

Anticipating and Overcoming Objections

Social studies education is critical for the success of our democratic republic. Here are the top objections to greater emphasis on social studies education and some tactics to overcome them:

1. Social Studies does not teach students “real life” skills that will help them with their career.

Responses...

- Surveys of business leaders consistently identify that they are looking for employees who have the necessary soft skills to thrive in their work environment. These soft skills include:
 - Communication Skills
 - More likely to write a letter to a government official (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Successful employees had strong soft skills including the ability to communicate (Google, 2013)
 - 93% of businesses give preference to hiring a candidate who can clearly communicate (AAC&U Survey, 2013)
 - Leadership skills
 - The soft skills of humanities have been deemed essential by business leaders. (RBC Royal Bank, 2018)
 - Practicing civil discourse skills and compromise supports the ability to lead employees (US Chamber of Commerce, 2019)
 - Adaptive Thinkers
 - The soft skills of humanities have been deemed essential by business leaders. (RBC Royal Bank, 2018)
 - Studying history increases the ability to assess evidence and conflicting interpretations (American Historical Association, 1998)
 - Ability to work in teams
 - The soft skills of humanities have been deemed essential by business leaders. (RBC Royal Bank, 2018)
 - Successful employees had strong soft skills including the ability to work with others (Google, 2013)
 - Practicing civil discourse skills and compromise supports the ability to work in teams (US Chamber of Commerce, 2019)
 - Problem solving skills
 - The soft skills of humanities have been deemed essential by business leaders. (RBC Royal Bank, 2018)
 - Successful employees had strong soft skills including the ability to solve problems (Google, 2013)
 - 93% of businesses give preference to hiring a candidate who can problem solve over a specific degree (AAC&U Survey, 2013)
 - Higher confidence in public speaking
 - Civic education leads to a higher confidence in public speaking (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Dynamic and well-prepared speakers are highly valued by employers and tend to earn leadership positions and important client contact roles. ([Doyle, 2019](#))

- “A highly confident speaker is viewed as being more accurate, competent, credible, intelligent, knowledgeable, likable, and believable than the less confident uncertain speaker.” ([Wesson, 2005](#))

2. Students should be focusing on fundamentals like reading and writing.

Responses...

- Social studies provides students with vocabulary that is essential to their academic success.
 - 55.43% of words that students need to know for K-12 academic success are social studies content words. (Marzano, 2004)
 - 53.74% of words that students need to know for K-5 academic success are social studies content words. (Marzano, 2004)
- More time spent learning about social studies leads to higher reading and writing scores.
 - (Recht & Leslie, 1988; Gaultney, 1995)
- More time spent learning about social studies leads to students doing a better job of comprehending new vocabulary.
 - (Elleman, etc, 2009; Kaefer, etc, 2015)
- Students who have social studies connections included in their reading and writing of their curriculum score higher on reading tests.
 - (Duke, etc, 2020)

3. Social studies isn't tested so we should not worry about teaching it.

Responses...

While there may not be a mandated specific social studies test in my state, testing data from national exams tells us that a decrease in the testing of social studies has led to lower scores due to less classroom time spent on social studies. Less social studies means less community involvement, among other things.

- Overall scores in the National Assessment of Educational Progress in 2018, while not significantly different from 2014, indicated an across-subject decline. These results and larger achievement data trends affirm a long-standing social studies crisis since the assessment's first administration in 1994. (NCSS, 2020)
- Less of an emphasis on testing social studies has led to a decline in the amount of social studies being taught. (Fordham Institute, 2011)

4. Social studies is not useful beyond knowing facts about history.

Responses...

- Social studies education makes students likely to vote.
 - Taking classes or discussion about politics at home can make a student up to 11% more likely to vote. (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)

- Students who possessed more civic knowledge and skills were more likely to expect to vote as adults (Torney-Purta et al., 2001)
- When civic education works well it is an important pathway to political participation. (CIRCLE, various)
- Social studies education makes students more likely to volunteer in their community.
 - Four times more likely to volunteer. (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Civic knowledge was associated with the expected likelihood of volunteering, contributing to charity, or planning to engage in political activism (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004).
- Social studies education leads to students becoming more engaged in the democratic process and wellbeing of their community.
 - More likely to exercise their skills in politics (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - More likely to contact government representatives (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Higher rates of civic engagement (Cohen, Kahn, Marshall, 2018)
- Social studies education makes students more aware of the world around them by promoting human kindness and global awareness.
 - More likely to intervene to stop bullying. (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Higher empathy and emotional intelligence (RBC Royal Bank, 2018)
 - Successful employees had strong soft skills including empathy (Google, 2013)
 - More than 9 in 10 businesses prefer hiring a candidate who demonstrates ethical judgement, integrity, and interpersonal skills (AAC&U Survey, 2013)

5. Students today don't care about learning important information about their country.

Responses...

- Students with strong social studies education learn factual content knowledge that is essential to understanding the history of our country and how it operates today.
 - Increased test scores on civic knowledge (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)
 - Students who reported classroom study of four specific U.S. political institutions had higher overall knowledge scores than those who did not report such instruction (Torney-Purta & Barber, 2004)
 - An understanding of civics fundamentally depends on an understanding of history. It's hard to grasp how the system operates if you have no idea where it came from and no context in which to place it. (Wexler 2019, pg. 10)

6. Students today don't care what is going on in their community.

Responses...

- Students with a strong social studies education are more aware of current and historical events, which leads them to understand the cause and effects that lead to them making change in their community.
 - Increased understanding of the cause and effect of events (Civic Mission of Schools, 2011)

- Higher rates of civic engagement to make change (Cohen, Kahne, Marshall, 2018)

Sources

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