

Realities and Possibilities: Critical Global Education in Wisconsin Elementary Social Studies Standards

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Abstract

This study critically examines the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies for elementary grades to understand what global content is present and how teachers can engage with standards through a critical global perspective. We conducted a textual analysis of the standards using decolonizing frameworks and critical global citizenship education. We found few explicit references to global topics in the early grades and identified additional possibilities. As a result, we developed an analytical process for scholars and practitioners to examine curriculum and other educational texts through a critical global education lens. We provide multiple examples to implement critical global perspectives in elementary social studies classrooms.

Keywords: Global education, critical global education, social studies standards

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Introduction

The year 2020 has been characterized by a transformation of society in unprecedented ways. The COVID-19 pandemic has surfaced the intricate connections between different countries and regions of the world that many people took for granted; many of these connections are revealed as uneven, with benefits and consequences reinforcing social inequalities in risks of exposure, access to healthcare, or quality information. With the high-profile killings of Black Americans like George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery, a global wave of solidarity in the Black Lives Matter movement also pushed for critical discourse on systemic racism and white supremacy that transcended national borders. In other words, we find ourselves in a crucial

time of reckoning on what it means to be part of a global community. As we continue to experience greater global interconnection through migration and communication technology, we must be increasingly aware of the need for a critical engagement of what it means for the world to be interconnected, for us here to connect and learn about/with those elsewhere, and the unequal ways we experience this global interconnection.

These ideas are the foundation of a global perspective, which is composed of the knowledge, behaviors, and attitudes that we demonstrate towards the global--phenomena that transcend national boundaries. While many of us begin to think about differences from an early age, most of us are not exposed to critical perspectives in understanding

ourselves as members of a global community. When we do learn about global topics in classrooms, it is often introduced through holidays, festivals, foods, and nations, especially at the elementary levels (i.e., Lee, Menkart & Okazawa-Rey, 1997; Shatara & Sonu, 2020).

A critical social educator engages critically through global perspectives. At the heart of this work is strife against the legacies of colonialism and imperialism, which are rooted in white supremacy. A global mindset requires us to push beyond nation-centric framing of issues of injustice, which limit our understanding of issues solely to the narratives within the nation-state. Such a narrow focus ignores key global power dynamics. It is imperative that critical social educators understand and take a stance on the global and complex nature of social injustices; we must acknowledge and work through the tensions between/among local, regional, national, and global dynamics. We argue that one cannot be a critical social educator without being critically globally minded.

Both of us, Hanadi and Gerardo, come to a disposition of critical global social educators because of who we are. Being Palestinian American and Puerto Rican, respectively, we both come from countries that dominant and colonial narratives do not recognize as countries. We embody belonging that defies the definitions of nation-state; we come from a world of in-betweenness and transcendence. Having worked among immigrant communities and the borderlands, we have taught students who live, and move, and have their being beyond the rigorous physical/political, socio-cultural, and economic borders of the nation-state. These students have traditionally been marginalized precisely by such transcendent/global belonging.

Because of our lived experiences, we believe it is crucial to incorporate a global lens in teaching and learning. Our positionalities shape how we read educational texts, and we seek to show this process for teachers and teacher educators. In conversation with critical global education literature (Andreotti, 2014; Subedi, 2013), we present and model this process by analyzing the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies (Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction [DPI], 2018) with a critical global perspective. As teacher educators new to Wisconsin, we engaged in this analysis to better understand the state's expectations for social studies teachers. We chose to showcase standards analysis because teachers and teacher educators use standards as a starting point in social studies curriculum and teaching (Marino & Bolgatz, 2010; Shear et al., 2015; Vasquez Heilig, Brown, & Brown 2012; Vickery, Holmes, & Brown, 2015). State standards also are written by powerful stakeholders and determine what knowledge, as well as whose knowledge, is of most worth (Cuenca & Hawkman, 2018).

In this article, we offer a specific example of how to critically analyze a text (e.g., state standards) with a critical global education mindset, which could be applicable to other curriculum materials. We anchored this process around two questions: (a) What global content is present in the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies?; and (b) How can teachers engage these standards through a critical global perspective?

