

# **The Iowa Council for the Social Studies Journal**

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# FORWARD



This issue of the ICSS Journal is focused on HISTORICAL THINKING. Numerous national reports have asserted that America's elementary and secondary students lack critical historical knowledge and are unable to apply higher order thinking skills in the area of history. The teaching of history has not escaped the polarized political machinery of the reform movement. As recently as 1995, the National Center for History in the Schools met a firestorm of opposition upon the publication of its history standards. It is too early to tell if the recently revised second edition of the history standards will clarify the issues related to students' knowledge of history and their relationship to world-class standards. However, we anticipate that the quality of teaching of history in America's schools with all of its ambiguities, multiple interpretations and ideological perspectives will continue to capture the attention of educators, researchers and politicians well into the next century.

This edition of the ICSS Journal opens with Linda Symcox's article identifying five standards for historical thinking. Her article provides a rich theoretical background for the six research reports which follow. In a second article, Treiber describes the Time Line Technique by which students in her fifth-grade classroom develop a robust intellectual framework for historical thinking. In a third study, Buscher and Fehn dismiss the concept that the intellectual power of "talented and gifted" students is evenly distributed across intellectual domains. They use the unique signposts of historical understanding to evaluate the performance of talented math and science students in the area of historical thinking. Next, Potter explores the degree of confidence students place in a wide array of historical sources. In a fifth study, Fehn, Flowers and Jones explore the impact of African-American history on the historical understanding of African-American students. Then, in a study on the attitudes of high school students

toward women's history and feminism, O'Reilly describes implications for the teaching of history in the secondary classroom. Finally, Yeager, Foster, Maley, Anderson and Morris round out this edition of the ICSS Journal as they explore the development of historical empathy. They describe how high school students wrestle with a moral dilemma of historic proportions, the atomic bomb.

This edition of the ICSS Journal, unique in its emphasis on research, contributes substantively to the limited body of research related to historical thinking.

Lynn E. Nielsen  
ICSS Journal Editor