

The Iowa Council for the Social Studies Journal

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FORWARD

This issue of the ICSS Journal focuses on the theme Teaching Iowa History. While the teaching of Iowa is a curriculum element required by the state at the elementary level, the degree to which curriculum materials are available to teachers runs thick and thin from classroom to classroom. In some districts where teachers and administrators have taken a special interest in the subject, instruction is rich and motivating for students. In other schools, teachers scramble to find resources and teaching ideas. While Iowa history is required in the elementary schools of the state, we know that some middle level and secondary teachers also teach about Iowa.

In 2001, I conducted a survey of elementary Iowa history teachers. The following general recommendations were drawn based upon the data collected for the study.

- Iowa history teachers would benefit if the State Historical Society of Iowa were more visible as a source of support for Iowa history instruction.
- “New” Iowa history teachers would benefit from general curriculum leadership and support in the form of curriculum guides, ready-made teaching units and up-to-date resources.
- Many teachers would welcome the development of a basic Iowa history teaching unit.
- Teachers have limited time for teaching and for development of their own teaching units and curricula.
- Teachers need current and up-to-date instructional materials.
- Teachers want direction regarding what should be taught.
- Teachers need and want an up-to-date textbook.
- Teachers are eager for the support of almost any materials related to Iowa history instruction.
- Teachers are eager for in-service or workshop support for teaching Iowa history.
- Teachers are acutely aware of the budgetary limitations of the districts.

With these recommendations in mind, this issue of the ICSS Journal contributes to the discourse in six articles focusing on various issues related to state and local history instruction ranging in focus from classroom resources to political policy.

Tom Morain introduces this issue by reviewing the current political environment surrounding discussions about Iowa history in the curriculum. He identifies the curricular options and presents a clear and concise defense for teaching state history.

Scott Raecker focuses on the relationship between citizenship and state history as he reviews the importance of character development and service learning in the schools.

Elise Fillpott provides an inside-the-classroom look at one of the Teaching American History grant projects as she describes the kind of hands-on history teaching that elementary instructors in the schools of Washington, Iowa have come to embrace.

Galin Berrier provides a solid argument for inclusion of Iowa history into the classrooms of secondary teachers. He illustrates the point with examples drawn from his experience teaching about the Underground Railroad and Iowa's place in its development.

Curtis Nielsen introduces the reader to the newly developed website Iowa History Online. Structured around ten key questions, Nielsen reviews the contents of the site as he describes the growing body of online resources available to teachers throughout the state.

Donny Brazile focuses on the power music can play in helping students construct a historical narrative from the inside out. He defines folk music as primary historical sources and identifies how folk songs can be used to motivate students to learn history.

Lynn E. Nielsen, Editor
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