



## Standards Alignment

### **The National Center for History in the Schools National Standards for History (1996)**

Standard 1A – Students understands family life and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago.

### **National Council for the Social Studies Curriculum for Social Studies (1994)**

Standard 2 – Time, Continuity and Change

Standard 3 – People, Places and Environment

Standard 4 – Individual Development and Identity

### **REVIEW OF KINDERGARTEN UNIT – History of Me by Dr. M. Gail Hickey, Professor of Education Indiana University-Purdue University Fort Wayne**

National standards for teaching social studies and history support teaching historical knowledge in early elementary grades. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), for example, in their Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (1994) recommends children in kindergarten explore "their own immediate environment" and "environments far distant in time and space". Ten curricular themes outlined by the NCSS standards include three themes especially suited for developing kindergarten instructional units on personal and/or family history: Individual Development and Identity; People, Places, and Environments; and Time, Continuity, and Change. The National Center for History in the Schools, in their National Standards for History for Grades K-4 (1994), recommends young children explore and understand "family life now and in the recent past; family life in various places long ago".

Similarly, recent research on how children learn social studies-related concepts and acquire the skills used by historians supports teaching historical knowledge in early elementary grades. Levstik and Barton's (1994) research, as well as Downey's (1994) study, concluded that even early elementary grades children are capable of



more historical understanding than educators originally thought. Further, this body of research showed young students' historical knowledge is limited primarily to information about popular culture and everyday life, a conclusion providing additional support for teaching about personal and family history at the kindergarten level.

As a social studies teacher educator, and as one involved in the development of National Council for the Social Studies curriculum standards, I endorse the use of such instructional units as presented by "Shoebox History of Me".

## Lesson Plans

This unit introduces children to the concept of history as story, and establishes student familiarity with documents and concepts of change and continuity between now and the past. By telling their own stories through pictures, maps, toys, and various other articles from their lives, students on the starting line of school may learn to perceive history as something fun and personally relevant.

The unit relies largely on sharing and class discussions. If teachers model discussion with their own story of how things have changed since they were children, the students will get a taste of “long ago” to compare with life today. Examination of the sources, such as photos, letters, clothing, and toys, may best be accomplished through thoughtful questioning in a discussion circle. Whenever possible, why’s and how’s may be explored to develop the children’s critical thinking skills.

Because children in foster or adoptive families may not have toys and photos from their past, it is important to identify those students, if possible, and make contingency plans for their participation. You don’t want any students to feel isolated or excluded; if necessary, they can display photos, toys, and other keepsakes/artifacts that belonged to other family members or that you provide.

Although historical methodology terms such as “source”, “history”, “artifact”, and “examine”, to name a few, will be almost universally unknown to students at the outset of the unit, teachers may use them in tandem with more familiar synonymous terms. Through gradual, repetitive exposure, students may begin to recognize and become comfortable with the rudiments of a history vocabulary.

As the unit progresses, each student places sources about her/his life into a shoebox or bag. By the end of the unit, students will have ingredients for their own histories. Because that history will be based on just a handful of documents, it will not fully reflect the student’s actual life, in itself a valuable lesson about the nature of history.

### Citing Sources

- ❖ Sources Cited – this piece encourages students always to think about the source of their information, and introduces them to processes that later in their school years and lives they will use to construct research papers in any field of study.
- ❖ The students each have a “My Life” box or bag in which to place sources.
- ❖ The sources will be of various types, and Bringing History Home (BHH) provides icons that correspond with those types.
  - After the class studies a certain source, such as letters, toys, photos, the students together choose the BHH icon for that type of source and place it on a special paper. Students may take turns pasting or taping the



appropriate citation icon on the classroom source page. (Please see the citation icons PDF in the unit resources.) For example, after they study letters, students place the envelope icon on their sources-cited paper to represent what they have studied.

- At the end of the unit, the class will have a record of the sources they explored to tell the stories of their lives.

## Activity 1: What is History?

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students become familiar with the word “history”.
- ❖ Students learn there is a story to be told about their individual lives.

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Students learn we can create stories using information from various sources; that we can create stories by looking at photographs, other stories, letters, and by talking to people about their experiences and knowledge.

### Activities:

- ❖ Discussion about stories
  - What sorts of things can we use to tell stories?
    - Examine (look closely at) a photograph
    - Read a book
    - Read a letter
    - Examine (look closely at) an object or thing
    - Talk to one another (What did you do this morning? Where do you live? How many brothers and sisters do you have?)
  - We all have life stories or histories. Over the next couple of weeks, we are going to learn how to tell our life stories.
- ❖ Teachers send a letter home that describes the History of Me and asks parents for basic background information on their child. The parents and children should fill out the form together. (Please see the unit resources for a sample letter form.)

