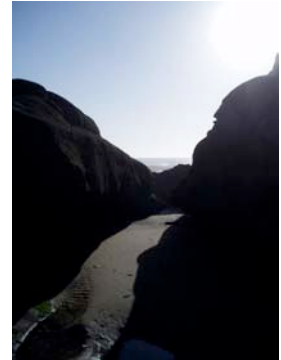


THE P.A.S.S.



TRANSCRIPT

Music...

[Voice] “Mountains rise all around us making our journey long and laborious, yet there is a pass – there IS a pass – that will get us through. I believe that social studies stands as that pass for education. It allows us to traverse the challenges by unifying the content areas, preparing students for the 21st century, and smoothly allowing technological integration. Join me in entering that pass to discover the endless possibilities.”

Music Ends....

[Joel] *“Hello, everyone, this is Joel Medley from the Social Studies Section at the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction. Welcome to our first rendition of “the P.A.S.S.,” which stands for “Podcasts about Social Studies.” Our goal is to provide some thoughts and ideas on relevant issues for you to take and implement in your schools and districts. NC DPI will post these podcasts quarterly on a variety of topics; so, if you have ideas that you would like to hear discussed, please email me at jmedley@dpi.state.nc.us.”*

“For our first podcast, we are privileged to have Edye Morris-Bryant, the current President of the NC Council for the Social Studies. Thank you, Edye, for agreeing to be here with us!

[Edye] Thank you for having me, Joel.

[Joel] *“Please describe your background for us. What led you into the field of education and provide us a brief summary of your experiences? Also, how did you become involved with the NC Council for the Social Studies?”*

[Edye] Well, education has always been a part of my life, my mother and my grandmother being educators along with my grandfather, so at an early age, of course, I had a love for learning. That love continued to grow and I began teaching. I taught language arts and social studies in seventh and eighth grade. After some time in the classroom, I realized that I really wanted to broaden my ability to help teachers with instruction. I had a passion for curriculum and instruction, and I went on with Wake County Public Schools to serve as a lead teacher for social studies. I had an opportunity to work with instructional resource teachers at every elementary school in the Wake County Public School system in the area of social studies. It was a wonderful opportunity to see social studies in action with elementary students, seeing as my prior history was with middle school students. From that point, I took a position with the Department of Public Instruction as an educator on loan in the Instructional Services Division. That experience helped me to also visit classrooms across the state of North Carolina as well as in other states. I missed the classroom, and I missed having an impact in the schools. Attended a lot of professional conferences, it gave me the opportunity to grow myself but didn't quite have the forum to put it into practice; so, I went into administration as an assistant principal in a middle school and went on to where I currently serve as a principal at Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School.

As far as my involvement in the North Carolina Council for the Social Studies (NCCSS), I have really been fortunate to have wonderful mentors in my life, two of which really encouraged me to not only join the NCCSS but also to run for a board of director position, and I did. So, after that, I went to a conference and said "where can you have an impact in the area of social studies?" I was already part of a wonderful organization; and so with a lot of encouragement, I decided to run for the president-elect position, and I was able to be elected to that position and served two years as president-elect. Now, I am starting my second term as president.

[Joel] *"Explain a little bit of the benefits and purpose of the Council and what it really does for North Carolina?"*

[Edye] The NCCSS is really an organization, a professional organization, dedicated to supporting social studies educators across the state of North Carolina. Within that level of support, we not only provide instructional resources and strategies but we provide opportunities for educators to come together to network to gain skills with the ultimate goal of making sure that social studies is being taught and that the importance is being felt (not only in the classroom but beyond the classroom) – from the principal's office and superintendent's office but more importantly in the community. So, the NCCSS serves as a leader in this state of pulling together the social studies educators, equipping them, embracing them, and encouraging them to teach social studies, to help it come to life, and to create productive citizens of our students.

[Joel] *“Now serving as the president, you have a far reaching view of social studies initiatives. Are there any state, national, or global initiatives you currently foresee and can describe for us?”*

[Edye] Well, under No Child Left Behind, there are a lot of things coming down the line as far as social studies, and this will probably branch off into some other areas. I think the number one issue facing social studies is the marginalization of social studies. I don't think that we are as well informed as far as what is actually happening in school as it pertains to social studies, meaning that amount of time being taught or the depth that is able to be reached by teachers with our students – the skill set and the compromise of important skills due to the lack of time for social studies. I think that the impact will be felt at all levels as we continue under major Federal initiatives, such as No Child Left Behind, which are looking at what children are learning and what they don't know. We will soon come to find – and we have data now – that support that our children now are not acquiring the skills and the necessary knowledge needed in order to say that they have an understanding of social studies and its impact. Social studies is a tested subject everyday in our lives. We are tested in our interactions with the environment and our interactions with people. I think though before we get into whether we should test or not test, I think a greater question is to teach or not teach; and we have got to be willing to answer that question – is it being taught? And, there are things that can be done to ensure that it is being taught at every level. When we look at the elementary school level and the time being so limited, we have questions being raised as to why our students do not perform so well at the high school level in End of Course subject areas. We must go all the way down to the elementary level and take a look at how much input – we have a desire output for our students, but I don't think that we forced or paid that much attention or put a lot of emphasis on the input level. We cannot expect great output if we are not willing to put in the input. Through out methods of advocacy, we are willing and we are active in making sure that we inform our legislators – inform the people that make decisions about time and about how things are done in schools – making sure they really know what is going on. First, it is information and then it is to instruct those in power and position; and then, we also want to inspire them by hearing from teachers and students first-hand. You can hear from principals and you can hear from DPI, but until you hear from a classroom teacher who struggles with covering necessary skills, covering content, and not being able to do so – actually, the schedule of the day not even including social studies. We have a responsibility to inform and instruct, but more importantly, to inspire; because we are charged with the responsibility of creating productive citizens.

