we do this. You have inspired me as an educator from before you even knew me, and you continue to inspire me each day we work together. We talk about getting smarter each time we talk, and I truly believe that I have learned to be a better husband, parent, presenter, facilitator, educator, and friend because of my time spent writing this book with you. I look forward to what happens next!

## Glenn's Acknowledgments

Thanks to my amazing wife and incredibly patient children for spending time with a history-obsessed husband and dad. Your love and support makes every adventure amazing and this book possible. Love you infinity!

Self-Directed Learning Center educators Billy Landes and Jim Tomayko modeled for me what great teachers look like before I even knew teaching was something that I wanted to do. You are the foundation of my teacher self.

I have been honored to learn alongside Nathan McAlister, the phenomenal KSDE TLCs and FEs, and so many other Kansas educators. I am who I am as a social studies educator because I've had the opportunity to watch you teach, ask you questions, and design instruction with you.

To the 143 eighth-grade social studies students who survived my very first year as a middle school teacher: Seriously. My apologies. You need to know that I did get better.

Joe, thanks for hanging out with me! I'm not exactly sure how all of this worked out, but I'm so glad that it did. Your hard work, constant desire for perfection, and incredible passion for

the discipline is and always will be an inspiration. Your friendship means so much. And I really do get smarter every time we get together!

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# ABOUT THE AUTHORS

**Joe Schmidt** is the founder of Joe Schmidt Social Studies LLC where he provides support and professional development to educators and districts across Maine and the country. He is also a co-author of the 2022 book *Civil Discourse: Classroom Conversations for Stronger Communities*.

From teaching in the classroom to district, state, and national level leadership, Joe is proud of his work supporting educators that teach in grades from PK thru college. He strives to connect social studies educators regardless of grade level, content area, geographic location, or political leanings. He has

worked with Colonial Williamsburg, Learning for Justice (formerly Teaching Tolerance), the National Council for Geographic Education, ThinkerAnalytix, the Jump$tart Coalition for Personal Finance, iCivics, National Geographic, Educating for American Democracy, and has taught Elementary Methods at the University of Maine.

Joe served as a high school social studies classroom teacher for 9 years in rural Wisconsin before leaving the classroom to be the social studies teacher leader for the Madison Metropolitan School District for 3 years. He was the social studies specialist for the Maine Department of Education for 5 years and is currently the senior director of teacher programs for the Bill of Rights Institute, a 501(c)3 nonprofit based in Arlington, Virginia.

Additionally, Joe is currently the vice president for the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and will serve a 1-year term as NCSS president starting on July 1, 2026. As a leader for NCSS, he is currently or has served as chair or co-chair for the Government and Public Relations Committee, the Advocacy Task Force, the C3 Framework Task Force, the 2020 Summer Leadership Institute, the Task Force on Inquiry, the Task Force on Innovation, the Committees Review Task Force, the FASSE Committee, and the select subcommittee for the *Social Education* journal. Joe has served on the state social studies council executive boards in Wisconsin and Maine.

As a speaker, Joe is a frequent presenter at state, regional, and national conferences with presentations focusing on civil discourse, disciplinary literacy, inquiry, assessment, and the use of primary sources, among others. He has presented for or consulted with organizations and school districts in states representing more than half the country, including giving featured talks at conferences in Arizona, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Maine, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, and Wisconsin. Joe has won awards for service to social studies education from the Middle States Council for the Social Studies and the Wisconsin Council for the Social Studies.

Joe lives in Maine with his wife Peggy and is Dad to two adult children and one teenager. He can be found on almost all social media: @madisonteacher. Learn more about his work at joeschmidtsocialstudies.com.

**Glenn Wiebe** is president of History Tech Consulting, providing professional learning opportunities, curriculum coaching, and assessment support for teachers, schools, and districts across the Midwest and the country. He authors the History Tech blog, an Edublog finalist and member of the EdTech Must Read list. Glenn has also published articles for the National Social Studies Leaders Association, the Teaching History and Fractus Learning websites, and has written numerous discipline-specific curricula.

*I have an intense belief in the power that educators have as agents of change in the world. We have the ability to literally change the future through our interactions with kids.*

Glenn's teaching career began at Derby Middle School, finding ways to help 13-year-olds dig deeply into social studies and reading. He earned a graduate degree in American History while continuing to develop innovative practices and sharing them with his students. He spent 5 years teaching at a small midwestern liberal arts college before transitioning into a social studies curriculum specialist position at ESSDACK, a regional educational service center in central Kansas.

Serving as the director of multiple state and federal grants, Glenn has the opportunity to lead the learning of hundreds of elementary, middle school, and high school humanities teachers. He especially enjoys working with other members

of the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources Consortium across the country. Spending time with preservice teachers as a social studies methods instructor helps him stay connected to the latest trends.

Glenn travels across the country as a consultant, working and learning alongside both elementary and secondary teachers. He is the past president of the National Social Studies Leaders Association, acted as co-chair for the 2013 and 2020 Kansas State Department of Education Social Standards Writing Committee, and is a past president and current board member of the Kansas Council for the Social Studies. He also serves on the advisory board of the Library of Congress Teaching with Primary Sources program, is a state representative on the National Geographic Advisory Committee, the chair of the National Council for the Social Studies Resolutions Committee, and a member of the iCivics Educators Network.

Glenn lives in northern Delaware with his wife Maura, is the father of two adult kids, and will admit to visiting Gettysburg National Military Park no more than nine times. You can find him online at @glennw98 and at glennwiebe.org.

# INTRODUCTION

We (Joe and Glenn) spend a lot of time thinking about social studies. One thing we have spent a lot of time discussing is that we have one big thing in common (even though we grew up in different parts of the country in different decades): We both received a **Trivia Crack social studies education**. We are pretty sure that you did, too.

> You'll see boldface words and phrases throughout the Guide, highlighting terms and ideas that we think are important. Find their definitions in the glossary.

Back in 2014, Trivia Crack was all the rage when it was the "highest-ranking free app in the Apple app store" ahead of Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat (Kosoff, 2014). (Think Trivial Pursuit or Jeopardy on your phone while competing with friends and family around the world.) Ten years later, millions of users continue to play it, even inspiring a 2022 Netflix interactive video version called Trivia Quest (Isenberg, 2022).

For those of you not addicted to the app, the basic premise is pretty simple. You are awarded points and earn digital coins for being able to answer multiple-choice questions focused on trivial knowledge in a variety of different categories. And like many mobile trivia games, the content of the questions is not actually that important. It is the race to gather the points and coins that really matter.

Although the scope of the Trivia Crack app might have been new, the idea is not. Trivial Pursuit has dozens (hundreds?) of versions, and Jeopardy has been on TV since 1964! Americans love to show off their ability to remember little nuggets of random information.

It was this type of thinking that played out in the social studies classrooms that we both grew up in. The classes we attended were less like learning environments and more like games we played where grades and credits became more important than the actual social studies content. It was a game that resulted in "less interest in learning, a preference for easier tasks, and shallower thinking" (Blum, 2020).

