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A Portrait of Rural Social Studies Teachers (and their students): Demographics and Implications for Professional Development

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Amy Allen

I am an Assistant Professor at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. Prior to coming to Virginia, I was an elementary school teacher and private school administrator where my primary role was K-12 curriculum development and working with K-12 teachers to provide professional development. My ultimate goal, whether working with preservice or inservice teachers, is to provide the support necessary for equitable and anti-oppressive social studies to be taught in the elementary classroom. I am interested in research that focuses on how to create and engage in professional development with teachers, religion in elementary social studies, and place-based learning. My own professional development efforts have been focused on global learning and decolonizing curricula. Outside of my professional pursuits, I enjoy art in almost any form. In addition to visiting art museums and Broadway productions any time I get the chance, I dabble in paint pouring, creating stained glass, and making jewelry, and I am a member of our local community choir.

Thomas O. Williams, Jr.

I am a Professor of Special Education in the School of Education at Virginia Tech, located in Blacksburg, Virginia. My ultimate goal is to facilitate meaningful inclusion of students with disabilities into mainstream classrooms. I try to incorporate this concept in every class that I teach. I am interested in analyzing complex survey data sets to address key issues in education related to teacher training and retention. My professional development efforts have been focused on these restricted-use government data sets and the associated statistical procedures necessary to analyze the data. Outside of my professional pursuits, I value spending time with my wife and daughter. Recently we have really gotten into fossil and mineral collecting and metal detecting. I enjoy working with students with disabilities, and I have taught special education in a variety of settings: public schools, correctional facilities, and residential treatment. I am also a member of the steering committee for the Virginia Tech Center for Autism Research. I feel honored to be a part of such a wonderful organization.

David Hicks

I am a Professor of History and Social Science Education in the School of Education, College of Liberal Arts and Human Sciences at Virginia Tech. My ultimate goal is to prepare teachers who are teachers of children first and history and social science second. I am interested in way too many things but currently gravitate toward research that is practically orientated in terms of how to scaffold inquiry-based learning and also using extended reality technologies to help young people visualize the past and make visible local hidden histories. My own professional development efforts have been focused on learning how to work in transdisciplinary teams and workflow practices–typically this begins with drinking beer (Body by Boddingtons). Outside of my professional pursuits, I enjoy swimming (I am a member of FAT–faculty aquatic team), kayaking (floating next to the kayak), and mountain biking (laying on the ground next to my bike). I hate punctuation and grammar. Prior to becoming a professor, I taught middle and high school history and social studies in England and then in upstate New York (Newfield and Oxford). I also taught in Job Corp (Oneonta) and later worked as a museum curator and educator.

Keywords social studies, rural, demographics, professional development, race, poverty, research to practice

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INTRODUCTION

The call for this issue centering on rural social studies specifically asked researchers to consider the demographics of social studies teachers teaching in rural settings. We approached this call with research interests in the professional development of social studies teachers (Allen, 2021; van Hover & Hicks, 2018), exploration of the demographics and characteristics of teachers through secondary analysis of national data sets (Mullins et al., 2020; Williams & Ernst, 2022), and our work as teacher educators at a rural land grant university. Given this, we recognize the necessity of having a clear evidence-based portrait of teacher (and student) demographic and characteristics to inform future practice rather than succumbing to assumptions and stereotypes regarding the rural (and for that matter urban and suburban) populations (Mcardle, 2019).

Currently, the most reliable and recent national data set that can provide both a clear definition of rurality and a portrait of who is teaching social studies in rural settings is the 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) restricted-use data file from the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES), administered by the Institute for Education Sciences (IES). The objective of the NTPS series is to collect information necessary for a comprehensive picture of elementary and secondary education in the United States. The data collected by the NTPS allows for a detailed analysis of the characteristics of schools, principals, teachers, school libraries, and public school district policies (Taie & Goldring, 2017; Goldring et al., 2020). In this article, we provide a snapshot of key demographics and characteristics of social studies teachers in a rural setting before sharing some key implications based on specific insights from the data.

