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INTRODUCTION

We (Joe and Glenn) spend a lot of time thinking about social studies. One thing we have spent a lot of time discussing is that we have one big thing in common (even though we grew up in different parts of the country in different decades): We both received a **Trivia Crack social studies education**. We are pretty sure that you did, too.

You'll see boldface words and phrases throughout the Guide, highlighting terms and ideas that we think are important. Find their definitions in the glossary.

Back in 2014, Trivia Crack was all the rage when it was the “highest-ranking free app in the Apple app store” ahead of Facebook, Instagram, or Snapchat (Kosoff, 2014). (Think Trivial Pursuit or Jeopardy on your phone while competing with friends and family around the world.) Ten years later, millions of users continue to play it, even inspiring a 2022 Netflix interactive video version called Trivia Quest (Isenberg, 2022).

For those of you not addicted to the app, the basic premise is pretty simple. You are awarded points and earn digital coins for being able to answer multiple-choice questions focused on trivial knowledge in a variety of different categories. And like many mobile trivia games, the content of the questions is not actually that important. It is the race to gather the points and coins that really matter.

Although the scope of the Trivia Crack app might have been new, the idea is not. Trivial Pursuit has dozens (hundreds?) of versions, and Jeopardy has been on TV since 1964! Americans love to show off their ability to remember little nuggets of random information.

It was this type of thinking that played out in the social studies classrooms that we both grew up in. The classes we attended were less like learning environments and more like games we played where grades and credits became more important than the actual social studies content. It was a game that resulted in “less interest in learning, a preference for easier tasks, and shallower thinking” (Blum, 2020).

As K–12 students, we were both compliant students, doing what we were told without much thought. Neither of us really thought much about memorizing the information that we would later use to excel at Trivia Crack. It was just what was expected. But years later, after decades of experience as social studies educators, we struggle to articulate exactly what our teachers expected us to learn from those sorts of activities.

The more we reflect on our own K–12 educational experiences, the more we realize that there were many activities that we were asked to complete that did not really make much sense. Along with memorizing the 105 counties of Kansas, Glenn was also asked to memorize the 50 states and their capitals. Seven continents. Three branches of government. He matched definitions from textbook glossaries with words on lists and answered multiple-choice questions.

Joe colored in countless lakes and rivers on countless maps. Coloring maps were so prevalent in class that Joe, along with most of his classmates, still remembers his high school geography class as the “coloring class.” He recited the Preamble to the Constitution and created multiple timelines with dates and events. And he read textbook chapters. So many chapters.

Those factoids and tidbits were the absolute perfect education we needed to succeed at activities such as Trivia Crack and games like Trivial Pursuit.

So . . . What Is the Problem?

Although our K–12 experience was perfect for creating incredibly successful Jeopardy contestants, what we did *not* receive during our time memorizing Kansas county seats and coloring

maps of Maine was the educational background we needed to excel at being engaged and informed citizens in a democracy. We were not asked to actually apply any of the incredible amounts of stuff that we memorized. We were not trained to ask questions about the past or how the past applied to the present. We did not learn how to make sense of evidence and use it to support a thesis or claim. We were not asked to think critically.

As Glenn's own children entered the school system, he quickly noticed that not much had changed since he was a middle school student. His son Jake and daughter Erin loved their first years as an elementary student. But the older they got, the more they began to realize that much of what they did in class was busy work. Erin's high school social studies classes became a repetitive drudge of lectures, note-taking, fill-in-the-blank study guides, and Friday quizzes . . . quizzes that were often simply a repeat of Thursday's study guide.

Although she often mentioned that she rarely used any of this memorized information once the quiz had been graded, Glenn did notice that her level of sarcasm was approaching professional grade. Walking out the door to her first-hour government class one morning, Erin quipped, "I'm off to save the world, one worksheet at a time."

Following high school, Erin transitioned into an undergraduate visual arts program. It was during the early days of a required art history class taught by medieval historian Dr. Nancy Thompson that Erin quickly noticed a difference between Thompson's class and the ones she experienced during her middle and high school years. Thompson focused on engaging stories, posed intriguing and authentic questions, encouraged the use of primary sources to solve problems, and pulled Erin into a history world she didn't know existed. Excited by this new way of viewing the world, she added a Medieval History major to her course load, eventually leading to a graduate degree in archival library science.

Your kids are no different from Jake and Erin. They do not want a poor high school history experience any more than Glenn's kids did. No one does. What students want and need are inquiry-based learning strategies that integrate stories with context, with compelling questions that pull them into content, and that connect those questions and stories to contemporary and relevant issues.

Here Is the Cool Thing

Your kids know this, too. Younger generations are desperately seeking ways to make the world a better place and are looking for the content and skills needed to do that. Research from Wunderman Thompson Intelligence (2020) on Generation Z reveals what your own classroom anecdotal evidence is already suggesting:

Gen Zers have not only been involved in some of the biggest in-person protests in the past years, they have been leading them.