As K–12 students, we were both compliant students, doing what we were told without much thought. Neither of us really thought much about memorizing the information that we would later use to excel at Trivia Crack. It was just what was expected. But years later, after decades of experience as social studies educators, we struggle to articulate exactly what our teachers expected us to learn from those sorts of activities.

The more we reflect on our own K–12 educational experiences, the more we realize that there were many activities that we were asked to complete that did not really make much sense. Along with memorizing the 105 counties of Kansas, Glenn was also asked to memorize the 50 states and their capitals. Seven continents. Three branches of government. He matched definitions from textbook glossaries with words on lists and answered multiple-choice questions.

Joe colored in countless lakes and rivers on countless maps. Coloring maps were so prevalent in class that Joe, along with most of his classmates, still remembers his high school geography class as the "coloring class." He recited the Preamble to the Constitution and created multiple timelines with dates and events. And he read textbook chapters. So many chapters.

Those factoids and tidbits were the absolute perfect education we needed to succeed at activities such as Trivia Crack and games like Trivial Pursuit.

## So . . . What Is the Problem?

Although our K–12 experience was perfect for creating incredibly successful Jeopardy contestants, what we did *not* receive during our time memorizing Kansas county seats and coloring

maps of Maine was the educational background we needed to excel at being engaged and informed citizens in a democracy. We were not asked to actually apply any of the incredible amounts of stuff that we memorized. We were not trained to ask questions about the past or how the past applied to the present. We did not learn how to make sense of evidence and use it to support a thesis or claim. We were not asked to think critically.

As Glenn's own children entered the school system, he quickly noticed that not much had changed since he was a middle school student. His son Jake and daughter Erin loved their first years as an elementary student. But the older they got, the more they began to realize that much of what they did in class was busy work. Erin's high school social studies classes became a repetitive drudge of lectures, note-taking, fill-in-the-blank study guides, and Friday quizzes . . . quizzes that were often simply a repeat of Thursday's study guide.

Although she often mentioned that she rarely used any of this memorized information once the quiz had been graded, Glenn did notice that her level of sarcasm was approaching professional grade. Walking out the door to her first-hour government class one morning, Erin quipped, "I'm off to save the world, one worksheet at a time."

Following high school, Erin transitioned into an undergraduate visual arts program. It was during the early days of a required art history class taught by medieval historian Dr. Nancy Thompson that Erin quickly noticed a difference between Thompson's class and the ones she experienced during her middle and high school years. Thompson focused on engaging stories, posed intriguing and authentic questions, encouraged the use of primary sources to solve problems, and pulled Erin into a history world she didn't know existed. Excited by this new way of viewing the world, she added a Medieval History major to her course load, eventually leading to a graduate degree in archival library science.

Your kids are no different from Jake and Erin. They do not want a poor high school history experience any more than Glenn's kids did. No one does. What students want and need are inquiry-based learning strategies that integrate stories with context, with compelling questions that pull them into content, and that connect those questions and stories to contemporary and relevant issues.

## Here Is the Cool Thing

Your kids know this, too. Younger generations are desperately seeking ways to make the world a better place and are looking for the content and skills needed to do that. Research from Wunderman Thompson Intelligence (2020) on Generation Z reveals what your own classroom anecdotal evidence is already suggesting:

> Gen Zers have not only been involved in some of the biggest in-person protests in the past years, they have been leading them.

Just days before the horrific school shooting at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, government teacher Jeff Foster spent his class time guiding students through the process of civic engagement and facilitating conversations around ways that active citizens can impact positive change in their communities (Rosenblatt, 2018).

Two of those students, David Hogg and Emma Gonzalez, would become front runners in a national movement aimed at protecting students from gun violence: "We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Just like *Tinker v. Des Moines*, we are going to change the law. That's going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that textbook and it's going to be due to the tireless effort of students" (Rosenblatt, 2018). Your students want to change the world, and memorizing lists of state capitals just doesn't cut it anymore.

We know how to support our students: introduce primary sources, provide inquiry-based instruction, and integrate powerful technology tools. But integrating all these pieces alone and without tools can be difficult and maybe a little intimidating. We can help with that. Some of you may have grown up using very cool survival field guides, using them to learn about edible roots and berries, find true North, build shelters, and set up campsites. Together with experienced leaders, these types of outdoor field guides helped Joe and Glenn survive hiking trips in the wilds of Colorado and Wisconsin.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were such a field guide for thriving in the wilds of social studies instruction?

This is that book! We have crammed all of our experience and background into creating this social studies FIELD Guide, created specifically to support you in designing and delivering learning that is best for your students. Like the survival field guides we grew up with, our FIELD Guide has tools, examples, suggestions, and resources that are ready for immediate use.

To help you survive and thrive in the social studies wilderness, we have divided those tools and resources into four main sections: Foundational evidence, Inquiry, Educational technology (edtech), and quality Learning Design. We also added two bookend chapters. Put together, the FIELD Guide plays out like this:

## Chapter 1. Load Your Pack

We love research. Joe *really* loves research. So we both understand the importance of having a strong base of data that supports best practice. Chapter 1 is all about setting the stage for why our FIELD Guide works and prepping you for the next steps.

## Chapter 2. F Is for Foundational Evidence: Start With the Good Stuff

A FIELD Guide classroom requires primary sources, first-person accounts, and supporting evidence. Chapter 2 highlights what it can look like when you integrate these types of resources into your learning designs.

## Chapter 3. I Is for Inquiry: Ask the Right Questions, Get Better Answers

This brings the FIELD Guide alive! If you want engaged learners, then you need to develop compelling questions and design activities that scaffold your students to use evidence to answer those questions. Chapter 3 shares examples and resources for doing that.

## Chapter 4. E Is for Edtech: It's All of the Things

An environment that integrates technology is an environment where learning happens at high levels and your life as a teacher gets just a little bit easier. We are firm believers in using edtech to impact learning. Unpack some of our favorite tools and strategies in Chapter 4.

## Chapter 5. LD Is for Learning Design: It's More Than Three Sticks of Wood

We get it. This can seem overwhelming. What is the best way to organize all this? Chapter 5 provides some structures and suggestions for arranging the learning in ways that are best for your students without making you crazy.

## Chapter 6. Beyond the FIELD Guide: Enjoy the Experience

Whether it is a week-long camping adventure or a quick out-and-back day hike, every trip comes to an end. So what is next? Chapter 6 wraps it all up so you're ready for your next adventure.

## Be Sure to Take a Few Hikes Along the Way!

At the end of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we have included some activities, resources, and tools just for you. Think of them as hikes you can take to help you explore the power of the FIELD Guide. Each **hike** provides a resource, activity, or strategy that gives you the chance to put into practice the skills and knowledge you picked up in that chapter. And like most actual hiking trails that you can experience in the wild, each of our hikes is rated as easy, moderate, or difficult.

