

# Introduction

**W**ow! Look at this curriculum! How can I be sure all my students are actively engaged in powerful social studies learning and score well on the tests? What do I do to create a strong community of learners and independent problem solvers? Where will I find primary sources and teaching materials to make the learning meaningful for my students? These are just a few of the many questions most social studies teachers ask everyday.

Welcome to the world of social studies education. To help you gather the answers to these and other questions, we share this book filled with a wealth of practical, easy-to-implement, and creative ideas. We have written this book for all social studies educators, scattering indispensable secrets throughout the book to help ensure your success. You include middle-level teachers, middle school and junior high school teachers, and high school teachers. You teach courses in general social studies; in core areas, such as civics or government, economics, geography, and history; or in non-core areas, such as psychology, sociology, and anthropology, to name a few. Each course is developed for a specific grade level and type of learner, such as state government for English learners or Advanced Placement Economics for college-bound high school juniors and seniors. This book will be a valuable resource for all classroom teachers seeking guidance and support to improve their own social studies teaching.

This book also will be a useful tool for department chairs and curriculum specialists as they mentor novice and experienced teachers and advance their own professional growth and development. In addition, the concepts and practices presented in this book will benefit school administrators and teacher educators who guide and/or supervise social studies teachers.

## xviii SECRETS TO SUCCESS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES TEACHERS

The book is divided into twelve chapters, each with pragmatic guidelines, checklists, and resources: secrets to ensure immediate success.

Chapter 1 begins with a discussion of the social studies classroom as you orient yourself for your particular teaching assignment and create a community of learners.

Chapter 2 introduces social studies as a discipline and guides you through state standards, district expectations, and your school's mission in developing your curriculum.

Chapter 3 focuses on meaningful instruction to engage and empower your students.

Chapters 4 and 5 help you strengthen outcomes by aligning curriculum and instruction with assessment, connecting social studies skills and learning with your students' lives.

Chapter 6 examines the integration of literacy skills, using the textbook as a tool to build social studies skills.

Chapter 7 addresses meaningful instruction by knowing your students, identifying important concepts, selecting your themes and units, and planning significant learning experiences to make the most of your time and your students' interests and energies.

Chapter 8 suggests ways to collaborate with colleagues through teaching teams, departments, and other school personnel.

Chapter 9 describes how to incorporate a variety of resources, including artifacts, teaching trunks, videos, slide presentations, guest speakers, and field trips.

Chapter 10 covers the use of instructional technology in the classroom and features a rich reference list of Web sites organized by subject area.

Chapter 11 suggests a wide range of supplementary activities to enrich and enhance learning listed by subject area.

Finally, Chapter 12 encourages teachers to reflect on their practices and plan for future professional development.

We invite each of you to tailor this book to your own unique situation. As we address a broad range of topics and issues relevant for many different types of social studies educators, we encourage you to customize and extend the information within each chapter so the suggestions apply appropriately to your needs and wants. We think you will soon discover that the entire book offers innovative and productive ideas that will help you become more competent, confident, and ready as a social studies teacher.