THE RESEARCH

In this study we used the 2017-2018 National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS) to answer the following questions concerning rural social studies teachers:

1) Who are social studies teachers? (i.e. race, gender, age, experience, degree level, and etc.).
2) What type of program did social studies teachers complete?
3) How satisfied are they with their employment?
4) What types of professional development did they receive?
5) What do the students in their social studies classes look like?

We examined the NTPS dataset by focusing first on the larger category of public school teachers in the Social Sciences and then specified the subgroups within Social Sciences. These groups included: Social Studies General, Economics, Geography, Civics/Government, and History. Examining Social Studies General allowed us to look at the field more broadly, while the other four groups allowed us to look at the core disciplinary focuses as outlined within the C3 Framework (NCSS, 2017). All participants were categorized as rural teachers using the IES/NTPS variable URBANS12. Within the survey, rural is defined as either fringe (less than or equal to 5 miles from an urbanized center), distant (between 5 and 25 miles from an urbanized center), or remote (more than 25 miles from an urbanized center) (Geverdt, 2019).

Data included in this study was collapsed by IES to combine all of these distinctions within the rural umbrella. Data analysis included using descriptive statistics to examine participants' demographic data, type of education program, descriptions of the program, and student demographics. While the tables included reflect the full results of this analysis, in our summary of findings, we focus on and highlight within the tables what we consider some of the most interesting statistics and patterns in terms of their demographics/characteristics and professional development experiences.

FINDINGS & IMPLICATIONS

What do rural social studies teachers look like in terms of their demographics/ characteristics, education, years of experience, and perceived satisfaction? The data reveals approximately 20.3% of social studies teachers in the United States work in a rural area (see Table 1).

Table 1

Geographic Location of Teachers in Percentages

	All Teachers	All Social Science	Social Studies General	Economics	Civics or Government	Geography	History
City	29.1	27.9	28.8	19.7	30.6	28.4	27.9
Suburb	38.7	39.4	34.6	47.8	41.7	41.4	39.8
Town	11.6	12.4	13.0	11.2	9.5	13.9	12.4
Rural	**20.5**	**20.3**	**23.6**	**21.3**	**18.3**	**16.3**	**19.9**

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.

Of these rural teachers, a substantial majority are non-Hispanic white: over 90% of social studies teachers in the field at large and in each respective social studies discipline. With the exception of economics and history, the gender of rural social studies teachers is evenly split between male and female (see Table 2).

Table 2

Demographics of Rural Teachers

		Social Studies General N = 16,050	Economics N = 1,900	Civics or Government N = 3,190	Geography N = 2,060	History N = 21,160
Race	**White**	**90.8**	**90.4**	**99.5**	**94.5**	**96.1**
	Nonwhite	9.2	9.6	0.5	5.5	3.9
Ethnicity	Hispanic	0.7	‡	3.9	2.9	2.9
	Not Hispanic	**99.3**	‡	**96.1**	**97.1**	**97.1**
Gender	**Male**	**50.1**	**81.0**	**57.2**	**59.7**	**64.0**
	Female	**49.9**	**19.0**	**42.8**	**40.3**	**36.0**
Age	Mean	42.22	48.22	46.60	40.35	43.17
Years of Experience	**Mean**	**13.29**	**14.27**	**15.61**	**11.76**	**14.66**
Highest Degree	Bachelors	41.8	39.6	34.0	49.9	43.4
	Masters or higher	**58.3**	**60.3**	**65.9**	**50.1**	**56.6**

‡ Did not meet IES reporting requirements.

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.

More than 50% of rural social studies educators have advanced degrees, and around 80% come from traditional programs with approximately 90% being fully certified (see Table 3).

Table 3

Description of Program and Certificate

		Social Studies General N = 16,050	Economics N = 1,900	Civics or Government N = 3,190	Geography N = 2,060	History N = 21,160
Type of Program	**Traditional**	**76.2**	**81.0**	**81.0**	**88.7**	**81.6**
	Alternative	23.8	19.0	19.0	11.3	18.4
Certification Status	**Fully certified**	**89.0**	**96.5**	**94.2**	**94.6**	**95.6**
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.						