Literature Review

Literature on global education in elementary classrooms tends to focus on the capability of students to understand complex ideas and engage in conversations about cultures outside of the United States (Kenyon,

2018; Kenyon & Christoff, 2020; Torres, 2019). Children's literature is one avenue scholars have recommended for teachers to broaden students' perceptions of the world (Kenyon, 2018; Kenyon & Christoff, 2020). Scholars recommend that teachers be aware of the stereotypes and misrepresentations of cultures in literature and media, which influence students' knowledge of the world (Kenyon, 2018; Kenyon & Christoff, 2020; Torres, 2019).

While the elementary global education scholarship encourages younger students to learn about multiple perspectives and different cultures, the literature centers around the nation-state as a way to learn about differences outside the U.S. and has limited discussions around larger global issues that interconnect the world. Scholarship in secondary social studies has developed definitions of global education with more depth (e.g., Case, 1993; Gaudelli, 2003; Merryfield, 2012). We hope to further complicate global education for elementary contexts. Our understanding of global education is based on Kenneth Tye's (2014) literature review, which identified three goals:

- Global education involves learning about those problems and issues that cut across national boundaries, and about the interconnectedness of systems – ecological, cultural, economic, political, and technological.
- Global education involves perspective taking – seeing things through the eyes and minds of others.
- Global education involves taking individual and collective action for social justice and the creation of a better world. (Tye, 2014, p. 867).

Over the past 20 years, global education¹ has increasingly become a more critical piece of school curriculum in the United States, especially in secondary social studies. We have seen a rise in school coverage of issues such as neoliberal economic and political contexts, globalization, various global issues (e.g., climate

change, human rights) as well as other themes that show interconnectedness, cosmopolitanism, and global citizenship (Gaudelli, 2009, 2016; Matthews & Sidhu, 2005; Oxley & Morris, 2013; Sant et al., 2018). Both global education scholars (Merryfield, 2012; Myers, 2010; Pike & Selby, 2000) and international educational organizations (Asia Society, n.d., Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Oxfam, 2015; UNESCO, 2014) have crafted frameworks to better understand global education as a field. Overall, these frameworks coalesce in encouraging teachers and students to learn global content and issues and participate in social action against global injustice.

While these frameworks address notions of interconnectedness and perspective taking, which are important aspects of global education (Tye, 2014), critical global education scholars go one step further by centering non-Western voices and concepts of colonization and imperialism to explain the root causes of global issues (Andreotti, 2014; Subedi, 2013). Critical global education provided the conceptual framework in our analysis of Wisconsin social studies standards and understanding the possibilities for teaching global issues critically in elementary classrooms.

Theoretical Framework: Critical Global Education

Critical global education goes beyond Tye's (2014) conception of global education to provide the perspective and lens to view the world and its issues by paying particular attention to notions of power and representation. We relied on two texts, Subedi's (2013) decolonizing framework and Andreotti's (2014) critical global citizenship, to identify critical perspectives in global education in the standards.

Subedi (2013) called for global education curriculum to include “more nuanced and complex interpretation of global issues,” a knowledge that is not essentializing and not simplifying (p. 629). He presented specific ways for teachers to re-conceptualize and approach global education curriculum and instruction by promoting (1) antiessentialism, (2) contrapuntal perspectives, and (3) ethical solidarity.

Antiessentialism refers to two essential principles of decolonizing global curriculum: no culture is homogeneous or monolithic and there are no hierarchies of people, communities, and cultures when learning about differences.

Subedi wrote,

A key feature of antiessentialism is its emphasis on the need to learn about difference in critical ways. Beyond valuing the need to learn as well to be critical about differences, antiessentialist politics stresses that differences ought not to be constructed to create hierarchies across cultures and communities (p. 633).

Teachers are responsible for teaching cultures as complex and diverse, especially with non-Western cultures.