Just days before the horrific school shooting at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, government teacher Jeff Foster spent his class time guiding students through the process of civic engagement and facilitating conversations around ways that active citizens can impact positive change in their communities (Rosenblatt, 2018).

Two of those students, David Hogg and Emma Gonzalez, would become front runners in a national movement aimed at protecting students from gun violence: "We are going to be the kids you read about in textbooks. Just like *Tinker v. Des Moines*, we are going to change the law. That's going to be Marjory Stoneman Douglas in that textbook and it's going to be due to the tireless effort of students" (Rosenblatt, 2018). Your students want to change the world, and memorizing lists of state capitals just doesn't cut it anymore.

We know how to support our students: introduce primary sources, provide inquiry-based instruction, and integrate powerful technology tools. But integrating all these pieces alone and without tools can be difficult and maybe a little intimidating. We can help with that. Some of you may have grown up using very cool survival field guides, using them to learn about edible roots and berries, find true North, build shelters, and set up campsites. Together with experienced leaders, these types of outdoor field guides helped Joe and Glenn survive hiking trips in the wilds of Colorado and Wisconsin.

Wouldn't it be nice if there were such a field guide for thriving in the wilds of social studies instruction?

This is that book! We have crammed all of our experience and background into creating this social studies FIELD Guide, created specifically to support you in designing and delivering learning that is best for your students. Like the survival field guides we grew up with, our FIELD Guide has tools, examples, suggestions, and resources that are ready for immediate use.

To help you survive and thrive in the social studies wilderness, we have divided those tools and resources into four main sections: Foundational evidence, Inquiry, Educational technology (edtech), and quality Learning Design. We also added two bookend chapters. Put together, the FIELD Guide plays out like this:

Chapter 1. Load Your Pack

We love research. Joe *really* loves research. So we both understand the importance of having a strong base of data that supports best practice. Chapter 1 is all about setting the stage for why our FIELD Guide works and prepping you for the next steps.

Chapter 2. F Is for Foundational Evidence: Start With the Good Stuff

A FIELD Guide classroom requires primary sources, first-person accounts, and supporting evidence. Chapter 2 highlights what it can look like when you integrate these types of resources into your learning designs.

Chapter 3. I Is for Inquiry: Ask the Right Questions, Get Better Answers

This brings the FIELD Guide alive! If you want engaged learners, then you need to develop compelling questions and design activities that scaffold your students to use evidence to answer those questions. Chapter 3 shares examples and resources for doing that.

Chapter 4. E Is for Edtech: It's All of the Things

An environment that integrates technology is an environment where learning happens at high levels and your life as a teacher gets just a little bit easier. We are firm believers in using edtech to impact learning. Unpack some of our favorite tools and strategies in Chapter 4.

Chapter 5. LD Is for Learning Design: It's More Than Three Sticks of Wood

We get it. This can seem overwhelming. What is the best way to organize all this? Chapter 5 provides some structures and suggestions for arranging the learning in ways that are best for your students without making you crazy.

Chapter 6. Beyond the FIELD Guide: Enjoy the Experience

Whether it is a week-long camping adventure or a quick out-and-back day hike, every trip comes to an end. So what is next? Chapter 6 wraps it all up so you're ready for your next adventure.

Be Sure to Take a Few Hikes Along the Way!

At the end of Chapters 2, 3, and 4, we have included some activities, resources, and tools just for you. Think of them as hikes you can take to help you explore the power of the FIELD Guide. Each **hike** provides a resource, activity, or strategy that gives you the chance to put into practice the skills and knowledge you picked up in that chapter. And like most actual hiking trails that you can experience in the wild, each of our hikes is rated as easy, moderate, or difficult.

Just starting out? Take off down one or two “easy” hikes. Been in the classroom a few years and looking for something new? The “moderate” is perfect for you. Need a challenge? Tackle the “difficult.” The different levels allow you to pick and choose what experience might work best for you without needing a park ranger along the way.

The hikes are marked with boot icons to indicate their difficulty and are color coded: **one green boot** for the easy hikes, **two orange boots** for the moderate hikes, **three red boots** for the difficult hikes. The headings for each hike are color coded as well: easy hikes have **green** headings, moderate hikes are **orange**, and difficult hikes are **red**.

A large chunk of our combined 60 years in education has involved providing research-based professional learning opportunities across the country. Now, we are taking our best and most practical strategies and passing them on to you. We’ve also had the opportunity to work alongside a ton of very smart teachers; we are looking forward to also sharing some of their stories with you.

As a social studies teacher, what you do every day is incredibly important. You are in a position to literally alter the lives of each of your students while creating engaged, informed, knowledgeable citizens who will change the world. What you do every day makes a difference.

But doing what you do every day is difficult. The FIELD Guide will be helpful for most teachers, but never forget that this resource is here to support you. We want the Guide to make your life easier, not more difficult. Our classroom experience, our love for social studies, and our belief in the FIELD Guide gives us the chance to learn and work together with you.

So put on your social studies hiking boots. We are ready to walk alongside you!