Just starting out? Take off down one or two "easy" hikes. Been in the classroom a few years and looking for something new? The "moderate" is perfect for you. Need a challenge? Tackle the "difficult." The different levels allow you to pick and choose what experience might work best for you without needing a park ranger along the way.

The hikes are marked with boot icons to indicate their difficulty and are color coded: **one green boot** for the easy hikes, **two orange boots** for the moderate hikes, **three red boots** for the difficult hikes. The headings for each hike are color coded as well: easy hikes have **green** headings, moderate hikes are **orange**, and difficult hikes are **red**.

A large chunk of our combined 60 years in education has involved providing research-based professional learning opportunities across the country. Now, we are taking our best and most practical strategies and passing them on to you. We've also had the opportunity to work alongside a ton of very smart teachers; we are looking forward to also sharing some of their stories with you.

As a social studies teacher, what you do every day is incredibly important. You are in a position to literally alter the lives of each of your students while creating engaged, informed, knowledgeable citizens who will change the world. What you do every day makes a difference.

But doing what you do every day is difficult. The FIELD Guide will be helpful for most teachers, but never forget that this resource is here to support you. We want the Guide to make your life easier, not more difficult. Our classroom experience, our love for social studies, and our belief in the FIELD Guide gives us the chance to learn and work together with you.

**So put on your social studies hiking boots. We are ready to walk alongside you!**

# LOAD YOUR PACK

CHAPTER 1

*In 1930, the Republican-controlled House of Representatives, in an effort to alleviate the effects of the . . . anyone? Anyone? The Great Depression. Passed the . . . anyone? Anyone? The Tariff Bill. The Hawley-Smoot Tariff Act, which . . . anyone? Which raised or lowered . . . ? Raised tariffs in an effort to collect more revenue for the federal government. Did it work? Anyone? Anyone know the effects . . . ? It did not work, and the United States sank deeper into the Great Depression.*

—*Ferris Bueller's Day Off* (Hughes, 1986)

## BIG IDEA

### Field Guide

Compact and portable, a traditional field guide can help you identify plants, animals, and natural objects in their natural environment. They're designed for easy outdoor use, intended to be taken with you as you journey out into the wild. Field guides typically include descriptions and illustrations of the flora and fauna, suggestions for successful navigation of terrain, and ideas for organizing what you discover on your journeys.

*(Continued)*

(Continued)

### FIELD Guide

Our version of the traditional field guide is an acronym highlighting what Joe and Glenn view as the most important features of a successful social studies classroom. **FIELD** stands for

**F**oundational evidence and other primary sources

**I**nquiry-based instruction

**E**ducational technology

**L**earning **D**esign

Like a traditional field guide, our social studies **FIELD Guide** gives you the descriptions, suggestions, and ideas to help you thrive in the great outdoors of the social studies world. In this chapter, we will help you start your journey with some research, some personal experiences, and an introduction to our Hike suggestions.

## Why We Believe in the FIELD Guide

Neither Joe nor Glenn is a woodworker. We do have the basic power tools, but neither of us has the skills necessary to actually make anything. But both of us do know people who are true artisans, able to create incredible products. And we love chatting with them about the process they use. Even something as simple as a three-legged stool requires amazing amounts of skill and experience to create. The legs, seat, and cross pieces must be designed, fashioned, and joined together carefully. When done correctly, all the stool components work together to provide strength, stability, and safety in a beautiful package.

Great social studies instruction is designed the same way. Foundational evidence. Inquiry. Edtech tools. Quality learning design. Why are we comparing stool legs to edtech tools and inquiry? Because we are convinced that, just as handmade furniture is superior in quality and durability, integrating

researched best practices into your instruction will make even a great classroom more effective and provide more support to students.

We believe that the FIELD Guide basics of integrating foundational evidence, inquiry-based instruction, and educational technology tools using appropriate learning design methods into your social studies teaching can have an incredibly positive impact on student learning.

Could we be wrong about how well the FIELD Guide works in social studies classrooms? Joe would like to point out that Glenn did once predict that the Kansas City Chiefs would be undefeated on their way to a third Super Bowl victory. So . . . yes, we have been wrong about things before. But unlike Glenn's undefeated Super Bowl prediction, our belief in the FIELD Guide is based on working with tons of research, hundreds of teachers, thousands of exercises, and endless do-overs from a lifetime of lessons learned not only from us, but from our nationwide network of teaching colleagues.

Ongoing educational research supports the FIELD concept. But, perhaps more importantly for us, it is the anecdotal evidence that carries the most weight for our FIELD Guide. It is both our own experiences and those of multiple teacher friends and colleagues that form the belief in why foundational evidence, inquiry, and edtech tools can be so impactful.

## The Path Less Taken

Glenn spent most of his high school career in a very unusual place. While the majority of students in his western Kansas high school spent their time moving from class to class, following a traditional schedule of bells and lectures, Glenn hung out in a corner suite of rooms on the top floor of a building stuck out on the edge of campus. The Self-Directed Learning Center, known by its students as the LC, was unusual because there were no bells, no set schedule, no mandated curriculum, and no required textbooks.

Using early research by Benjamin Bloom and Fred Keller highlighting the success of mastery learning and personalized systems of instruction, the LC's teacher facilitators worked with

students to design their own learning programs leading to graduation. Glenn earned his physical education credits by becoming proficient at rappelling out of the LC's third-story window and his biology credit by designing a livable underwater habitat based on the work of Jacques Cousteau.

But it was the work he and other students did to earn the required civics and government portion of his social studies credits that remain his most vivid memory. Encouraged to develop their own compelling question and research project, Glenn and others designed a program to increase the percentage of registered voters in the city precinct with the lowest voting participation. With guidance from the LC teachers, the project design required that students research primary source voting records to brainstorm possible reasons for low registration numbers and poor voter turnout and then create possible solutions for increasing voter involvement. Students used computer software to predict possible results in an upcoming election for governor of Kansas, based on previous elections and expected voter turnout.

The group's solution? A boots on the ground, door-to-door campaign that resulted in a significant increase in registrations—with a voter turnout rate that remained virtually unchanged. Which led to a whole new set of compelling questions and investigations.

At the time, Glenn had no idea that his teacher facilitator was using an early version of the FIELD concept. Glenn had never heard the phrase "compelling question," nor did he have a grasp of the inquiry method. He did not make the connection between using technology and cementing content into the organizational schema of student thinking. But it was this combination of choice, problem solving, collaboration, primary sources, and a simple computer program that remains locked in his memories.

## The *Usual* Way

Joe had a different high school social studies experience than Glenn did. He grew up in a small town and attended a small school that had two social studies teachers. One teacher taught the U.S. and World history classes, and the other taught

everything else. But both had a similar approach—requiring students to learn a specific set of information through rote memorization and demonstrate mastery by completing very traditional multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank tests.