The mean for "Years of Experience" of rural social studies education, as noted in Table 2, is between 11.56 and 15.61 years. Combined, all social studies teachers in rural contexts have been in their role for an average of 13.29 years. Given that data collected prior to this survey shows more than a third of newly certified teachers leave the field within five years (NCTAF, 2010), this average seems high and suggests rural social studies teachers are more likely to stay in their positions. This supposition is supported by survey questions that indicate a majority of teachers say the teachers at their school like being there and would collectively describe themselves as a satisfied group (see Table 4).

Table 4

Percentage of Rural Teachers Reporting Satisfaction Ranging from Somewhat Agree to Strongly Agree

	Social Studies General N = 16,050	Economics N = 1,900	Civics or Government N = 3,190	Geography N = 2,060	History N = 21,160
The stress and disappointments involved in teaching at this school aren't really worth it.	28.8	30.5	27.0	26.0	24.7
The teachers at this school like being here. I would describe us as a satisfied group.	**76.5**	**88.2**	**75.6**	**68.5**	**72.7**
I like the way things are run at this school.	69.7	73.0	64.6	57.7	67.5
If I could get a higher paying job I'd leave teaching as soon as possible	36.5	66.4	51.4	36.8	38.9
I think about transferring to another school.	35.8	42.7	44.5	40.4	37.2
I don't seem to have as much enthusiasm now as I did when I began teaching.	46.9	45.4	68.0	39.2	45.1

I think about staying home from school because I'm just too tired to go.	31.1	22.3	26.2	9.2	24.5
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.					

Rural social studies teachers report participating in up to 8 hours of subject-specific professional development (PD) per year. This level of subject-specific professional development is at a lower rate than PD provided on general education topics such as classroom and behavior management, differentiated instruction, or preparing students for annual assessments (see Table 5).

Table 5

Percentage of Rural Teachers Reporting Zero to Eight Hours of Professional Development

	Social Studies General N = 16,050	Economics N = 1,900	Civics or Government N = 3,190	Geography N = 2,060	History N = 21,160
Professional development that directly relates to your teaching assignment.	**51.1**	**33.7**	**37.0**	**59.2**	**39.4**
Professional development on using technology to support instruction.	69.8	39.2	61.9	70.5	66.4
Professional development on teaching Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM), or incorporating STEM into other subjects.	**89.4**	**97.5**	**96.6**	**94.9**	**94.6**
Professional development on classroom and behavior management.	**81.9**	**85.6**	**91.4**	**93.4**	**85.9**
Professional development on instruction strategies to teach students with disabilities or IEPs.	84.0	100	81.3	87.2	85.9
Professional development on differentiated instruction for all students.	**73.4**	**83.0**	**73.9**	**70.9**	**77.4**
Professional development on preparing students to take annual assessments.	82.0	82.8	83.9	85.7	83.1
Professional development on analyzing and interpreting student achievement data.	77.7	72.4	59.4	76.7	82.2
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.					

This finding aligns with decades of research in the field suggesting disciplinary-specific social studies professional development is a rare occurrence in most schools (Allen, 2021; Brugar & Roberts, 2017; Callahan et al., 2016; Crocco &

Livingston, 2017). Even for teachers who explicitly report teaching social studies content, somewhere between 89.4 and 97.5 percent of teachers indicate they have participated in PD on teaching Science, Technology, Engineering or Mathematics (STEM), or incorporating STEM into other subjects (see Table 5). Again, this aligns with literature within the field of education; there is generally more funded research conducted and opportunities provided in STEM fields than in humanities programs (Saxena, 2016).

In terms of rural social studies teachers' classroom caseloads, what immediately stands out from the data is that 28.94% of students are identified as BIPOC (see Table 6; formally listed as non-white in the government data set).

Table 6

Rural Teacher Classroom Descriptors

	Social Studies General N = 16,050	Economics N = 1,900	Civics or Government N = 3,190	Geography N = 2,060	History N = 21,160
Caseload average	97.71	121.68	108.42	114.14	112.47
Class size average	19.97	24.77	21.54	23.07	24.12
Percentage of students who are non-White	**28.9**	**27.2**	**39.9**	**21.5**	**29.8**
Percentage of students with disabilities	11.2	14.9	7. 8	12. 8	10.8
Percentage of students with limited English proficiency	3.2	5.5	5.6	1.1	2.5
Percentage in high poverty schools (greater than 75% free and reduced lunch)	22.8	21.5	10.8	30.4	15.8
SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, National Teacher and Principal Survey (NTPS), "Public School Teacher and Private School Teacher Data Files," 2017–18.					

