



# Mississippi Council for the Social Studies

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**MCSS Newsletter:**  
**Dr. Lindon Ratliff**

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Please visit the  
MCSS website at  
[mcss.org.msstate.edu](http://mcss.org.msstate.edu)

**The Mississippi Council for the Social Studies is a state affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies. The purpose of this organization is to promote social studies as the key subject in developing good citizenship, to provide a link among educators interest in social studies and to aid the development of social studies educators professionally.**

## Dr. Charles Reagan Wilson to give Keynote address at the 2013 Annual Conference



Charles Reagan Wilson is the Kelly Gene Cook, Sr. Chair in History and Professor of Southern Studies at the University of Mississippi. His research interests include the South and American religion. He is the coeditor of the Encyclopedia of Southern Culture and the author of Baptized in Blood: The Religion of the Lost Cause, 1865-1920 and Judgment and Grace in Dixie: Southern Faiths from Faulkner to Elvis. MCSS is honored that Dr. Wilson has agreed to deliver the keynote for the Fall Conference in Natchez.

MCSS is proud to announce the annual conference will be held on October 17-18, 2013 in Natchez, Mississippi. Sessions will cover Government, Economics, Civics, History, Geography, Primary Sources, Common Core Standards, and Civil Life. Please plan to join us in Natchez!

Registration information can be found at the MCSS website and on page 4 of the newsletter.

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### NATCHEZ, MISSISSIPPI

- Recently named one of the 100 Must See Destinations by Life Magazine
- Recognized as the Best Small City for a Weekend by AAA Southern Traveler Magazine
- "Natchez is what you love about the south:—City Motto

## Call For Papers Deadline June 1st

If you are interested in presenting a paper at the conference the deadline for submissions is June 1st.

We are interested in what you are doing in the classroom, your ideas on how to implement CCSS, and

Major Themes include:

- History
- Economics
- Geography
- Civics
- Social Sciences
- Global Connections

If you are interested please visit the MCSS website for directions on proposal submissions.

Please share what you are doing with others at our Fall Conference in Natchez.

## Research in Action by Dr. Kenneth Anthony

It is the season for testing. All across the state US history teachers are preparing their students for the US history test. Many are concerned based on the results from the test last year. Evidence of this concern was a recent proposal by a Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) task force to drop the US history test from the assessment model, but not as a graduation requirement. To be clear it was a recommendation and has not been acted upon and the state superintendent and others in the MDE have indicated that they intend to keep the US history test in the assessment model. The larger question is how do we most effectively prepare our students for the US history test? But I think that this is the wrong question. The question we should be asking is, "How do we best teach our students US history?" If we do a quality job of teaching our students history it follows they will do well on the US history test.

We are constantly told that we should use data to make instructional and education decisions. I have followed that advice and looked at the 12<sup>th</sup> grade US history results from the 2010 National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) (available at <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/>). I analyzed the data to see the effect of a variety of teaching strategies that teachers and schools participating in the NAEP report.

Before I share what I found, I'd like you to do a self-test. Below I have listed 12 teaching strategies mentioned in the NAEP data. Rank these methods from high to low according to which you think would be the most effective:

- Discuss materials studied
- Give presentation to the class (students)
- Read extra material not in the text book
- Read material from a text book
- Focus on preparation for state assessments
- Work on group project for history or social studies
- Watch movies or videos for history or social studies
- Use letters, diaries, or essays by historical people
- Do research using a CD or the internet
- Offer help through before and after school programs
- Go on field trips or have outside speakers
- Offer help through extra work or homework

Now in a way this was a trick question, because most of these strategies work well as measured by scores on the US history NAEP, it just depends on how often you use them. There can be too much of a good thing when it comes to teaching. Below are three charts that include the teaching strategies above with the resulting NAEP score for how often a particular strategy is used. I have bolded the highest score for each method. The average national score was 288. As you look through the chart, identify what strategies and time factors result in scores above and below the national average. I have included some commentary on what I have learned from the data about instruction, but I encourage you to study and draw your own conclusions.