It was not just that Joe's classes featured a traditional teaching style. They also featured a traditional content. Like many other educators we talk with, Joe remembers having very little exposure to diverse stories and voices across history as part of his K–12 education. The emphasis was on the "textbook version" of history, with few opportunities to explore the hidden (and not so hidden!) stories beyond presidents, war heroes, and dead white guys. This "usual" content meant that Joe learned in an environment lacking what today would be described as culturally responsive teaching.

We are guessing your experience may have been very similar. It was not until his undergraduate years with Dr. Daniel Kallgren that Joe learned about lives and experiences different from his own. It was these classes, and a powerful unit centered on the civil rights movement, that Joe credits as the reason for changing his major from Business Finance to Social Studies Education. Those types of stories matter. They inspire us to do better and be better. And they are still often underrepresented.

Were there exceptions to these traditional methods and content in Joe's K–12 classes? Absolutely! Joe vividly remembers doing a mock Constitutional Convention in his U.S. History class, and when the discussion got heated he was gaveled "out of order." Channeling his best Al Pacino, Joe responded, "I'm out of order? This whole classroom is out of order!"

But the truth is that Joe cannot remember other similar experiences during his high school years. Being gaveled out of order was the exception to the rule of traditional rote memorization. What does he remember most about his history classes? He remembers the Review Game.

## The Review Game

The Review Game was simple. The class was split into two teams. Individuals from each team would compete one on one to correctly answer a question on an upcoming testable topic.

The good news for the competitive students was that the questions came verbatim from the test. Verbatim. Right down to the multiple choice.

Joe's teacher was literally giving everyone a copy of the test ahead of time. All Joe had to do was copy the questions, memorize the answers, remember the answers for one day, and a perfect score was guaranteed. Once the test was graded and returned, Joe's class went back to lectures, worksheets, and textbook read-alouds. Lather, rinse, repeat. And although Glenn did have the rare opportunity to impact a state election as part of his social studies classroom experience, his college classrooms replicated Joe's lather, rinse, repeat cycle of lectures and note-taking.

Seen in the rearview mirror, both Joe and Glenn recognize this traditional process as the quintessential assembly line school experience that so often fails to engage kids in meaningful and relevant learning.

Your current students are not Joe and Glenn. But the assembly line instruction they receive is often the same. The problem is that today's world requires flexible thinkers, open minds, media literacy, and problem solvers. The rigid lecture and rote memorization strategies will never develop those kinds of citizens, and they are in desperate need of an update.

You might have a story similar to Glenn's voter registration experience and Joe's out of order activity from your K–12 or college experience. Most social studies teachers can think of at least one or two impactful lessons that they participated in as students. It is this type of experience that we believe the FIELD Guide can replicate in your classroom. But we also know that when push comes to shove, it becomes very easy for teachers to fall back to traditional methods that deliver quick and easy lesson plans but lack the positive impact of learning activities like Glenn's election and Joe's Pacino impersonation.

## Back to Basics

Our FIELD Guide provides the counterbalance to the assembly line process and offers the support that your students need to

be successful. It takes advantage of everything current education research has to offer.

But we get it. Integrating inquiry-based learning, primary sources, and technology tools into your instruction can be difficult. We also know that there are others, both inside and outside the profession, who argue that we're doing our students a disservice when we encourage teachers to change what they teach or how they teach it. That what was done in the past is still useful and should not be pushed aside. There is a continual cry for "getting back to the basics."

The loudest voices will shout that the basics worked for them and they turned out just fine. They point to how little students today know ("Just look at the ridiculous things they say on TikTok!"). For the most part, the complaints we often hear are really nothing new. People have been shouting similar things since the early 1900s and became especially loud during the 1970s (Morgan & Robinson, 1976; Wexler, 2020; Wineburg, 2018b).

## WE ARE NOT CONVINCED

Returning social studies education to repetitive, rote memorization with a multiple choice assessment model will result in the same student boredom, parent frustrations, teacher resentment, and poor test results that the discipline has previously experienced. As Joe likes to say, "If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting what you have always gotten."

We think that Sam Wineburg, professor at Stanford University and current guru of social studies education, would agree. As part of the research he conducted to write *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (2001) and to create the original Stanford History Education Group, Wineburg uncovered the true story of the "basics" that some are arguing for:

> Americans always have flunked tests of historical facts. The first large-scale history exam was administered in 1917. High school students—the elite who made it that far in 1917—yanked the Articles of Confederation from the 18th century and plunked

them in the middle of the Confederacy. They confused Jefferson Davis with Thomas Jefferson, and stared with bafflement at 1846, the beginning of the war with Mexico. (Wineburg, 2018a)

Wineburg points to a similar test in 1943 of 7,000 college students. The assessment's summary suggested that students are "all too ignorant of American history." Subsequent tests, such as one given to students in 2000 (Neal et al., 2000), showed little improvement. The 2022 NAEP results highlighted a similar lack of student success (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023). These test results show that going back to the basics won't make our kids any smarter or produce better citizens.

*If you keep doing what you have always done, you will keep getting what you have always gotten.*

We are convinced that the solution to the "kids don't know anything" problem is to stop looking for something to "go back to" and instead to look at what the research can tell us about how to engage kids and create knowledgeable citizens. The research on what works in social studies education gives us what we need to teach differently and to design instruction that we know works. But just as important, the research can also help us to better understand what doesn't work and why teachers keep doing it.

## Sage on the Stage

We know many of the practices that have become ingrained into the habits of social studies teachers are also some of the practices that research says do not work. The research of Wineburg (2001, 2018a, 2018b) and others can help us to examine our own practices, evaluate what's working, and ask questions about why we do what we do.

## NEED AN EXAMPLE? POPCORN READING

You may not be using Popcorn Reading (where students take turns reading out loud) in your classroom. But many still are. Even though

> we know of no research evidence that supports the claim that Round Robin Reading actually contributes to students becoming better readers, either in terms of their fluency or comprehension. (Hilden & Jones, 2012)

In fact, the research suggests just the opposite. In 2021, Sarah Gonser summarized the work of East Carolina University professor Todd Finley by saying "that oral turn-taking reading practices like round-robin stigmatize poor readers, weaken comprehension, and sabotage fluency and pronunciation."

Need a list of some of the other things that we know don't work that still happen in classrooms? Check out the list below. (Full disclosure: Glenn and Joe incorporated many of these early in their careers.)

- Assigned reading without context or background
- A focus on "covering" loads of content rather than digging deeply into specific topics or themes
- Measuring learning with summative assessments that include mainly low-level-thinking question types
- Ignoring cultural and individual differences in your students
- Using poor whole group questioning techniques and asking things like, "Does everyone understand?"
- Spending a majority of class time on direct instruction with little student interaction or input
- Using mostly textual and secondary documents while ignoring primary sources and multimedia
- Failing to incorporate appropriate technology tools
- Too. Much. Poorly. Designed. Homework.