The level of student diversity within the classroom is worth highlighting since, as we have already stated, over 90% of social studies teachers in the field at large and in each respective social studies discipline are white with a number of years teaching under their belts. Of particular note, 99.5% of civics teachers are white, which means BIPOC students are almost always being taught about citizenship by white teachers. Surprisingly, the data also reveals a smaller than expected number of high-poverty students in rural schools. However, this population should not be ignored. The intersectionality of race, gender, class, language proficiency, and disabilities converge in challenging ways that should be addressed.

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHERS

Implications for teachers from the data we have highlighted in this summary are informed by a recognition that a great deal of change is happening in the demographics of rural communities alongside ideological debates about the teaching of divisive or contested content in the social studies (NCSS, 2022). Though policy makers frequently assume rural schools are white, about 20% of 50 million rural residents in the U.S. are BIPOC, and there is a growing number of students of color even in traditionally white areas (Mcardle, 2019). This assertion aligns with the data collected in this study.

The majority of rural social studies teachers are well qualified in terms of both the highest degree earned and credentialing through a traditional program. Rural social studies teachers report having reasonable size caseloads, are often satisfied in their rural school placements, and stay in the profession longer than average (Seelig & McCabe, 2021).

The data also mirrors research recognizing the increased levels of racial diversity that make up their caseloads (Mcardle, 2019). Data surrounding professional development opportunities indicate a need for sustained PD about teaching students with diverse identities. As teachers leave teacher preparation programs to return to their rural hometowns, they should do so equipped with realistic expectations that they will not be teaching miniature versions of themselves. Developing an equity literacy mindset (Gorski, 2013; Gorski & Pothini, 2014) as part of a pedagogy of difference and care, we suggest, is critical to their future success in the field given the makeup of students in the social studies classroom.

Freely available and easily accessible (digital) social studies discipline-specific educative curriculum resources focused on diversity, equity, and inclusion could provide powerful opportunities for sustained and systemic social studies professional development for rural social studies teachers. Below we offer some initial recommendations for high-quality online educative social studies professional development resources designed to provide teachers access to discipline-specific content and resources and/or focus on scaffolding and supporting inquiry-based teaching of difficult knowledge and divisive concepts and/or encourage equity (see Table 7). Because social studies is a broad subject area, we highlight materials from our professional libraries that cut across a number of disciplines while addressing difficult and challenging topics, introducing new and effective teaching strategies, and providing guidance and new perspectives for teaching diverse students in engaging ways.

Table 7

Accessible Online Social Studies Educative Resources that Encourage Equity and/or Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary Application	**Online Educative Curricular Resources**	**Description**
All Disciplines	Equity Literacy	The Equity Literacy website offers professional development mini courses that serve as a primer for equity literacy, a comprehensive approach for creating and sustaining equitable schools.
History	Facing History and Ourselves	Facing History offers professional development and classroom resources designed to help teachers teach difficult concepts and connect history with today.
History and Geography	Teaching with Primary Sources	The Library of Congress offers classroom materials and professional development to help teachers effectively use primary sources from the Library's vast digital collections in their teaching.
All Disciplines	Right Question Institute	The Right Question Institute provides professional development designed to strengthen students' ability to ask questions and participate in decisions that affect them. TPS and RQI have a series of 4 short modules to prepare teachers on how to use primary sources as the question focus for student discussion
History	Gilder Lehrman Center for the Study of Slavery, Resistance, and Abolition	The GLC offers teacher training and teaching resources about slavery, abolition, and resistance for all educators. They provide a guide outlining available teacher education resources within their own program as well as sharing outside resources.