### Resources:

- ❖ Book, letter, object (toy, kitchen utensil, etc.)
- ❖ History of Me parent letter/child information sheet



## Activity 2: Physical Change over Time

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students understand people change in size over time
- ❖ Students understand people can use physical records to demonstrate change, to show how things once were. (In this case, the child's original physical size is recorded on a birth certificate.)

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Students begin examining physical historic evidence for specific information (my feet were this size in 1998... how old was I then? Now my feet are this big. How much have I grown in five years?).

### Activities:

- ❖ Birth Record
  - Each student receives a birth certificate with his or her name on it, stamped with baby-sized feet and handprints, if possible. Teachers provide the certificates, as real birth certificates could be damaged or lost if brought from students' homes. (Please see unit resources for a sample student "birth certificate".)
  - Students stamp their hands onto a kindergarten certificate.
  - Students compare the size of their hands and feet now with when they were infants.

### Resources:

- ❖ "Birth certificates"
- ❖ Kindergarten certificates
- ❖ Infant hand-size stamps or markers to draw infant-size hands and feet
- ❖ Water-soluble stamp pads



### Activity 3: Photo Documents

#### Process Goals:

- ❖ Students learn to tell stories about themselves from photos.

#### Activities:

- ❖ Students bring in infant photos of themselves or a family member.
- ❖ Teacher takes photos of the children now with digital camera, with a background for the shot that tells something about the class or about that individual student.
  - Discussion about what we can tell from a photograph. If we were detectives, what would the photos of \_\_\_\_ tell us about him/her?
  - Students may share photos of family members. If they have pictures of family members during an earlier time, these may be shared as well.
  - Students may share photos of places they have lived, i.e., the surrounding countryside. Many social studies educators advise against inviting students to compare photos of the exteriors of their homes, as some students may be embarrassed by the appearance of their houses.

#### Resources:

- ❖ Student photos – infant and today

### Activity 4: Letters

#### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students learn about letters.
- ❖ Students learn letters serve many different purposes.

#### Process Goals:

- ❖ Students learn to examine letters for specific information.
- ❖ Students learn collectively to write a letter.

#### Activities:

- ❖ Discussion on what is a letter (in the age of e-mail and cell phones, this may be a true introduction for children!).
- ❖ Students share letters they have received
  - Holiday cards
  - Family newsletters

- ❖ Teacher chooses a couple of the letters to examine more closely. This may be framed as an investigative process. Some Q's to ask:
  - Who sent this letter? Is the person who sent the letter related to the recipient? How do we know? (Is it signed "Aunt" or "Granddad"?)
  - From where was the letter sent? How do we know? (Is this information in the body of the letter or maybe on the envelope?)
  - When was it sent? How do we know?
  - Why was it sent?
- ❖ Students brainstorm reasons to send letters, types of letters
  - Teacher may wish to offer suggestions such as bills, invitations, get-well cards, etc.
- ❖ As a class, students write a letter to an absent classmate, a recent visitor to the school, or a staff member at their school.

#### Resources:

- ❖ Letters of various types
- ❖ Children's letters to share

## Activity 5: Toys

#### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students learn toys can tell us a bit about the person who plays with them.
- ❖ Students learn our interests and abilities change over time, and the toys with which we play reflect that change.

#### Process Goals:

- ❖ This lays a foundation for examining artifacts. Students may learn to examine toys for information other than the simple existence of the toy.

#### Activities:

- ❖ Sharing and Discussion: students compare toys they played with as infants or toddlers, with toys they enjoy now.
  - Do you enjoy the same toys now you enjoyed as a baby?
  - If not, why do you enjoy different toys now?
  - How are your toys today different from your infant toys?
  - Do your parents have toys? What are they?
  - Do the toys someone plays with tell us something about that person?  
Such as:
    - They are interested in animals.



- They enjoy playing house.
- They are interested in cars and trucks.
- They enjoy art.
- They enjoy building/construction.
- Are there things we can't assume about a person just by looking at his/her toys?

