

March 8, 2005

05.35

To: Ginette Delandshere, Chair, IU SoE Policy Council
From: Terry Mason, SSDC director
Re: SSDC redesignation and name change

Since becoming its director last July, I have engaged in numerous discussions with colleagues here at IU and elsewhere about possible new directions for the Social Studies Development Center. As public funds for education become ever scarcer and opportunities for research and development projects in the social studies become rarer, it seems that it might be advisable to consider expanding the focus of the Center to widen the scope of possibilities for funded projects. Recent discussions in the SoE's International Programs Committee, on which I serve, have recently been addressing the need to have a point of contact in the School for those who wish to develop international projects with the School of Education. Currently, the School does not have a designated office to respond to such requests. In my conversations with other faculty and administrators in the School and elsewhere in the University, I have heard strong support for the idea that SSDC assume such a responsibility.

I know that we have a long tradition at the Center of supporting the social studies' role in the school curriculum and that we have an obligation to concentrate on projects that advance the cause of democracy and civic engagement. I believe that this should continue to be the primary mission of the Center. However, I would propose that we extend the scope of the Center's activity to include international projects that may focus, in some cases, on content areas other than social studies. Such an expanded focus would enable the Center to seek funding from a much broader range of potential funding sources, thus increasing the chances of the Center's continued existence. I believe that such a move would not necessarily diminish the Center's role with regard to social studies, but would move the Center toward a much more active role in the international, transnational, and global issues that are increasingly important in our contemporary world. I furthermore believe that international projects whether they directly address social studies content or not, can serve to promote important social goals such as enhancing international and cross-cultural understanding and improving interaction and communication among people from different nations. For these reasons, I propose that the SSDC maintain its commitment to promoting teaching and learning in the social studies, but that it also assume a new role within the School to sponsor international projects within the field of education.

Currently, many educational scholars and social scientists are employing the term "transnational" to refer to phenomena that transcend the "limits, interests, etc. of a single nation." I believe that a focus on transnational issues and concerns would position the Center at the forefront of current research, policy analysis, and program development. To that end, I propose that we redesignate and rename the Center as the "Center for Social Studies and Transnational Education." I hope that you agree that this change would be in the best long-term interest of the Center and would improve the Center's chances of continuing to be a vital force in promoting the value and importance of social studies in

addition to the new possibilities that will present themselves as a result of our newly expanded role.

I will be introducing this proposal to the Policy Committee of the Social Studies Development Center at its April 28 meeting but I wanted to have it reviewed by the Policy Council now since I know that you will have a full agenda for your last meeting in April. Any action you take on this proposal will, of course, be subject to approval by the SSDC Policy Committee. I would be glad to attend the Policy Council meeting to present this proposal and respond to questions and comments.