## AND LECTURES—LOTS AND LOTS OF LECTURES

At the beginning of this chapter, we quoted the lackluster economics teacher from the 1986 movie *Ferris Bueller's Day Off*, played by Ben Stein. Stein would go on to host his own TV show titled *Win Ben Stein's Money*, a trivia game show that reinforced the false narrative that knowing historical minutiae is a good thing—as long as the goal is to win bar bets about voodoo economics.

Early in our careers, we were not much different from Stein's uninspiring character. During his first few years as a middle school teacher, Glenn lectured. All the time. To 13-year-olds. And Joe was much the same when he started working with high school students. (Joe was so proud of his lecture outlines!)

Neither of us knew better, although we probably should have. Glenn's experience at LC was an exception. Lecturing was the primary teaching strategy in his very traditional middle school, high school, and college classrooms. There were no real alternatives provided in his college preservice education methods classes. Lecturing in a social studies class was just the way things were done.

Those memories come flooding back as Glenn and Joe chat about their experiences as students and classroom teachers. One conversation led them to an older article by Graham Gibbs (1982) titled *20 Terrible Reasons for Lecturing*. Both Glenn and Joe recognized multiple examples shared by fellow secondary and college educators. Any of these sound familiar?

- It is the only way to ensure content is covered.
- College is all lectures. So as high school teachers, we need to prepare them for that.
- Lectures are the best way to get facts across.
- My lectures are inspirational; they improve students' attitudes toward the subject and my students like them.
- Lectures ensure that students have a proper set of notes for future review.
- The criticisms you are making only apply to poor lecturers and bad lecturing.

They sound familiar to us because we used to say stuff like this. You may have heard others say stuff like this. Maybe, just maybe, you have said stuff like this yourself.

## Moving Beyond Lectures

Why do we continue to believe that lecturing and other forms of traditional instruction actually work? What does the research tell us about the effectiveness of lecturing? And, more important, what does it say about the alternatives and how we can use those instead?

We wanted to find out why teachers are still using strategies like Popcorn Reading. In their book, *Why Are We Still Doing That? Positive Alternatives to Problematic Teaching Practices,* authors Pérsida and William Himmele (2021) give us one possibility:

> Most teachers spend about 13,000 hours in the classroom as students before they graduate high school. That's a lot of hours soaking up habits that they will later consciously or unconsciously perpetuate, even after learning about best practices in college or university. (p. 2)

Several years ago, Alfie Kohn, author of *The Homework Myth* and other education-related books, addressed these same questions in a 2017 *Washington Post* article. Kohn cites research by Donald Bligh:

> The heavy reliance placed upon lecturing and its frequent use as an all-purpose method are unjustified in the light of evidence. It's possible that thought may take place during lectures but . . . the traditional style of continuous exposition does not promote it in such a way as to justify lecturing to achieve this objective.

We *love* this Kohn comment:

> To question the effectiveness of lectures is not to deny that teachers know more than students do, a common straw-man objection offered defensively by traditionalists. Rather, it suggests that having someone

> with more information talk to those who have less doesn't necessarily lead to that information being retained by the latter.

Kohn continues:

> And the more ambitious one's goal, cognitively speaking, the less likely one is to reach it by having students sit and listen. This is true because we are not empty receptacles into which knowledge is poured; we are active meaning makers.

As you can tell, we are not a fan of lecture-focused learning. We sat through those lessons as students and watched students' eyes glaze over when we spent too much time talking as a teacher. Luckily, there is another way.

## What Does Work?

How "ambitious cognitively speaking" should we be? The C3 Framework from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2013) and its Inquiry Arc are being used by local school districts across the country to redesign and restructure their state standards and local curricula. The **Inquiry Arc** makes things pretty clear. Historical thinking. Problem solving. Using evidence. Working with others. Communicating solutions. Taking informed action. Making the world a better place. Active, engaged, and informed citizens.

**FIND OUT MORE ABOUT THE C3 FRAMEWORK ON THE NCSS WEBSITE**

https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3

### COGNITIVELY SPEAKING, THAT'S PRETTY AMBITIOUS FOR STUDENTS AND FOR TEACHERS

Kohn (2017) also highlights a book titled *Teaching With Your Mouth Shut* (2000) by Don Finkel. Finkel suggests that the traditional view of teaching as a one-way street with direct

instruction at its center is destructively narrow. He believes that the teacher's role is not to transmit knowledge, but to create circumstances and opportunities that lead to quality student learning. Teaching and learning should be a collaborative process, with the teacher and students working together to create a learning environment that is both challenging, supportive, and based on inquiry. We couldn't agree more.

So does Kohn (2017). His basic rule of thumb?

> The longer the period during which teacher and students are together, the less time, proportionately, that the teacher should be talking.

The problem, of course, is that we all love to talk about social studies. A room full of young people, there for the express purpose of listening to us expound about the impact of the Union railroad system on Civil War battlefield strategy or the centralization of governmental power in feudal Japan? How can a history nerd resist that? It is not easy. Glenn and Joe will both admit that we talked way too much during our first few years in the classroom. (And even now, Joe's best piece of advice is to not get Glenn started on Civil War strategies!)

But it was a study documenting the percentage of teacher talk in K–12 classrooms that helped Joe begin thinking about his own instructional practice and how the learning might look different if his students were the ones leading the conversations. Glenn remembers a similar conversation with social studies rock star Bruce Lesh (2023) around Bruce's history lab idea. In a history lab, it's not Joe or Glenn doing the talking. The focus is on what kids are doing and discussing, not on what Joe or Glenn are saying.

In a **history lab**, students are given a problem based on a historical event, such as the causes of the American Revolution. They are then given a set of primary source documents, such as letters, speeches, and newspaper articles, to analyze. Students work in groups to analyze the documents and develop historical arguments based on the evidence they find.

Throughout the lab, the teacher emphasizes the importance of historical thinking skills, such as sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration. Students are encouraged to ask questions

about the documents, such as who wrote them, when they were written, and what biases they might have. Students consider the broader historical context in which the documents were produced.

At the end of the lab, the students present their historical arguments to the class, using the evidence they found in the primary source documents to support their claims. Through this process, the goal is to teach students how to think critically about history and develop a deeper understanding of historical events. Students are engaged in leading their learning throughout, which leads to higher engagement. How many of the elements of the FIELD Guide do you see potentially having a starring role in a history lab?

**LEARN MORE ABOUT BRUCE LESH AND HIS HISTORY LABS BY HEADING OVER TO OUR COMPANION WEBSITE.**

www.socialstudiesfieldguide.com/chapter-1

Joe likes to say that for the first seven years of his career, he was the "world's best worst teacher" because he copied so many of the practices he saw growing up. He had a lecture with a bullet outline to project for the students as he spoke. He had a multiple choice quiz for every section. He scored students based on how many times they spoke during a discussion. The percentage of teacher talk study helped him realize he was now doing everything that he once hated about school.

For Joe, this was a lightbulb moment. He succeeded at school, and genuinely liked many of the topics, but even with that mindset, there were still a lot of things that Joe hated about how teachers taught. And now as a social studies teacher, he was copying them! Maybe you did, too, when you started or still do even today. Two words: growth mindset.