Civics	Newsela	Newsela provides resources for both teachers and students to bring accessible social studies content knowledge and current affairs into the classroom
Civics	Civic Online Reasoning	The Civics Online Reasoning curriculum is a free resource that provides lessons and assessments to help teach students to evaluate online information that affects their communities and their world.
Economics	Diversifying Economic Quality	Diversifying Economic Quality provides resources that promote inclusive, innovative, and evidence-based practices for teaching economics.
History	Learning for Justice	Learning for Justice provides learning modules, presentations, and hands-on workshops with expert trainers. These resources help teachers improve their practice especially as it relates to diversity, empathy, and equity.
Civics	PurpleState	PurpleState is a free curriculum provided for civics teachers to teach secondary students how to understand the role of media in state policy issues.
History	Echoes and Reflections	Echoes and Reflections provides free Holocaust education programs, including curated content and multimedia resources, to help educators gain the skills, knowledge, and confidence to teach about the Holocaust effectively.

Q & A WITH Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks

Question #1

Teacher's Question:

You rightly point out the discrepancy between teacher and student demographics; what specific opportunities does that gap create (in the authors' estimation) for using the digital and accessible resources found in Table 7? (Put another way, what should teachers do with that list to meet the realities they see in their schools?)

Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks' Response:

The gap between teacher and student demographics requires that teachers invest time in learning about the students they will be teaching–their experiences, their cultures, and their interests–and research within the field demonstrates how this might impact classroom practice. In addition to long-standing practices like accessing students' funds of knowledge (An, 2022; Gonzalez et al., 1995), King (2020) considers what a framework of Black Historical Consciousness might look like when teaching American History. Specifically considering the finding that 99.5% of civics teachers are white, demonstrating how BIPOC students are being taught citizenship by white teachers, it is important to consider how civics instruction can be reimagined in a way that not only considers students of color but honors their heritage. Busey and Walker (2017) provide insight into this idea, considering complex racial experiences that mediate citizenship and civic action and proposing the idea of Black Critical Patriotism as a way to advance nuanced conceptions of racialized citizenship. It is from this perspective that we created the table above, intentionally looking for resources that might disrupt traditional ways of thinking and knowing or that shift the gaze and allow new perspectives and insights to appear in the social studies classroom.

Regardless of student demographics, teachers must take care in choosing high-quality educative resources. There are many areas to find materials, including social media spaces like Pinterest and Teachers Pay Teachers, but though these are widely used, it does not mean they are quality products. Research has highlighted the problematic and harmful narratives on important topics and issues that exist throughout these online portals (Gallagher et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2020; Shelton & Archambault, 2019). It is all too easy to quickly search for materials without scrutinizing the quality and veracity of resources or who is creating them. Alternatively, collecting and curating resources takes time and requires the development of criteria to evaluate online resources before deploying them within and through your teaching (Mullins et al., 2016).

We feel the resources outlined above are high quality, reputable, and support the mission of creating powerful and authentic learning within the disciplines that make up the teaching of social studies. They are resources that we use within our own teaching (Hicks, 2023), and we recommend them as a good place to start as teachers create their own professional library of resources. All are accessible online and free, so though the list may seem overwhelming, based on your need and context, you can drop in and drop out as it makes sense for your students.

Question #2

Teacher's Question:

The job satisfaction indicator "I do not have as much enthusiasm..." on Table 4 is interesting because nearly half of the teachers report losing enthusiasm--and the mean age and experience suggest these are mid-career teachers. How can rural teachers facing the feeling of loss of enthusiasm regain their passion for the job, given the implications that you describe?

Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks' Response:

In looking at Table 4, we were somewhat surprised at the positive levels of satisfaction reported by many teachers, but you make a good point about enthusiasm. We think it is important to note that enthusiasm level is compared to when they began their careers, so the data shows that they are satisfied but not as enthusiastic as they were to begin. We felt these findings bucked against an image of rural social studies teachers as worn out and dissatisfied with their careers. To a great extent, this portrait reflected recent research by Seelig and McCabe (2021) that sought to reframe how we think about rural teacher retention, not in terms of why teachers leave but actually why they actually stay. Their

research highlighted the importance of four central relational categories: a) commitment to students, b) opportunities for leadership and collaboration in terms of professional growth–a collaborative school culture and feeling respected by school leaders, c) connections to the community as a teacher and respected community member, and d) personal and professional ties within the broader community environment.