**Resources:**

- ❖ Toys

**Activity 6: Food**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Families differ – there is diversity in the foods we eat

**Activities:**

- ❖ Class Discussion on what sorts of foods the children eat now.
  - What dishes of food does your family often eat? What foods do you eat on special family occasions, such as birthdays or Thanksgiving?
  - What foods do you like? Dislike?
  - Do you eat the same things now that you did as an infant?
- ❖ Class Potluck
  - This may be held at the end of the unit, party-style, or on an ongoing basis.
  - If held on an ongoing basis, at the beginning of the unit parents may sign-up to provide a classroom treat on one of the activity days, preferably a snack that reflects a family or ethnic tradition

**Resources:**

- ❖ Plates, napkins, forks or spoons
- ❖ Serving utensils/dishes

## Activity 7: Beds and Transportation

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Artifact analysis. Students learn to think about changes that happen as they grow older. The objects in our everyday lives reflect those changes.

### Activities:

- ❖ Activities -- Beds
  - Discussion about the type of bed in which students sleep.
    - Has that changed since infancy? Why?
  - Students may color pictures of cradles and cribs, or pictures of regular beds, if available.
- ❖ Activities -- Transportation
  - Students discuss what they “ride” for fun (trikes, big wheels, etc.) now.
    - What do babies ride in? Why?
    - What will students ride in/on as they grow older?
  - Students may color pictures of buggies, strollers, big wheels, or any other types of transportation the teacher wishes to include. This activity may include a discussion about disabled peoples’ challenges and their forms of transportation.

### Resources:

- ❖ Coloring book pictures of transportation types and/or beds

## Activity 8: Music

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Music can reflect growth and changing preferences.
- ❖ Music may tell us something about the people who listen to it.

### Activities:

- ❖ Discussion: Do students have a favorite song?
  - What is it?
  - Can they explain why they like it?
  - Has it always been their favorite, or has that changed over time?



- ❖ Students listen to lullabies and compare them with the songs they prefer today, such as Raffi songs, Sesame Street tunes, etc.
  - Do students have older brothers or sisters who listen to other types of music?
  - What sorts of music do their parents enjoy?

**Resources:**

- ❖ CD's of lullabies, if available
- ❖ CD's of children's songs
- ❖ CD's of music of various ethnic origins, if available

**Activity 9: Mapping**

**Content Goals:**

- ❖ Students understand mapping is a representation of the physical world.
- ❖ Students learn where they were born, and that the name of their place of birth may be found on a map.

**Process Goals:**

- ❖ Students collectively experience map construction and illustration.
- ❖ Students begin learning how to read a U.S. map.

**Activities:**

- ❖ The class helps their teacher take bird's-eye view photos of classroom objects arranged on a desk or a circle on the floor. Students then work with their teacher's help to draw (map) the objects onto a poster board.
- ❖ The class as a whole draws and colors a map of the classroom or playground.
- ❖ Me on the U.S. Map
  - Students pin their school pictures around the border of a U.S. map.
  - Students locate their birthplaces on the map, with teacher assistance, and stretch a strand of yarn from their photo to their birthplace, pinning or taping in place at each end.

**Resources:**

- ❖ Digital camera, if available
- ❖ Large map of the United State, laminated if possible
- ❖ Tape and/or push pins
- ❖ Student school photos



## Activity 10: Timelines

### Content Goals:

- ❖ Students are introduced to chronological time in the context of their own lives.

### Process Goals:

- ❖ Students learn to place events from their own lives in order of occurrence on a timeline.

### Activities:

- ❖ The class together makes a timeline, “A Day in our Life at School”.
  - The timeline may be illustrated with magazine cut-outs, clip art, student drawings, school maps, school newsletters, photos the teacher takes, etc.
- ❖ Student Timelines and Gallery Walks.
  - Teacher draws a timeline that begins with “Birthday” and includes years one through six or seven to allow for the age of the class’ oldest student. The line should be placed at the bottom edge of a board, just above a ledge or chalk shelf.
  - Each student takes a turn creating their timeline. This may be spread over several days or weeks to allow everyone a turn.
  - The student of the day shows and explains his or her artifacts to the class one by one and places them next to the appropriate age on the timeline. For example, a hospital bracelet would go below “Birthday”, a stuffed animal or one-sie outfit would go by the first year, a photo of a vacation below the two year old year, a favorite old book next to the three year old year, etc.
  - When the timeline is complete, the class lines up for a Gallery Walk. Everyone holds their hands behind their backs, to help them remember not to touch anything, and lines up to review the artifacts. The walk gives students a chance to practice visiting a museum, and places each student’s artifacts and life history in a special, important spotlight.

### Resources:

- ❖ Butcher paper for timelines
- ❖ Contents of students’ History of Me boxes or bags