Contrapuntal perspectives (Said, 1993) focus on the counter narratives within curriculum that roots global issues around colonization and imperialism while also connecting to questions of power and knowledge construction. In addition, similar to antiessentialism, histories and experiences within the non-Western world are diverse and complex. With this, it is important for global issues to have a “contrapuntal approach [that] departs from traditional ways of framing comparative analysis, as it explicitly focuses on questions of colonization and imperialism” (Subedi, 2013, p. 633).

Ethical solidarity expands the concept of social action beyond the alleviation of global issues (e.g., ending poverty or hunger) towards working with the communities that are

experiencing these problems. Subedi (2013) emphasized the need to question the ways solidarity has been conceptualized and “the need to mobilize collective struggles across differences” (p. 635). With the critiquing of current mobilization efforts around social action, he called for different marginalized groups to come together across their differences through their struggles. He encouraged cross-cultural dialogue that “speaks with the Other” and not for them (p. 635), countering superficial aspects of exchanges and community building. An example that connects to Subedi’s framing of ethical solidarity is the partnership of Black activists in the United States and Palestinian activists throughout the world in learning and supporting their causes (Alexander, 2019; Erakat & Hill, 2019).

Andreotti (2014) critically analyzed global citizenship education (GCE) around the ways in which educators frame global issues. She distinguished soft GCE from critical GCE. Soft GCE represents “the dominant notion that something is right or wrong, biased or unbiased, true or false,” promoting an Us versus Them/savior approach. This approach boils down to ‘Your problems are bad and far away from us, so it is up to us to fix them.’ For example, dominant narratives conceptualize poverty and helplessness as global problems. On the other hand, critical GCE addresses “notions of power, voice, and difference” (p. 27) that are the root causes of global issues. These issues are systemic and complex and should be framed as “an attempt to understand origins of assumptions and implications” (p. 27). Using Andreotti’s (2014) critical GCE, the global issue of poverty should be reframed from helplessness to issues of inequality and inequity caused by colonialism.

These critical global education frameworks provide the lenses through which we

interpreted the Wisconsin state standards and provided possibilities for what elementary teachers can do when discussing the world in their classrooms.

The Process

Our goal for this article is to showcase a process for analyzing educational texts with a critical global perspective. We conducted a textual analysis (Hall, 1993; Prior, 2003) of the

two elementary-level bands of the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies (DPI, 2018): K-2 and 3-5. Before starting the analysis process, both researchers agreed on definitions of the theory-informed codes to be used in analysis. After the initial reading, researchers discussed their use of the codes and discussed discrepancies to create further agreement. This process is outlined in Table 1.

Step	Explanation
Step 1: Identify Explicitly Global Standards	Identify these terms in the text: “global,” “world,” “globe,” and “international.”
Step 2: Identify Globally Adjacent Standards	Identify these terms in the text: “human,” “culture,” “country/countries,” and any specific countries/regions name.
Step 3: Reinterpreting through a Global Lens	Reinterpret and find opportunities for global perspectives in the text, specific to interconnectedness of issues and systems, perspective taking, and action.
Step 4: Challenging Dominant Narrative through a Critical Global Lens	Challenge dominant narratives and counter with attention to the larger inequitable and unequal systems in place as a result of colonization and imperialism in the text.

Table 1: Process of Analyzing Educational Texts with a Critical Global Perspective

First, we searched for terms that were explicit references to global perspectives such as “global,” “international,” and “world.” Second, we searched for terms adjacent to global perspectives, such as “human,” “culture,” “country/countries” and any specific countries/regions named. While the latter terms are sometimes used in the standards to refer to U.S.-focused ideas, these terms can also be used to refer to issues and topics that transcend national scopes. This analysis helped

us identify what on the surface could be recognized as global content in the standards. Third, we conducted a deeper analysis by casting an expansive net on what aspects of global were being addressed in the standards, based on Tye’s (2014) definition of global education (global issues and systems, perspective taking, and action). This phase involved not only seeing the terminology used within the performance indicators but also the concepts and examples referenced with an eye towards teaching applications.

In the last step, we analyzed the standards to identify critical global perspectives relying on Subedi's (2013) decolonizing framework (antiessentialism, contrapuntal readings, and ethical solidarity) as well as Andreotti's (2014) framework for soft versus critical global citizenship education.