Of interest to me are the things that when done almost every day are associated with higher test scores including discussion of material studied, reading material from a text book, and doing research on the internet. In this era when we tend to focus on how to leverage technology for instructional purposes those teachers who report that they have students read from the text book every day have higher test scores than those who have students read from text books never, a few times a year, or once or twice a month. In our efforts to be relevant, interesting teachers, and motivated by experts many schools have abandoned the textbook, but maybe that's a bad idea. Now I'm not advocating only using the textbook, but from a common sense approach it makes no sense to throw out textbooks because it is the largest single source of reliable information available and the source of the test makers' questions.

I think if we look closely at the charts above we find that using text books in conjunction with some other strategies result in higher levels of learning as measured by the NAEP US history test. Some of the other strategies that are associated with higher NAEP scores are reading extra material not in textbook; using letters, diaries, or essays by historical people (primary sources); and watching movies or videos for history of social studies when done once or twice a month or once or twice a week (see the tables). Another group of strategies appear to be associated with increased learning when done only a few times per year: giving presentation to the class, going on field trips or having outside speakers, and working on group projects for history or social studies.

Strategy	Never	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Almost every day
Discuss material studied	259	266	274	285	<b>296</b>
Give presentation to the class	283	<b>295</b>	287	274	259
Go on field trips or have outside speakers	289	<b>292</b>	270	261	247
Read extra material not in textbook	276	287	<b>292</b>	<b>292</b>	290
Read material from a textbook	272	277	287	291	<b>292</b>
Use letters, dairies, or essays by historical people	278	291	<b>293</b>	293	280
Watch movies or videos for history or social studies	274	<b>292</b>	<b>292</b>	285	269
Work on group project for history or social studies	285	<b>296</b>	288	279	264

Strategy	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
Do research using a CD or the internet	271	285	290	<b>301</b>
Focus on preparation for state assessments	<b>292</b>	286	289	286

Strategy	Yes	No
Offer help through before or after school programs	286	<b>293</b>
Offer help through extra work or homework	288	<b>294</b>

What is great about this information is that each strategy is something that teachers can control (with support from school and district administration). They are proactive strategies that teachers and schools can use to improve student achievement in US history and are applicable to other grade levels. An analysis of the data for grades 4 and 8 indicate similar results. What about reactive measures? How do efforts to prepare for the state tests impact student performance?

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**MISSISSIPPI COUNCIL FOR THE SOCIAL STUDIES  
FALL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION AND MEMBERSHIP FORM**

Conference Theme: *Putting the Common Good into the Common Core*

**Natchez Convention Center, Natchez, Mississippi**

**October 17-18, 2013**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Day Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Evening Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address \_\_\_\_\_

Check One:  Elementary School Teacher     Middle School Teacher     Secondary School Teacher  
 College Instructor     University Professor     Pre-Service Teacher  
 School Administrator     Vendor     Other

Circle the Congressional District in which you vote:    CD 1    CD 2    CD 3    CD 4

**SELECT ONE OF THE FOLLOWING OPTIONS:**

**I. Conference Pre-Registration (October 1 postmark deadline):** \_\_\_\_\_

To pre-register for the conference, enter \$70.00 on this line.

(Note: Lifetime MCSS Members enter \$45.)

**II. Conference Registration (after October 1):** \_\_\_\_\_

To register by mail after October 1 or to register on site, enter \$80 on this line.

(Note: Lifetime MCSS members enter \$55.)

**III. Payment of Membership Dues ONLY:** \_\_\_\_\_

If you will not be able to attend the conference but would like to renew your membership or would like to become a new member, enter \$25 on this line.

(Note: Students and retirees enter \$15.)

\*\*\* **Please note:** Conference registration includes the welcome reception on Thursday evening, all conference sessions, the luncheon and business meeting on Friday, and membership dues for the 2014 calendar year.

