Geography Essay, Research Paper

Geography in History: a Necessary Connection in teaching Social Studies

Geography and history are complementary subjects best taught together within the

social studies curriculum. It is part of the collected wisdom of teachers that one

cannot teach history without geography or geography without history. Both subjects

have been emphasized in high-profile curriculum reform reports produced by

various organizations, such as the Bradley Commission on History in Schools, the

Education for Democracy Project of the American Federation of Teachers, and the

National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools. But most social studies

teachers are primary teachers of history. They are ignoring an important part of

history because they do not include geography as part of the teaching repertoire.

The geographic perspective can enrich the study of history by helping students grasp

the significance of location, the inevitability of change, and the importance of human

perceptions at given times in the past. Helping students to become more informed

geographically means teaching better history.

Hypothesis

How should classroom instructors proceed to connect geography with history in the

curriculum. I believe that answering this question will involve three assumptions:

It is impossible to understand the present without understanding geography.

It is impossible to understand the present without understanding the past.

It is impossible to understand the past without understanding geography.

In other words, the rationale for history (studying the past to understand the

present) requires knowing geography: today?s geography and the geography of

different places at different times in the past.

Synopsis of Research

Bradley Commission-recognizes ?the relationship between geography and

history as a matrix of time and place, and as context for events?.

Florida Commission on Social Studies Education published Connections,

Challenges, Choices which presents the objectives, subjects, topics, and rationale

for the state of Florida?s new social studies curriculum for grades K-12.

Geography and history are hightlighted as core subjects of the school curriculum

in Goal Three of a set of six National Education Goals proclaimed by the

President and the state governors in February 1990.

The Shaping of America: A Geographical Perspective on 500 years of American

History-stresses that ?geography is not just a physical stage for the historical

drama, not just a set of facts about areas of the earth. It is a special way of

looking at the world. Geography, like history, is an age-old and essential strategy

for thinking about large and complex matters?.

Framework for the 1994 NAEP U.S. History Assessment-points out that ? history

is a spatial dimension-the places where human actions occur. for example,

aspects of the natural environment, such as climate and terrain, influence human

behavior; and people affect the places they inhabit. Therefore, main ideas of

geography, such as the location of places and relationships within places should

be included as important parts of the study of history?.

Geography for Life-presents a framework of four questions that focus on using

geography to interpret the past.