## Why Visible Learning Matters

As we start to realize what does not work, we can begin to look around for what does. The research of John Hattie (2018), Robert Marzano (Marzano et al., 2012), and the authors of the

latest version of *Classroom Instruction That Works* (Goodwin & Rouleau, 2022) provide us with some excellent examples of what can be successful.

Hattie has spent years analyzing more than 800 research studies that cover more than 80 million students and summarizing those efforts into something that he calls *visible learning*. His work spans the different core content areas, but he has some specific things to say about social studies:

> The discipline of social studies is far more than memorizing dates and facts. It involves the skillful ability to conduct investigations, analyze sources, place events in historical and cultural context, and synthesize various points of views, while recognizing our own biases. Recent developments in the field ask us to reorient our thinking about good social studies instruction—moving from one of passive memorization of facts and dates to a more dynamic process of disciplinary literacy. We need to teach students how to evaluate and synthesize vast amounts of information, analyze divergent points of view, and work collaboratively to build prosperous and fair societies. (Hattie et al., 2020)

What Joe and Glenn find interesting about Hattie's work is that although there are many strategies and approaches listed in his research, no one strategy by itself is the silver bullet. Combining tools and approaches then adapting them to fit your own situation is the key to long-term learning. What are some of Hattie's classroom strategies?

- Transfer strategies
- Classroom discussion and individual questioning
- Problem-solving and inquiry-based teaching
- Concept mapping
- Rehearsal and memorization
- Technology integration
- Concentration/persistence/engagement

- Note taking
- Small group learning
- Cooperative learning

Pieces of the FIELD Guide show up across Hattie's list. There will be times when students will use a primary source to uncover the answer to your thinking prompt. There may be a need for short periods of direct instruction and recording of foundational knowledge. Your kids might engage in small group conversations around questions they've developed through a teacher-led whole class discussion.

What do we want you to take away from John Hattie's research? A combination of multiple tactics are necessary for student achievement. In his research, Hattie has emphasized the importance of teachers being flexible and adaptable in their approach to teaching. Different teaching strategies are effective for different students and different contexts. It is important for you to have a variety of teaching styles in your tool belt so that you can tailor your approach to meet the needs of individual students and situations. The FIELD Guide will help you find ways to connect the different strategies in a way that best supports all of your students.

## Active Learning

It is not just Kohn and Hattie arguing for alternatives to lecturing and other outdated teaching strategies. A 2014 study published in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* looked at 225 studies of teaching methods. When we ignore active learning strategies and spend most of our time lecturing, the report found, students are 1.5 times more likely to fail than students in classes that use more stimulating, active learning methods (Freeman et al., 2014).

A 2019 study led by Louis Deslauriers found that students engaged in learning via lecture had a higher perception of their learning than did students in active learning classrooms, yet the test scores showed the opposite. Students in classes that

focused on passive learning through lectures scored lower than students in classes where they engaged in more active learning.

Although students see the value of active learning, initially it can feel frustrating. Louis Deslauriers suggests that "deep learning is hard work. The effort involved in active learning can be misinterpreted as a sign of poor learning. On the other hand, a superstar lecturer can explain things in such a way as to make students feel like they are learning more than they actually are. . . . In all the courses at Harvard that we've transformed to active learning . . . the overall course evaluations went up." Physics professor Eric Mazur participated in the study and praised its results: "This work unambiguously debunks the illusion of learning from lectures" (Ruell, 2019; Deslauriers et al., 2019).

More recent research is saying the same thing. *The New Classroom Instruction That Works: The Best Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* (Goodwin & Rouleau, 2022) is based on recent research by McREL International and the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD). The book highlights similar studies of instructional practice while claiming that the result is

- increased student achievement,
- improved student motivation and engagement,
- enhanced student thinking and problem-solving skills,
- increased student transfer and application of knowledge, and
- improved teacher effectiveness.

The COVID-19 pandemic taught us that learning can—and sometimes has to—occur in nontraditional formats. Prior to the spring of 2020, there were many ideas in education considered to be "true" because they were so ingrained in our own experiences, first as K–12 students and then as K–12 teachers.

*The impact of the pandemic forced all of us into new teaching and learning situations that helped us examine many commonly held beliefs. These beliefs were exposed when keeping the status quo was no longer an option.*

Grab the first three elements of the FIELD Guide, add established learning design principles to serve as the glue holding everything together, and you have a classroom structure that will propel learning beyond the basics and turn your kids into students who are ready for whatever college or career path they choose. It will help you connect students to foundational evidence, engage student curiosity, and take advantage of technology that increases access, encourages collaboration, and expands equity. The bonus? They leave your classroom with the lifelong ability to be active members in their civic communities.

## Tomorrow Glasses

Matt Miller, author of the 2023 book *AI for Educators* and creator of the amazing *Ditch That Textbook* series, was interviewed on *The Dave Burgess Show* podcast to talk about his book. Miller stressed the importance of preparing students for a future we cannot predict.

> Teaching with "tomorrow glasses" is hard. Teaching with "today glasses" is easy because today glasses deal in certainty. They deal in fact. They deal in past experience. They deal in data. They deal in things that we can measure and things we feel comfortable with and things we can see with our two eyes. Dealing in future glasses is uncertain and it deals with predictions and prognostications, and casting a vision into the future, and making decisions based on what we think that is going to look like.

> . . . if we really want to prepare kids for that future, for tomorrow, we have to be willing to put on those tomorrow glasses. To take some risks and to make some imperfect decisions and take some imperfect actions and get it wrong sometimes. We've got to be willing to do that if we want to give our students any sort of a chance at being prepared for that future. (Burgess, 2023)

**Tomorrow glasses**. We love that!

When thinking about the future, you have to be willing to take some informed risks, but you also have to be prepared to give yourself some grace. Predicting the future is not easy. Joe tells preservice and early career educators that he does not think there has ever been a time when his "five year plan" ever turned out as planned five years later.

Two things about Joe's ever-changing five-year plans. First, it is about doing what is "best" not what is "easiest." Changes have been made, even when they were scary, and risks were taken even when there were a lot of unknowns. During his time as a high school football coach, Joe would support his team in the weight room and tell his players, "Getting better takes hard work. If getting better was easy, everyone would be great!"

Second, changing his plans meant Joe learned new things and made decisions based on the new information. He did not stay on the planned path when he learned that it was not the best path any longer. As the economist John Maynard Keynes is often quoted as saying, "When my information changes, I alter my conclusions. What do you do, sir?" (Note: There is no record of Keynes actually saying this!)

We believe that it is OK to be wrong. But what we are not OK with is staying the course when new information tells you that the course is wrong. Do not be afraid to do what you think is best, but be prepared to change course as you uncover evidence that suggests something different. To be ready for their future, our students absolutely need us to be willing to do that.