We want to acknowledge that our positionality as critical global teacher educators of color at a comprehensive university in Wisconsin afforded an important lens through which we analyzed the standards. We recognize that global perspectives are typically a very small part of social studies curriculum in the United States (Rapoport, 2009), and we are committed to identifying opportunities to guide our pre-service teachers to see possibilities and entry points in the existing standards to make global connections in the curriculum. Inspired by Dover et al.'s (2016) social-justice orientations to state standards, we found ourselves: identifying aspects that clearly embrace global perspectives in the curriculum, finding opportunities to reframe current curriculum to incorporate critical global perspectives, and noting areas in the standards that should be resisted as incompatible with a critical global education.

Findings and Contributions

In this section, we outline how global the Wisconsin Academic Standards for elementary social studies are, as well as what critical perspectives can be found. We organized our findings to highlight our process of curriculum analysis in hopes that it will help scholars and practitioners apply it in other contexts.

We start by reporting on the first three steps: what is explicitly global, what is adjacent to global, and what areas could be approached through a global lens. Then, for the fourth step, we bring a critical global lens.

Step 1: Identify Explicitly Global Standards

Out of 64 total indicators, there are only two performance indicators in the K-2 band that use the word 'global;' none of the indicators for this band use the terms 'world' or 'international.' Moreover, the two uses of the term global refer to one of multiple levels or dimensions to an issue. For example, Inq5.a.e states, "Explore opportunities for personal or collaborative civic engagement with community, school, state, tribal, national, and/or global implications." Within the 3-5 band, there were only four performance indicators that used the word 'global' or 'world;' none of the indicators used the term 'international.' These indicators show a brief progression from the K-2 band to include more global perspectives, particularly in geography, which are as follows (emphasis added):

Geog2.b.5 "Investigate push and pull factors of movement in their community, state, country, and world."

Geog3.a.5 "Classify a provided set of resources as renewable or nonrenewable, and analyze the implications of both at the local, national, and global level."

Step 2: Identify Globally Adjacent Standards

In the K-2 band, three additional standards stand out as referring to global content. In the behavioral sciences, performance indicator BH3.a.2 asks students to compare beliefs in one culture to another, providing the example "How do people in a different country celebrate their birthdays?" This standard clearly asks students to think about the global community and reflect back on themselves. In the economics standards, Econ4.e.2 asks students to "Investigate how people can benefit themselves and others by developing special skills and strengths. Hypothesize why people in one

country trade goods with people in another country.” This standard introduces the global economic marketplace as well as the concept of specialization. In the political science standards, PS2.a.1-2 asks students to “[c]lassify basic rights that all humans have (i.e., life, liberty, safety),” which invites students to identify human rights.

Within the 3-5 band, nine standards address the teaching of different cultures, the comparisons of different countries, and the analysis of human actions on the environment. This is an increase of standards from the K-2 band performance indicators.

All 3-5 standards using the term ‘culture’ are housed in the behavior sciences group. Culture first appears within BH1.b.4 in a list of identity markers such as “ethnicity, race, age, religion, gender, and social class” that allow students to get to know themselves and their identities. The rest of the behavior sciences standards proceed to ask students to learn about and compare different cultures: how they solve common problems (BH2.a.4-5), how they develop different values (BH2.b.4), and how they interpret similarities and differences that cause understandings or misunderstandings (BH3.a.5). These standards allow for students to expand their global content on different cultures as well as different perspectives of how issues, values, and experiences are expressed and understood.

Standards for 3-5 including ‘country’ or ‘countries’ discussed connections and comparisons in different themes within the discipline groupings. For example, Geog3.b.4 focused on the interdependency of countries in transportation and communication. PS2.b.5 asked students to “compare and contrast being a citizen of a country to the principles of good citizenship.” The vagueness of ‘a country’ versus ‘the country’ allows for teachers to discuss different perspectives of citizenship in the

world, where citizenship can be related to the place you are born or the ethnic group to which you belong. One economics standard named specific countries and regions as examples of what could be taught. Econ4.e.3 asked students to “compare and contrast specialization in two or more regions.” The standards suggested examples stemming from regions in the U.S. (“Midwest and Northeast”) to countries (“United States and Japan”) and continents (“Europe and South America”). This was the only time specific continents and countries (excluding the U.S.) were mentioned in the elementary standards.