These insights, coupled with our data, provide a powerful framework for professional development work that shores up and strengthens teachers' passion for their work. Teachers need space to reframe their value, to feel respected and connected to their communities within and outside the school walls. While considering this question, David found himself chatting with colleagues in the VT School of Education Training and Technical Assistance Center (TTAC, 2023) about the types of professional development resources they were familiar with, especially as it relates to materials and approaches that support and shore up teacher enthusiasm and motivation while teaching during challenging times. These colleagues suggested a book entitled *The School of Hope: The Journey from Trauma and Anxiety to Achievement, Happiness, and Resilience* by Cathleen Beachboard, a practicing middle school teacher. For many teachers, motivation and enthusiasm for teaching can wane over time when faced with more and more students struggling with their mental health, anxiety, and willingness to engage in the classroom. This guidebook is an accessible read with practical ideas and strategies based on the psychological science of hope. It helps teachers get to know their students and build supporting and caring relations with all students within their daily activities. Importantly, the book also recognizes the need for teachers also to find ways to care for themselves in order to be able to educate children. Within individual chapters, there are sections entitled "Compassion for Colleagues" that suggest pathways for colleagues to collaborate with each other, support and care for each other, and together model ways of operating in terms of learning, engagement, growth, and hope in their day to day routines that cut across grades, hierarchies, and departments while working toward building a whole school culture and ethos of hope. The practical ideas and pathways offered within the book have the potential of resonating with teachers across their career spans in terms of energizing and re-energizing their enthusiasm, passions, positivity, and hope for themselves, their students, and the school divisions and communities in which they serve.

Question #3

Teacher's Question:

Over the past half a century, rural areas have seen a decrease in economic activity, population, and resources. Likewise, they have been ravaged by the opioid epidemic and suffer from severe generational poverty. Some of the poorest areas with some of the fewest resources are rural. What role should student poverty play in considering the type of professional development offered to social studies teachers?

Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks' Response:

When we started to investigate this question, we believed rural schools would be highly impoverished, but the reality is only a small percentage of schools fall into the high poverty category; however, these numbers vary depending on how you define poverty. The definition we use is based on the government definition, which is 75% of students receive free or reduced lunch, but the percentage could be higher based on how the term is defined. In social studies and related disciplines, around a quarter of rural students are classified as high poverty. This statistic is similar to other subject areas and to schools nationwide, regardless of location.

Ultimately, poverty is not only a rural issue–it is a North American (if not global issue) issue–and, just like we outlined above, context still matters. It is important for teachers to consider the unique challenges their student population is facing, and factors such as isolation and the demographics of a particular classroom change the way rural teachers can and should respond to these issues. For us, understanding the intersectional nature of race, ethnicity, and class should inform curriculum design, pedagogical strategies used, and community engagement. Internet access provides opportunities and scalable resources that can serve as powerful professional development tools for both preservice and practicing teachers, emphasizing equity literacy in working with all students and undergirding a school culture of hope, collaboration, and engagement. We briefly mention the work of Gorski (2013) as well as Gorski & Pothini (2014) above to highlight the importance of developing and teaching an equity literacy mindset to negotiate the impacts of the intersectionality of class, race, gender, ethnicity, and disability skillfully and thoughtfully. Alongside their books, which, like Beachboard's *The School of Hope*, could be great practical books for an individual teacher or teacher reading group, Gorski and colleagues have developed the Equity Literacy Forum (Equity Literacy Institute, 2021). This resource includes an introduction to the Equity Literacy Framework, readings, and resources,

alongside a series of free or low-cost self-paced online equity learning modules and teacher professional development courses. The courses offered include Understanding Equity and Inequity; Learning to be a Threat to Inequity: The Equity Literacy Framework; and Ditching Deficit Ideology: The First Step Toward Cultivating an Equity Commitment.

Question #4

Teacher's Question:

How can place-based learning professional development help social studies teachers serve their minority and low socioeconomic students?

Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks' Response:

Considering students whose identities may intersect race and class demographics, we encourage teachers to lean into asset-based resources (as compared to a deficit-based approach). As the demographics of rural areas change, many young people from rural areas, especially those experiencing poverty, look forward to leaving for seemingly greener pastures: more populated urban centers (Albers, 2021). However, we contend place matters. Rural areas are often unique places with abundant heritage, special landscape features, and local culinary, language, and arts traditions as well as strong social bonds and close-knit communities. Social studies teachers have an opportunity to build on students' pride of place, "the feeling of pride people can have for places they identify or associate themselves with" (Bonaiuto et al., 2020) as well as a sense of walking in the footsteps of others who have gone before in their communities.

For David that sense of pride in place and walking in the footstep of others from the past began in his secondary history classroom where, through local history projects, he learned about the industrial heritage of his hometown Huddersfield, England–a town that was described in parliamentary papers during the 1812 Luddite uprising as a "metropolis of discontent." The industrial heritage of the town resonated with him as both his parents worked in the textile mills before they closed. His great-grandfather, David Carter, ended up in the *Manchester Book of Habitual Criminal*s for stealing anything from horses to watches (...but maybe that story is for another time). His interest in place as a site for learning in rural areas as a middle school teacher led to an interdisciplinary archeological dig to examine what could be found around an old schoolhouse near the school where he was teaching to see if students could learn anything about the history of the school. He also worked on a place-based inquiry project for fifth-grade students that used augmented and virtual reality to explore the guiding question, "If this place/building could talk, what would it tell us about the people who were here before?" to facilitate learning about the hidden history of a local African American school on a now dilapidated site (Johnson et al., 2017). Similarly, Amy found place-based learning to be a powerful tool for helping high school students recognize equity challenges in the United States. After taking a group of high school seniors to the southern region of the United States to investigate the history of the Civil Rights Movement and its ongoing impact on present-day events, students made powerful connections that affected the way they interacted with their own communities after returning home (Allen, in press).

While these examples specifically focus on place-based learning experiences done with students, not with teachers, place-based professional development has the power to achieve similar results with teachers. Rural teachers may want to identify well-established projects in other rural communities to replicate as models of ambitious place-based social studies teaching. For example, consider investigating the Pride of Place curriculum (Pride of Place, 2019), developed through the Erasmus+ program, or the place-based community archive and oral history project, The Mountain Home Center Bland Country History Archives (The Bland County History Archives, n.d.). The Bland County Archives began when one social studies teacher, John Dodson at Rocky Gap High School, created an oral history and technology elective for students to collect and digitally archive oral histories from the local community more than 20 years ago. The Center for Place-Based Learning and Community Engagement (Promise of Place, n.d.) is also a great resource to help teachers understand the value of place-based learning as an interdisciplinary endeavor. This site also offers models and examples of curricula and projects that have already been developed and implemented. There are many opportunities for place-based learning within the social studies classroom, including but not limited to oral history projects, community map creation projects, local industry studies, environmental impact projects, studies of local governance, local artifact analysis projects, local folklore and storytelling projects, community improvement proposals (historic cemetery restoration and local or state historic marker proposal projects), migration pattern studies, architectural studies, farm to table initiatives, land use and rights of access studies.

Currently, we are also intrigued with a free tool called HistoryPin (HistoryPin, 2020) as a way to facilitate place-based education within social studies. Launched in 2010, HistoryPin was created by a non-profit company, and in 2021, the program received an NEH Digital Humanities Advancement Grant to support further design and development. At its core, HistoryPin is a community-centered/user-generated digital archive that is designed to allow local communities to share cultural and historical memories, narratives, and representations of themselves. Our own work using HistoryPin with students suggests that the platform/archive can be a powerful resource for teachers to engage with local community history as a portal into both national and world history. HistoryPin allows users to tell stories and histories of their own communities. Students learn to "pin" artifacts–historical photos, images of historical sources, videos, and oral histories–within google maps. These pins can then be curated into collections and tours to represent the cultural memories and histories of their communities. If a student has an exact location of a historical photo the student can use Google Street View to overlay the historical photo onto the current /contemporary location and then use the transparency feature to fade the historical photo in and out as a way to compare the scene in the past with what is there now. In addition, students can add/pin historical sources and research documents to specific locations to make visible the past and also make visible new representations of the past. For example, imagine your students researching the origins and context of local historical monuments and markers and then using HistoryPin to virtually pin updates/corrections to divisive and alienating language and assertions on the contemporary signage of the monuments and markers. Imagine your students using HistoryPin to mark the exact geographic location of historical sources and provide their own research detailing the context and origins of local monuments and markers to help community members make sense of why these markers and monuments were erected in the first place. Imagine your students engaging in research around local hidden and hard histories and then using HistoryPin to virtually create and pin new historical markers with text, images, videos, and documents that commemorate events or people involved that have previously been ignored or forgotten. As you can tell, we are excited about HistoryPin's potential for engaging our students in place-based inquiries in both rural and urban settings.