You should be asking yourself, "So what are the experts seeing when they put on Miller's tomorrow glasses? What should we be focusing on today to equip students for their worlds of tomorrow?"

- **Digital literacy and technology skills**
  - see the Futures of Education website (UNESCO, 2020)
- **Creativity and innovation**
  - see *The Future of Jobs Report 2023* (World Economic Forum, 2023)
- **Collaboration skills**
  - National Education Association (2024); NEA Today & LinkedIn Learning (2019)
- **Critical thinking and problem solving**
  - see *The Future of Work After COVID-19* (McKinsey and Company, 2021)

This does not sound like a classroom focusing on **back to basics**. It sounds more like what Glenn did in the LC, Joe's mock Constitutional convention, and similar activities that you have experienced as a student or teacher. We believe if you were to think about the best classes you have taught or the favorite classes you have been in, you will see that the ideas listed above were part of their foundation.

## Making Change Happen

If research tells us this is a better approach to teaching, how can we move forward? We believe that the first thing is to acknowledge that change is needed and that we need to look at the situation differently.

In his 2022 research article focusing on teacher education research between 2009 and 2019, Dr. Lightning Jay focused on the work of Thomas Fallace that describes three "strands" of social studies instruction. Fallace called the three strands traditional, disciplinary, and progressive. According to Jay,

> traditional social studies seeks to prepare students to engage in the body politic by transmitting a prescribed body of essential cultural knowledge; the disciplinary strand develops the skills and perspectives of academic experts; and the progressive strand explores the connection between citizenship, schools, and learning in a social context. (Jay, 2022, p. 343)

The "Trivia Crack" teaching and learning style falls under the "traditional" strand and would match many of the experiences that both Glenn and Joe had as learners growing up. Though this has shifted a bit in recent years, the traditional strand still seems to be the most common approach in secondary classrooms across the country.

But when it came to research about social studies education, Jay found the opposite. Of the 139 research articles he studied, Jay found that 38% focused on the critical approach, 28% on disciplinary, only 16% on traditional, and 18% labeled as "other" or "blended." The research around social studies instruction seems to look primarily at approaches other than "traditional." Yet in many classrooms, anecdotal evidence suggests that the traditional teaching style continues to be the favored instructional practice. The research supports a change in practice but the change doesn't seem to be happening. Why the disconnect? We suggest that some teacher **preservice education programs** are not keeping up with the evolving research. We are also convinced that the latest research is not making its way to K–12 teachers currently in the classroom. There continues to be a lack of resources and professional learning to support educators looking to hone their craft. And like both Glenn and Joe early in their careers, many teachers continue to teach as they were taught.

Change can be uncomfortable. We can fall victim to the cognitive bias called the sunk cost fallacy, believing that it is better to keep doing what we are presently doing because of the time and effort that we've already expended. So as we encounter new ideas and practices, we try to fit them into our preexisting box of reality. Rather than risk the discomfort of acknowledging that our current practices are wrong, we simply choose to not change. It can be easier to ignore the new than to accept our own need for growth.

## Opening the Door to Creativity

The good news is that changing how we approach instruction can often spark creativity and new ways of designing instruction. Ed Catmull is all in on finding ways for helping people be more creative. Catmull is the co-founder of Pixar Animation Studios, served as the president of Pixar Animation, and is a firm believer in how change can impact creative design. In his 2014 book *Creativity, Inc.* he wrote,

> Here's what we all know, deep down, even though we might wish it weren't true: Change is going to happen, whether we like it or not. Some people see random, unforeseen events as something to fear. I am not one of those people. To my mind, randomness is not just inevitable; it is part of the beauty of life. Acknowledging it and appreciating it helps us respond constructively when we are surprised. Fear makes people reach for certainty and stability, neither of which guarantee the safety that they imply. I take a different approach. Rather than fear randomness, I believe we can make choices to see it for what it is and to let it work for us. The unpredictable is the ground on which creativity occurs. (p. 148)

*Fear makes people reach for certainty and stability, neither of which guarantee the safety that they imply.*

When Miller (2023) urged us to use our "tomorrow glasses," he was embracing the creativity that uncertainty can encourage in the classroom. Neither Miller nor Catmull (2014) allow the unknown to stop them from striving for creativity. The fear of the "what may be" cannot be an excuse to do "what we have always done."

The impact of artificial intelligence and tools such as ChatGPT caught many of us by surprise in early 2023. We did not see it coming and we were not prepared for its impact. Changes like

AI can either scare us back to what we are comfortable with (even though we know it probably does not work), or it can encourage us forward to creating a better classroom for our students.

Some of you may be familiar with a quote by US Navy Rear Admiral Grace Hopper:

> The most dangerous phrase in the English language is, "We have always done it this way."

What you may not know is that in addition to being a rear admiral, Hopper was also a math professor at Vassar College. She earned a doctorate from Yale in 1934 and was forced to join the Navy Reserves during World War II because at age 34 the Navy told her that she was too old and small.

Starting in 1944 and continuing after the war, Hooper became heavily involved in developing the first mainframe computer and later helped create early computer languages that allowed for mass data processing. But her ideas were often pushed aside because many thought they would never work. Rear Admiral Dr. Grace Hopper saw the world with tomorrow glasses. Her detractors did not.

Neither Joe nor Glenn had a chance to meet Dr. Hopper. But she seems like just the person who would love the changes that can happen when you use our FIELD Guide.

## The Human Side of Teaching

Throughout the FIELD Guide, we will share stories from our own experiences and those of friends and colleagues because stories about actual people prove the same thing that the research does. There is an art to teaching, beyond the science. We cannot forget the ever-present human component of teaching.

When Joe was the social studies teacher leader for the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) in Madison, Wisconsin, a big part of his work was to create the first districtwide social studies curriculum. As part of the district assessment

alignment, he was using **document-based questions (DBQs)** and Stanford History Education Group History Assessments of Thinking (HATs) as the centerpiece of the shared district assessment.

During this work, Joe was having regular lunch meetings with one of the educational leaders from the Wisconsin Historical Society. At one meeting, Joe was excitedly updating his colleague about the work being done to align argumentative writing focused on primary sources. His colleague listened politely and when Joe got done he said, "That sounds really great, but you know I will always win, right?"

Joe was not aware he was involved in a contest and so asked for more specifics. (Joe hates to lose.) The response was, "You can get kids engaged in learning by reading primary sources, but if you bring them to my museum and I get to hand them a saber-tooth tiger claw or a piece of a meteorite, I will always win."

And they were right. And still are. It was a not-so-gentle reminder about remembering the human side of students and how to support their curiosity.

The rest of lunch that day was spent talking about the "power of the object" and the "power of the place." Joe learned about Tuan (1977) and Lowenthal (1996) shaping how historical museums and sites "teach" history to their visitors. Getting to see an object in real life (holding it is even better!) is why we go to museums. Standing in the place where history happened is why there are always people waiting to walk the Boston Freedom Trail, tour the Gettysburg battlefield, and explore Machu Picchu.