[Joel] *“You know, Edye, you've hit on some huge topics: the marginalization, whether we should or should not test social studies in a formal manner. What are some strategies here at your middle school to ensure that social studies is taught?”*

[Edye] Well, I'll tell you, and you know that every principal loves to brag on their school; but at Centennial Campus Magnet Middle School, one of our major approaches to learning here is curriculum mapping. Curriculum mapping is a tool that allows us to look at the curriculum and find natural points of connection across discipline areas. Well, embedded in that, of course, in an integrated unit of study. Every quarter, we have an integrated unit that combines all subject areas for every grade level; and the essential questions often stem from social studies topics. We have social studies taught every day here at Centennial, and we have a master schedule that supports that. So part of that is being a principal in tune with scheduling because the master schedule is really the nucleus of the school. I think that is one untapped area, or one that we need to continue to tap at the state level as well as the local level, is informing principals and administrators on how they can create a master schedule that emphasizes the importance of all discipline areas. Also, to encourage teachers and to equip them with opportunities to integrate social studies; because we live in an integrated world, so there is nothing wrong with social studies being integrated. We cannot get away from the fact that social studies is, in and of itself, an extreme discipline area and it should not be compromised.

[Joel] *"As a former social studies teacher myself, I know you've heard the same thing I've heard, we've heard students say they didn't like social studies. I've got a few students who agreed to share their reasons why; so I want you to listen to those responses."*

[Girl's Voice] "I don't like history because there's a lot of information and it's hard to know what is important and what information is not important."

[Guy's Voice] "In my social studies class, I really don't like the way we are going through it. She just gives us a chapter outline on the board, gives us a couple chapter review questions when we're done with the chapter, and we fill them out."

[Guy's Voice] "For my social studies class, the activities did not match my level. The material was interesting but the teacher made it boring. It was just not challenging at all. On the test, there was no critical thinking involved because it was an application of memorization."

[Joel] *"So, what can we do to change the perceptions of those students?"*

[Edye] When a teacher closes the door, or I like to say, opens the door, and they begin to lead students into learning social studies, they need to feel that they have the latitude and the love of the subject area to help it come to life. That means exploring instructional strategies that resonate with our students and that are relevant to their everyday lives. Part of that is being exposed – our teachers need to get out to professional development find ways to utilize technology or whatever resources are available to help our subject and discipline areas to

come to life for students. Actually, we really need to be students of our students to find out from our students how they learn best – be willing to ask the hard question and to look to them to give them plenty of opportunities to display what they know in a variety of formats – to realize that there is not just one way of learning.

[Joel] *“Well, Edye, we’re going to conclude here with this final question. Going back to the NCCSS, you’ve just finished your annual conference and looking forward to next year’s conference, do you know the dates, the theme, or location? Even tell us how a teacher would be able to present a proposal there at the conference.”*

[Edye] Well, Joel, I’m really excited about next year’s conference. Our theme is “Embrace the Future;” so with Embrace the Future, we will kick off our conference February 11-13, 2009, back again in Greensboro at the Koury Convention Center. If a teacher is interested in submitting a proposal – and I want to really emphasize a point first. We really want to hear from classroom teachers. We want classroom teachers to present strategies, and that’s something that we’re finding – that we don’t have as many teachers presenting. While we love our support from colleges and universities, it’s really nothing like hearing from a classroom teacher to another teacher on what works best in the classroom, so please encourage teachers to visit our website www.ncsocialstudies.com. They can download a form for a proposal for next year’s conference. Our membership information will be going out shortly to all of our members, but anyone can visit our website and I encourage them to do so.

[Joel] *“Great, Edye. Thank you so much for your time and expertise and contribution on this podcast.”*

[Edye] Thank you, Joel.

“Well, everyone, that wraps up our first episode of the P.A.S.S. The music used during this podcast is an original piece by J Underberg called ‘The Battle,’ and it is licensed with ‘Creative Commons.’ This, and other, songs can be downloaded and used in your podcasts courtesy of www.podsafesaudio.com.

Remember to submit those ideas for future podcasts to my email, and be looking on the website for our next one soon. Till then, keep collaborating to change student lives.”