Lastly, the term ‘human,’ was found three times in the 3-5 standards, once in a political science standard regarding human rights and twice in geography standards on human actions to the environment (Geog5.a.3-4, Geog5.b.5). These standards are connected to aspects of human responsibility of the earth given the increases of climate change present throughout the past few decades.

Step 3: Reinterpreting through a Global Lens

Using Tye’s definition of global education, we took a deeper dive in the standards to identify connections to global content beyond the use of key terms. Table 2 (next page) lists the number of performance indicators that referenced each of the elements of Tye’s (2014) definition beyond the use of key terms.

Based on Tye’s framework, we see that the standards offer multiple opportunities for students to learn about problems and issues across national borders and the interconnectedness of systems. Notably, we found that standards have the potential to cover important global content but rarely use direct terms representing the global scale (e.g., “global,” “international,” “world”). A lot of attention is given to things students should

know about the world--global knowledge. Examples of such global knowledge include renewable and nonrenewable resources, absolute and relative location, and rights and responsibilities in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. There are more standards on global topics as students move up in grades. In regards to perspective taking, this skill is

present in multiple performance indicators, meaning that global perspectives can be infused through these. Lastly, while taking individual and collective action was not as common in the standards generally, we did identify opportunities to infuse socially meaningful action with global perspectives.

Tye’s Definition of Global Education	K-2 Band Performance Indicators	3-5 Band Performance Indicators
Global Knowledge: Problems and issues across national borders	19	27
Global Knowledge: Interconnectedness of systems	10	17
Perspective taking	11	17
Taking individual and collective action	6	8

Table 2: Total number of performance indicators corresponding to each category of Tye’s definition of global education

Overt or explicit references to global are found as one choice within a list of options. For example, SS.Inq5.a.e reads “Explore opportunities for personal or collaborative civic engagement with community, school, state, tribal, national, and/or global implications.” This lack of global terminology limits the possibility that the standards will be taught from an integrated global perspective. A teacher might think about civic engagement referenced in the standard (Inq5.a.e) from a local and state perspective and skip the global level (perhaps due to time limitations or thinking early elementary is too young to discuss global civic engagement). Basic rights, as noted in the political science standards, can be described wholly from a nationalistic perspective (i.e., basic rights people have in this country) rather

than a human rights approach (a global perspective). It is important to distinguish between a comparative approach (i.e., comparing rights of two or more countries) and a global, interconnected approach (i.e., examining trends and themes within rights that cut across national borders, such as the status of refugees and asylum-seekers). Therefore, educators need to be purposeful about including topics from a global perspective.

Step 4: Challenging Dominant Narrative through a Critical Global Lens

The fourth step in the process involves looking through a critical global lens at the standards and curriculum. With the Wisconsin social studies standards offering both explicit and implicit opportunities for global education,

we considered: What possibilities do the standards provide for critical global education? This section will examine some of the elementary (K-2 and 3-5) social studies standards that will allow teachers to teach with critical global perspectives. It is important to note that while we are presenting these possibilities, it is very easy to interpret these standards in a superficial way that essentializes others and presents a deficit mindset when introducing global topics. Critical global education (CGE) is not just the incorporation of global topics and issues, but the ways in which they are framed and discussed to show the larger inequitable and unequal systems in place as a result of colonization and imperialism (Andreotti, 2014; Subedi, 2013). In this section, we discuss a number of standards that touch on critical global education based on the disciplinary divisions found in the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies: inquiry, behavioral sciences, economics, geography, history, and political sciences.

Inquiry. The Inquiry standards for social studies introduce the foundation for learning inquiry in social studies, including the importance of asking questions, finding appropriate sources from multiple perspectives, identifying conclusions, and also critiquing those conclusions. Introducing inquiry skills provides an opportunity to build the skill of asking critical questions from the beginning.