Mail this form along with a check, money order, or pre-approved purchase order to:

MARLO HENDRIX, MCSS TREASURER  
159 HIGH FOREST LANE  
TUPELO, MS 38801

\*\*\* *Checks, money orders, and purchase orders must be made payable to MCSS.* \*\*\*

**IMPORTANT REMINDERS:**

- ❖ To pay by purchase order, a pre-approved purchase order must accompany your registration form when it is submitted to the Treasurer. There are no exceptions to this policy.
- ❖ Requests for cancellation of registration and refund of monies paid must be made in writing to the MCSS Treasurer two weeks prior to the conference.

## Mississippi Council for the Social Studies

### Call for Proposals

What: MCSS Fall Conference

Where: The Grand Hotel, Natchez, Mississippi

When: October 17-18, 2013

**\* Proposals are due no later than June 1, 2013 \***

Presentations available for all grade levels covering:

- History
- Economics
- Geography
- Civics
- Social Sciences
- Global Connections



#### **Sub-Themes:**

Correlations with the Common Core  
Using Primary Source Documents  
Geography across the Curriculum  
Economics/Financial Literacy

Submit proposals at: <http://goo.gl/B3hpU>

## Message from the President

As the school year draws to an end it's always a time for reflection. This year has been an exciting one for MCSS. We held our Fall Conference at Raymond, MS in October with Congressman Greg Harper as the Keynote. We also held our first one day professional development conference in February at Mississippi State. We had over 65 preservice and inservice teachers attend and learn ways to implement Common Core State Standards in the social studies classroom. The end of the school year is also a time to look forward. As an organization we are looking forward to the Fall conference October 17-18 in Natchez, MS. The focus of the conference will be on how social studies teachers can help with the implementation of CCSS. We will also have opportunities to visit historical places in and around Natchez as a part of the conference. If you haven't registered already, please make plans to attend and register. The registration information is on page 4 of the newsletter. We are also looking for quality presentations. The call for proposals is on page 5 of the newsletter. We can't wait to see you in Natchez!



<https://www.facebook.com/MsCouncilForTheSocialStudies>

### Research in Action Continued from page 3

The bottom two charts include questions that focus on preparing for state tests and remediation. It appears that a focus on preparation for state assessments is inversely related to student achievement. Put another way, if you focus on the test rather than focus on teaching, student achievement is lower. If a teacher only focuses on preparation a few times a year student achievement increases. Why is this so? It might be because teachers who are focusing on preparing for the test are not teaching or using the other strategies associated with student achievement. What about efforts to remediate using before and after school programs or through extra work and homework? Again, there is an inverse relationship between these remediation efforts and success.

So what can we learn from this data? I think the most important thing is that good teaching and strategic choices about teaching strategies including a proper mix of strategies is a good way to increase student achievement. Waiting until students are behind and remediating is ineffective and replacing quality teaching with a test preparation curriculum is equally ineffective. Bringing in consultants to mine the QDI data and target specific students for score increases, plugging students into the computer to drill them on history facts, and weekly practice tests are no replacement for good teaching.

So what do we do with this information? We claim we make decisions based on the data. Well, NAEP provides us with a wealth of data from across the nation. The students tested are a nationally representative sample. 500 schools and 12,400 students took the NAEP US history assessment. The results of the 2010 NAEP challenge many of the educational practices in US history classes in Mississippi. I encourage you to think about your practice as a social studies teacher. What methods and strategies do you use? Are they supported by data? Are you relying on one or two methods or strategies because you are comfortable with them or believe that they are best for your students? Have you abandoned the text book? How often do you focus on the US history test?

If I take anything from this data it's that teachers can make a difference. Teachers must teach and must make wise decisions on how to use their limited instructional time wisely. The NAEP data should challenge our ideas about the best use of instructional time and the value of large amounts of test preparation. Though I have focused on 12<sup>th</sup> grade US history, similar trends are found in other subjects including reading and math. Not only does this data call into question our instructional strategies in the social studies, but also in other subjects.