Getting to these places regularly is impossible for most classrooms. You may have asked, "How can we bring these places and objects to students?" We are going to explore some of those tools later in the book. For now, we want you to focus on the bigger question that lives at the heart of Joe's story: How do we harness the energy and curiosity generated with historical objects and places to engage students in your classroom every day?

*How do we harness the energy and curiosity generated with historical objects and places to engage students in your classroom every day?*

Although we know that Kohn's (2017) research, Hattie's (2018) metadata, and McREL's suggestions (Goodwin & Rouleau, 2022) can provide a critical foundation for quality instructional designs, we also know how useful it can be to see specific examples of the FIELD Guide being implemented in social studies classrooms. So we have asked some friends to share what works for them.

Throughout our FIELD Guide, we will be sharing those examples from classroom teachers just like you. We have been fortunate to work with and learn from award-winning teachers from across the country. As we dig deeper into each aspect of FIELD in the following chapters, you will hear their stories about what has worked for them and the lessons they learned.

As we moved away from instruction that was heavy in lecture and multiple choice worksheets, we began to see increasing student engagement, deeper conversations, and better thinking. Students dove into simulations, made sense of deliberative activities, grappled with deep inquiry about primary sources, and completed lengthy, cross-disciplinary research projects. We also began to see that foundational evidence can be many different things beyond just a simple piece of text. It might be a guest speaker, an interaction with local experts, working with community organizations, or connecting with government officials and others who can help students collect and organize information.

One of Joe's in-depth projects was called the "Global Citizens Project." In coordination with an ELA teacher down the hall, Joe's students set out to design a community service project that was intended to help an international nonprofit. When trying to help students understand why the old commercials about "you can feed a hungry child in Africa for pennies a day" were really all about global economics, he realized that

his content had to matter to the students and needed to go beyond just lectures and multiple choice.

By helping students make sense of nongovernmental organizations, Joe also helped them begin to understand not just economic principles, but also what truly mattered to them. This led to students researching data about nonprofit groups that were working on that issue. They had to answer the question, "What do these groups need and how can we help them?"

But this also meant students had to reach out to organizations and work with people in the community, instead of just searching for information online or digging through archives of primary sources. Joe and his students were piloting Google Workspace tools that provided a wide variety of technology as they brainstormed, organized, planned, and wrote. They had deadlines set weeks in advance with peer-reviewed steps along the way, working with their ELA teachers about how to properly write a planning paper.

In the end, they had an authentic audience as their projects were implemented in and with their community. There were movie screenings at the local theater. Battle of the Bands at the local park. Game nights and volleyball tournaments co-hosted with community organizations. Students moved beyond knowing why money could buy different things in different places to seeing that concept play out in actual practice. They worked outside of their school walls and received permits from the city, negotiated with local businesses, and created informational campaigns in coordination with volunteer organizations.

Putting together and implementing high quality FIELD Guide lessons and units like this that incorporate foundational evidence, integrate inquiry, require edtech tools, and incorporate research-based learning designs will take time and effort. But we believe these are the learning experiences that your students will remember long after they leave your classroom. When you make the learning matter to students and layer in many of the best things that social studies has to offer, your students will notice. And they will care and they will be ready to learn. That is the FIELD Guide in action.

## What to Expect

Before we get too deep into each part of our FIELD Guide in Chapters 2 through 5, we want you to be familiar with the structure.

Each chapter will highlight one of the key components of FIELD, explain why it's important, highlight examples of what it can look like, and share resources you can use immediately in your classroom. We will also share FIELD best practices and examples in action developed by award-winning teachers from across the country and organized into FIELD Guide Hikes.

Glenn's wife, Maura, is a hiker. A serious hiker. Someone who scales 14,000+ foot Colorado mountains and who talks about elevation sickness, scree, hiking boots vs. walking sandals, and weather changes above the tree line. Glenn does not talk about any of those things. Glenn likes flat hikes in cool temperatures that end sooner rather than later. But even though they experience the activity at different levels, they both love the adventure and connecting with the outdoors.

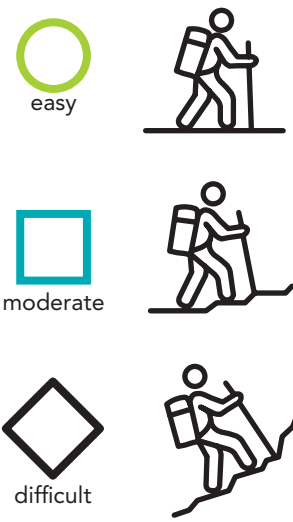
Both can also find the right trail aligned to their hiking preferences by using a hiking trail grading system (see Figure 1.1 on next page). Understanding the hiking difficulty scale can help people become better hikers by highlighting criteria like incline, length, size of obstacles, and surface type. Difficulty ratings can help hikers plan their hikes based on their abilities and physical fitness to perform various types of hikes. So Glenn can look for "easy" and "moderate," while Maura can focus on "difficult."

Using the FIELD Guide in a social studies classroom can be a bit like choosing the right trail for your level of hiking experience. Some of us have been doing this for a while and, like Maura, are ready for difficult instructional designs and activities. Some of us are just starting out or are new to the idea of using inquiry-based instruction and are looking for easy or moderate.

So in each chapter, we have included examples with different levels of inclines and obstacles so that you can find the

**Figure 1.1**

## Trail Grade Guide




Mostly smooth and wide. Dirt with occasional unevenness, easy terrain and little elevation gain

Mostly smooth, variable width. Dirt with occasional unevenness, and minor changes in elevation

Dirt and loose rock with continual unevenness. Major changes in elevation with long steep sections

instructional activity that is perfect for you. We have also created our own rating scale based on activity length, use of primary sources, prep time, and assessment type.

Look for these rating logos for each of the examples included in each chapter:

Quickly implemented with one or two learning activities. May include a simple formative assessment. Minimal preparation, usually delivered in one class period or less.

**EASY HIKE**

**MODERATE HIKE**

Mostly straightforward but may involve a variety of learning activities and assessment types. Could involve several hours of preparation and research, usually delivered in one or two class periods.

**DIFFICULT HIKE**

May require diverse activities and strategies, including formative and summative assessment. Will involve multiple hours of preparation and research, delivered in three or more class periods.

When a hiker is making their way up a fourteener in Colorado, they are going to need a field guide to help them be successful. Some days, your classroom might feel like a relaxing walk where you can stop and smell the flowers. Other days feel like you are climbing that fourteener in the Rockies while carrying every one of your students in your backpack. We get it. We've been there.

As you make your way through the book, be sure to grab the QR codes sprinkled along the way! Many of them will take you to our companion website at socialstudiesfieldguide.com. There you will find additional resources, lessons, and ways to connect with us.

**VISIT OUR COMPANION WEBSITE FOR ADDITIONAL RESOURCES.**

socialstudiesfieldguide.com

And that is why we are excited to share our FIELD Guide. We want you to have everything you need to be successful!