Inq1.b.e asks students to “determine what additional questions are needed to support research (i.e., ‘What more do we need to know?’).” Such a question opens space for guiding students to move beyond essentialist readings that reify the world through young people’s experiential lenses and instead expect/anticipate difference (antiessentialism) and counternarratives (contrapuntal readings)

as well as raise questions about fairness and justice (ethical solidarity).

Inq5a, which is the same in both K-2 and 3-5, explicitly asks students to “explore opportunities for personal or collaborative civic engagement with community, school, state, tribal, national, and/or global implications.” Given that this standard offers a key opportunity to present civic engagement in the global scale, teachers have the opportunity to reframe engagement around systemic inequity and inequality. For example, Andreotti (2014) wrote about the importance of changing an educator’s language and mindset around teaching about injustice. Instead of using terms such as “poverty” and “helplessness” to teach a global issue, we should think about the issue as systemic with regards to the power dynamics in place due to colonization and imperialism (Andreotti, 2014, p. 28). While these standards encourage students to take action with others, teachers should provide a basis for what it means to be civically engaged in an unequal world with inequitable systems. This critical approach to civic engagement counters the deficit perspective of looking at problems around the world as isolated and superficial. A critical global perspective guides teachers to reframe their mindset towards global issues from looking at problems to examining root causes that are grounded in global injustice, which transcends national borders.

Behavior Sciences. The behavioral sciences standards introduce young people to concepts of identity, cultures, and society, especially the similarities and differences between groups of people. As such, these standards are a crucial step in building an antiessentialist mindset in students. A critical global education mindset introduces children to difference without reducing cultures to stereotypes and without establishing hierarchies between cultures. For

example, in the K-2 band, performance indicator BH3.a.2 invites students to compare different cultures with the specific example of discussing birthday traditions in different countries. While on the one hand, this seems like an age-appropriate entry into comparing different cultures, a teacher with an antiessentialist perspective does more than mention exoticized representations of other cultures that are reduced to surface level descriptions; such descriptions boil down entire cultures to one thing (e.g., Country X is the one where they do Y on their birthdays).

Additionally, CGE is necessary to combat the danger of teachers centering only one or two cultures, representing them as less diverse and less complex. For example, if a teacher decides to teach about the culture of Mexico without a CGE framework, this can lead to assumptions about all Latin American countries if the teacher does not distinguish Mexico as having a different culture from other countries. Also, Mexico itself has many different cultures and complexities; no culture is monolithic (Subedi, 2013). To teach with CGE, teachers have to listen to those from the various parts of Mexico, read texts from Mexican authors, and avoid positioning themselves as all-knowing and instead as a learner that provides space and agency to the voices and narratives of the different people from Mexico. In a U.S. context, nuanced representations of Mexico should also incorporate similarities and differences to the experiences of Mexican-Americans as related but distinct from those in Mexico.

The Learning for Justice Anti-Bias Framework provides excellent examples of learning outcomes that align with these components of the critical global education framework. In the elementary levels, the framework includes the following Learning for Justice indicators:

No hierarchies: ID.K-2.4 “I can feel good about myself without being mean or making other people feel bad” as well as ID.K-2.5 “I see that the way my family and I do things is both the same as and different from how other people do things, and I am interested in both” (Learning for Justice, 2016, p. 4).

No culture is homogeneous: DI.3-5.7 “I have accurate, respectful words to describe how I am similar to and different from people who share my identities and those who have other identities” as well as DI.3-5.8 “I want to know more about other people’s lives and experiences, and I know how to ask questions respectfully and listen carefully and non-judgmentally.” (Learning for Justice, 2016, p. 6)

By including descriptors for how to compare cultures (e.g., “without being mean or making others feel bad”) as well as noting nuance in the comparisons (e.g., “both the same as and different from,” “people who share my identities and those who have other identities”), young people are predisposed to understand difference without judging others. By encouraging students to be interested in learning about other cultures, we lay a foundation for cross-cultural dialogue and community building.