Question #5

Teacher's Question:

Evidence and research-based professional development are important in education, but the availability of potential resources can be overwhelming. What strategies would you recommend to social studies teachers to sift through these resources to focus on the practices with the greatest potential to improve student learning?

Amy Allen, Thomas O. Williams Jr., & David Hicks' Response:

Great question. It can be overwhelming to sift through available resources, and teachers are often left to wonder who they can trust. Some tips we recommend include:

- Work with your colleagues. Ask what resources they use and trust as a starting point–and share any sources you find with them as well!
- Create a professional library. As resources are recommended to you and/or as you find resources that you value, create a way to track them and come back to them as you have time to engage. It is worth identifying a platform or curation tool to store, bookmark and organize categories, and update your favorite sites. Without organizing and curating, a simple list of bookmarks can feel overwhelming.
- Professional organizations like the National Council for the Social Studies as well as state social studies organizations provide access to online collections of strong resources and journals as well as annual conferences.
- Drop in and drop out as you have time and need. There's no rule that says you need to fully read or watch professional development training for it to be useful or for it to impact your students.
- Consider your specific context. If a resource doesn't seem like it will be helpful to your students, walk away and invest your time in a resource you can see yourself using–no matter how highly the resource was recommended!
- Look for resources that are interdisciplinary and help students make connections between your class and other subject areas.
- Tap into local history/context/guest speakers, especially as it helps you lean into developing students' pride of place.

- Be aware of what high-quality education resources look like. Train yourself in evaluating Open Educational Resources with guides from The University of Alberta (UAlberta, 2023) and the University of California Davis (UCDavis, 2023).
- There are many free resources available. Be careful when paying for resources, especially on sites like Teachers Pay Teachers (Gallagher et al., 2019; Rodriguez et al., 2020). Gallagher et.al, (2019, p. 219) created a checklist and protocol to help you evaluate the value of resources you find online. The table is made up of 3 sections with 4 prompts within each section. As you consider each question you have 3 responses to choose from YES, MAYBE, NO (see Table 8). When tallying up your evaluation, they suggest that if you have 0-1 YES responses in each section then "Scrap it?", 2-3 YES responses in each section then "Modify it!", or 4 YES responses in each section then "Keep it!"

Table 8

"Pinning" with pause checklist (Gallagher, Swalwell, & Bellows, 2019, p. 219)

	Yes	Maybe	No
Section 1: Attributing a Purpose			
a. Does the activity, resource, or idea support my inquiry question, standards, or learning objectives?			
b. Is it appropriately challenging for my students? Does it require critical thinking?			
c. Does it purposefully support students becoming global, democratic citizens?			
d. Do the ends justify the means? In other words, is the learning goal commensurate with how much time and resources it requires?			
Section 2: Reliability Assessment			
a. Is the content accurate? Can it be corroborated with other credible sources?			
b. Does the author have expertise in the discipline, in pedagogy, or in any context?			
c. Are these representations of people and communities authentic and nuanced?			
d.Is the content current with up-to-date information?			
Section 3. Judging the Perspective			
a. Does the content reflect my students' cultures and contexts?			
b. Does the content give my students windows into new cultures or contexts?			
c. Does it help my students question dominant ideas about what is normal or good?			
d. Am I sure that this activity, resource, or idea will not harm students - especially those with marginalized identities and/or backgrounds?			
Total			

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