



THE UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTHERN
MISSISSIPPI.



College of EDUCATION
and HUMAN SCIENCES
University of NORTH ALABAMA

CHOOSING THE RIGHT CONTROVERSIES: TRUST, INQUIRY, AND CIVIC EDUCATION IN SOCIAL STUDIES

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WELCOME

DEVELOPING C.L.E.A.R. THINKING:

Civic, Legal, Ethical and Analogous Reasoning—funded by the U.S. Department of Education's American History and Civic Education National Activities program



THE BRIDGING DIVIDES PROJECT
Using Geography to Develop Civic Competence



Persistent Issues in
History Network

History Study to Promote Civic Competence

Our experiences with inquiry in social studies span several lesson study projects.

SESSION OVERVIEW

Purpose(s):

- Establish key purpose(s) of social studies instruction
 - Discuss factors that influence the teaching of controversial issues in history
 - Explore ways to mitigate risk while designing a course that prepares students for democratic citizenship
 - Discuss the affordances of lesson study professional development as a collaborative approach for supporting inquiry-based instruction
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CONTEXT



The image shows the cover of a Presidential Action document from the White House. At the top center is the Presidential Seal. Below it, the text reads "PRESIDENTIAL ACTIONS". The main title is "Ending Radical Indoctrination in K-12 Schooling". Below the title, it says "The White House | January 29, 2025". At the bottom, there is a paragraph of text starting with "By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:" followed by a link to "Section 1. Purpose and Policy" and a short paragraph of text.

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

[Section 1. Purpose and Policy](#), Parents trust America's schools to provide their children with a rigorous education and to instill a patriotic admiration for our incredible Nation and the values for which we stand.



The image is a screenshot of an EducationWeek article. The top navigation bar includes "MENU", "SEARCH", and the EducationWeek logo. Below the navigation bar are categories: "LEADERSHIP", "POLICY & POLITICS", "TEACHING & LEARNING", "TECHNOLOGY", and "OPINION". The article is categorized under "OPINION". The title is "Students Aren't Being Indoctrinated. The Real Problem Is Mistrust of Teachers". Below the title is a sub-headline: "Teachers are pulling back from important classroom debates". At the bottom, it says "By Ken Futernick — November 14, 2025" and "5 min read".

EducationWeek

LEADERSHIP POLICY & POLITICS TEACHING & LEARNING TECHNOLOGY OPINION

OPINION

TEACHING OPINION

Students Aren't Being Indoctrinated. The Real Problem Is Mistrust of Teachers

Teachers are pulling back from important classroom debates

By Ken Futernick — November 14, 2025 5 min read

- *Inquiry is the charge. However, this type of instruction is controversial and scary today.*
-

CHOOSING THE "RIGHT" CONTROVERSY

- Inquiry topics might be arranged on a continuum reflecting how an issue may be perceived in your instructional context:
 - Low RiskHigh Risk
- Example
 - Lexington Green.....Brain Drain.....Jan. 6th Insurrection



APPLYING EXAMPLES TO THE CONTINUUM

Access Alabama Course of Study 11th
grade standards:

- U.S. HISTORY II: WORLD WAR 1 TO PRESENT



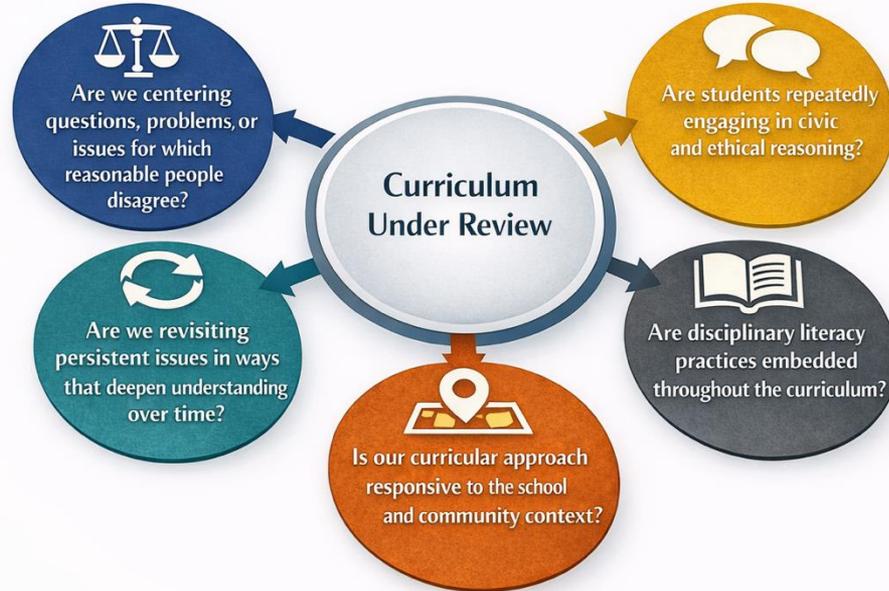
Mentimeter results

THINK ALOUD

- Rise to World Power (Topic 1 of 6)
 - Communicate opportunities, considerations/concerns, and choices
 - Identify questions with varying levels of controversy
 - Emphasize key aspects of our planning approach for later synthesis
 - [Website for accessing concept map](#)
-

Key Lenses in Our Think-Aloud Decision Process

Professional filters used to evaluate instructional risk and value



BUILDING TRUST

Foundation: A well-developed **rationale** for curricular decision-making

- Supported by standards and professional scholarship

Engage in intentional course level design

- Evaluate potential inquiries (risk levels) and consider the overall balance of the curriculum
- Collaborate with colleagues

Build trust and credibility through ongoing communication

- Help stakeholders "catch the vision" of the course design
- Establish the purpose of inquiries in relation to key learning goals

Build capacity for inquiry

- Consider experiences in your local context
- Brain Drain example

Utilize deliberative strategies

- Structured Academic Controversy
-

CONTEMPORARY AMERICA

- Now look at final standards (18-20)
 - How would you approach these standards?
 - Trace the evolution of the environmental movement and political debate over **climate change** from the 1980s to the present, including how environmental and natural disasters have shaped the discussion.
 - Assess the economic and political effects of **immigration** on the United States and explain how immigration policies have evolved in the post-Cold War era.
 - Evaluate how **federal policies** and legislation have shaped American society since 1988.
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SUGGESTED INQUIRIES



Persistent Issues in
History Network

History Study to Promote Civic Competence

Topic	Central Question	Strategy
Civil Rights	With the passage of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, has society done enough to achieve equality for all citizens?	Persuasive Campaign
Palmer Hearings	Was the government justified in limiting individual freedoms in the 1920s?	Congressional Hearing
Foreign Policy	Should the United States seek to spread democracy around the world?	Structured Academic Controversy
Immigration	To what extent has the U.S. supported or opposed immigration over time?	Document Analysis
Women's Suffrage	What is the best strategy that women's suffrage activists should use to secure voting rights?	Grassroots Meeting
Berlin Crisis	Is the U.S. justified in imposing its will in Europe?	Truman Think Aloud

CONCLUSION

Reflection: How have you navigated the process of designing inquiries around controversial topics?



Our perspective from lesson study

RECOMMENDED SOURCES

- Parker, W. C. (2023). *Education for liberal democracy: Using classroom discussion to build knowledge and voice*. Teachers College Press.
 - Articulates a vision for a centrist approach to civic education. Also, provides information on the structured academic controversy deliberation strategy.
 - Pugh, S. M., McGuire, M. E., Butler, J., Castillo, J., Moore, D., Ramirez, B., & Russac, P. (2023, April). *Powerful Teaching and Learning in Social Studies*. National Council for the Social Studies. <https://www.socialstudies.org/position-statements/powerful-teaching-and-learning-social-studies>
 - Professional source that provides support for engaging students in inquiries that focus on civic learning goals.
 - Stanley, W. B. (2005). Social Studies and the Social Order: Transmission or Transformation? *Social Education*, 69(5), 282–286.
 - Continues to be relevant after 20+ years. Our presentation aligns with the position of John Dewey as articulated in this piece.
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Session Survey

We would greatly appreciate your time in answering a few questions about your session.
Thank you!



<https://bit.ly/4aI4XHb>