Economics. The economics standards introduce students to the free-market system, specifically the concepts of resources, needs versus wants (scarcity), economic incentives, markets, and international trade. This approach to economic education is emblematic of soft global citizenship education because the standards emphasize dominant notions about global systems (free-market capitalism) and ignoring nuanced readings of inequality, exploitation of labor, and legacies of economic imperialism. To build a critical global perspective, teachers should introduce how different people access the benefits or suffer the consequences of economic globalization unequally. For example, SS.Econ2.c.3 asks students to provide examples of production

such as “land, labor, capital and entrepreneurship” for a product. Through a critical approach, educators would raise issues of power and exploitation that accompany capitalism using examples of everyday products. This approach requires going beyond the standards.

Geography. The geography standards introduce the five themes of geography (location, regions, place, movement, and human/environment interactions) as well as map skills, renewable/non-renewable resources, interdependence, and urbanization. While not explicitly stated, these standards offer multiple opportunities to develop an antiessentialist perspective by introducing young people to counternarratives.

When introducing the theme of movement, students should be introduced to migration as a global issue, which is an avenue to discuss the community as an active part of global systems and issues. A critical global educator encourages young people to see the global roots of their community (including the European roots of individuals and not assuming European-Americans are ‘native’ to this land) and contextualize the push/pull factors that cause people to move. For example in the K-2 band, it is important that standard Geog2.c.2 “Describe population changes in their community over time” is not presented in a way that assumes White/European descendants in colonized regions throughout the world are the mainstay of the community while others (from countries outside Europe--Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) are the ‘migrants.’

Another theme within geography, human/environment interactions, implicitly stood out as a way for teachers to discuss climate change, which is the focus of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN, 2015). In the 3-5 band, standards Geog5.a.3-4

and Geog5.b.5 ask students to “compare the positive and negative effects of human actions” on the environment and natural resources through time (DPI, 2018, p. 42). This can be interpreted for global educators as an opportunity to teach about climate change. Using a critical global education lens, teachers can discuss the equity and fairness of the effects of human actions to the physical environment on colonized regions. Teachers should not equate the responses to the effects of climate change, such as extreme weather events in places like the U.S. and Europe, to responses to desertification in parts of West Africa or sea-level rises in the South Pacific. The legacies of colonization and the stripping of resources are a significant consideration in responses to climate change. We also want to recognize that the U.S. and Europe are not monolithic in their responses to climate change, and marginalized communities are also unevenly impacted there as well. It is significant to reframe the topic as disproportionately affecting disenfranchised global communities of color. Teachers can also amplify the work of global youth activists such as Isra Hirsi, Autumn Peltier, Helena Gualinga, and Bruno Rodriguez (Asmelash, 2019) in bringing awareness to the ways in which climate change has affected communities of color throughout the world.

Political Science. The political science standards introduce students to national symbols, democratic values such as human rights and participation, and argumentation skills. These standards offer important opportunities for young people to learn about themselves as members of a democratic society oriented towards action. However, a critical global educator disrupts nationalistic orientations and incorporates careful attention to our belonging to an interconnected global community.



In the 3-5 band, PS2a.i asks students to investigate examples of rights and responsibilities and the advancement of civil rights. This performance indicator includes discussion of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). Through a critical global perspective, we can help students think about the colonial and imperial root causes and effects of inequality on different groups of people and the promotion of human rights. This can include teaching students about the many human rights violations, predominantly from White Europeans, after the UDHR was published.

Other political science standards also invite students to take action. In the K-2 band, PS3.a.1 asks students to “Describe and explain the effect an action has on members of a group. Express an opinion and vote on a topic in their lives.” To incorporate such standards in the classroom through a critical global perspective, teachers can critique the ‘canned food drives’ action common in schools (e.g. fundraisers for victims of a natural disaster, famine, or more systemic issues like poverty or climate change), which focuses on raising money for a global issue. This type of social action makes teachers and students feel like they have contributed to the cause but not really address the colonial and imperial root causes of the challenge. While it is important to help young people understand that they have a voice and a role to play in the global scene, they must also understand the complexities of the global issues and when and how to use that voice in partnership and accompaniment with global communities that are different from their own.

