

Interdisciplinary Education

By: [Wayne Journell](#)

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Abstract:

This issue marks my debut as editor of the Interdisciplinary Education Feature of Social Studies Research and Practice (SSRP). I would like to thank Dr. Cynthia Sunal, Executive Editor of SSRP, for this opportunity. As a loyal reader, reviewer, and contributor of the journal, I am aware of the influential position it holds within the field, and my goal as feature editor is to continue to meet the high standards set forth in the journal's mission statement. The Interdisciplinary Education Feature is an ideal outlet from which to disseminate high-quality research and descriptions of innovative practice pertaining to all levels of social studies instruction, and I am looking forward to serving the journal in this capacity.

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Article:

*****Note: Full text of article below**



Interdisciplinary Education

Wayne Journell
Contributing Editor

This issue marks my debut as editor of the Interdisciplinary Education Feature of *Social Studies Research and Practice (SSRP)*. I would like to thank Dr. Cynthia Sunal, Executive Editor of *SSRP*, for this opportunity. As a loyal reader, reviewer, and contributor of the journal, I am aware of the influential position it holds within the field, and my goal as feature editor is to continue to meet the high standards set forth in the journal's mission statement. The Interdisciplinary Education Feature is an ideal outlet from which to disseminate high-quality research and descriptions of innovative practice pertaining to all levels of social studies instruction, and I am looking forward to serving the journal in this capacity.

Before proceeding, I would like to quickly thank the previous editors, Drs. Elizabeth Wilson and Tammy Cook, for their excellent work over the past five years. Elizabeth and Tammy served as Interdisciplinary Education Feature co-editors since the journal's inception, and over the years, they have introduced readers to a wide range of cutting-edge research and practice. I am pleased to report that Elizabeth is continuing her work with the journal as one of the new co-editors of the Technology integration feature, and Tammy is serving as an assistant professor of secondary education at the University of Montevallo. Again, I would like to thank them for their service as feature editors, and I hope to maintain the high standards they have set.

As editor, I plan on following a precedent set by Elizabeth and Tammy in that the feature will have a wide interpretation of what constitutes interdisciplinary education. Manuscripts that address projects combining one or more disciplines within social studies education will remain of interest to the feature, as will projects merging social studies with other academic disciplines, such as language arts, science, and mathematics. I also would gladly welcome articles describing research or practice that blend social studies and cultural aspects of instruction, such as art, music, drama, and film studies. I can even envision a place in this feature for work dedicated to the relationship between social studies and disciplines that address specific needs of learners, such as special education and English language development. Of course, these suggestions should not be considered all-inclusive. Any type of interdisciplinary education, no matter how broadly defined, is of interest to the feature.

One aspect of this feature I would like to emphasize during my editorship is that interdisciplinary learning is applicable to all levels of education. Too often, true interdisciplinary learning seems to be exclusive to elementary and middle school classrooms. Certainly, the single-teacher structure found in elementary education is a natural environment for interdisciplinary projects, as is the grade-level "team" mentality found in most middle schools. While the feature will continue to publish elementary and middle school interdisciplinary work, I am hoping to expand the number of manuscripts I receive that describe interdisciplinary learning at the secondary and collegiate levels.

In contrast to their middle school counterparts, many secondary educators often develop their instruction in isolation or within discipline-specific learning communities, which can stifle opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Yet, in my own experiences as both a secondary educator and a university professor I have seen powerful cases of interdisciplinary learning in high school classrooms, and I hope to receive manuscripts that illustrate these types of collaborations as well as manuscripts discussing ways in which secondary social studies educators can circumvent the logistical barriers that may limit interdisciplinary learning. It is in this spirit that I have asked my colleague, Dr. P. Holt Wilson, to help craft the initial feature article of my editorship. In the article that follows, we outline a project that creates an unlikely partnership between secondary social studies and mathematics which allows students to develop a more sophisticated understanding of polling data within a civics/government curriculum.

Perhaps one of the reasons quality interdisciplinary learning is so rare in social studies classrooms is that pre-service teachers are not experiencing examples of interdisciplinary instruction in their teacher preparation courses. As a middle and secondary social studies methods instructor, I am often guilty of failing to show my students how they can collaborate with other disciplines. As most methods professors can attest, it is already hard enough to squeeze everything we want our students to know into one or two semesters, and unfortunately, interdisciplinary projects tend to be cut in favor of “traditional” methods of social studies instruction. However, I feel confident that there are social studies methods professors who are doing innovative interdisciplinary projects in their classrooms, and I am hoping they will share their experiences with the rest of us.

Of course, the success of any journal rests on the quality of submissions it receives. I would encourage any authors who feel they can contribute to the feature to submit manuscripts for review. In keeping with the spirit of the journal, the Interdisciplinary Education Feature will accept both rigorous research studies and descriptions of innovative teaching practices grounded in relevant literature, and I welcome contributions from university professors, doctoral students, and professional educators at all stages of their careers. Manuscripts for the feature can be submitted directly to me via e-mail (wayne_journell@uncg.edu), or authors can choose to submit their manuscripts through the standard submission process for the journal. If authors choose the latter option, please note that the manuscript should be considered for the Interdisciplinary Education Feature. Regardless of which mode authors choose, it is important they adhere to the *SSRP* submission guidelines and checklists outlined on the journal website.

Finally, I am always seeking individuals willing to review manuscripts for the feature. Those interested in serving as manuscript reviewers should send me an e-mail with a vita and a short description of their research/practice interests. Given the scope of the feature, I would certainly welcome reviewers from all disciplines, not just social studies.

Again, I am excited for this opportunity to serve the profession, and I look forward to working with prospective authors and reviewers during my tenure as feature editor. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions, comments, or suggestions about the feature.