History. The history standards emphasize historical thinking skills that allow students to make an argument, provide evidence, and evaluate resources. These standards promote the use of multiple perspectives within a topic

in the past and do not focus on any specific content. The state suggests sequencing world history in K-12 classrooms around content and eras that were adopted from the College Board Advanced Placement World History.

Critical global educators can use antiessentialist approaches to teach historical content and multiple perspectives. For example, when studying ancient history (mainly located in non-Western regions), teachers can avoid framing one civilization as better or more ‘civilized’ than another, or a group of people, particularly civilizations of color, as ‘uncivilized.’ It is not enough to just sprinkle the teaching of different civilizations such as Indus River Valley, Yangtze River, Kush, Olmec, and Chavin into the curriculum; it is about how they are framed within the curriculum with analysis of their complexities and richness. Traditions from these cultures still exist today as a result of resistance to colonization. It is important to value these and other non-Western perspectives within history, giving them weight as ‘real’ and important histories.

Conclusion

We examined the Wisconsin Academic Standards for Social Studies to find explicit references to, and possibilities for, global education. We provide interpretations of the standards that center critical global perspectives and avenues to take up and reframe global issues that focus on the consequences of colonialism and imperialism. Our goal was to provide an analytical process for scholars and practitioners to examine curriculum and other educational texts through critical global lenses.

Overall, we found very few explicit references to global content and issues in the Wisconsin elementary social studies standards. While various standards could be interpreted to

cover global topics (beyond the few standards that are explicit), by and large, these standards do not cover the breadth of global knowledge, actions, and dispositions. We call for teachers and teacher educators to use this process to intentionally seek opportunities and critical global connections in educational texts.

Teachers are responsible for the curriculum and their disposition dictates how the curriculum will be implemented and interpreted in the classroom. Such a critical disposition is crucial in order for students to question and think critically about the world around them. The inclusion of global topics and critical interpretation of the standards can and should be practiced not only in the Wisconsin social studies standards but with other state standards in the United States and in other international educational institutions.

While these standards do provide possibilities for critical global education, it is imperative that the teachers who are engaging with these standards take the initiative and show an openness to:

- Interpret the standards in ways that combat essentialism,
- Center the global issues presented around the consequences of colonization and imperialism, and
- Create “ethical solidarity” (Subedi, 2013, p. 635) by learning with and from the Other.

Building decolonizing global content is one step to developing critical global perspectives. Watching and listening to global voices of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in the news and

media presents essential perspectives to understand with greater nuance global issues and particularly issues that are not reported in the most popular U.S. and European media. For example, we rely on resources like AJ+ (a media company affiliated with Al Jazeera), that center global issues like the persecution of the Rohingya, the perspectives of the Palestinians, and the concentration camps of the Uighurs. Teachers can then do further research on those topics to gain an understanding of the colonial roots of these global issues and how to talk about them in their classrooms.

The Wisconsin standards are consistent with the expanding communities framework for elementary social studies, which introduce students to the self, followed by the local community, and adding global layers in the later grades (Halvorsen, 2009). This framework presents a deficit mindset on young children’s capabilities of learning complex and controversial ideas in social studies (Akenson, 1987; Frazee & Ayers, 2003; Swalwell & Payne, 2019; Wade, 2002). Critical global education contributes to the disruption of this traditional framework. We join critical social educators in calling for a shift in this mindset by showing a process to identify opportunities for bringing critical global perspectives into the elementary social studies classroom.

Global education is ever more important in 2020. Teachers must be willing to engage and relearn/unlearn about the world around them to prepare students for the interconnected world of today and tomorrow.

Notes

1. It is important to note that when we discuss global education, we are referencing a framework for thinking about the world that is interconnected, not centering one area of the world over another. In our discussion of global education, we are not talking about (though we overlap with) comparative education (comparing different education systems) and international education (education in and about other countries). In this

article, we use the terms global perspectives and global issues as global education. In some instances, we use the term global citizenship education (GCE); while GCE and global education have different trajectories and bodies of work, for the purposes of this study, we rely on the areas where they overlap and therefore use them interchangeably.

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