

Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Barry Witten, PhD

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library
Education is Key—Civics Education Oral History project

Interview #ECE-A-L-2020-016

Dr. Barry Witten, a professor of social studies at Western Illinois University, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Education is Key—Civics Education* Oral History project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: Feb. 7, 2020 Location: Western Illinois University, Macomb, Illinois

Interview Format: Digital audio

Interviewer: Philip Pogue, ALPL volunteer

Transcription by: _____

Edited by: _____

Total Pages: _____ Total Time: 1:35/1.58 hrs

Accessioned into the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Archives on August 3, 2020.

The interview is archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield, Illinois.

Transcript being
processed

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Abstract

Barry Witten, *Education is Key - Civics*, ECE-A-L-2020-016

Biographical Information Overview of Interview: Barry Witten was born in Hays, Kansas in 1958. He attended school in Hays, graduating from High School in 1977. Witten continued his education at Ft. Hays St. University where he graduated with a degree in history in 1981. He later earned his Master of Arts degree in history from Ft. Hays State University in 1988. In 1999, Witten earned his Ph.D. at Kansas State. Early in his career Witten served as a public school teacher in Frankfurt and Plainville, Kansas, where he taught grades 6-11 social studies subjects. Later, he became a grad assistant at Kansas State University before joining the Western Illinois faculty in 1997. At WIU, Dr. Witten has taught social studies methods courses and received Department of Education Grants tied to Learning Our Past and Exploring America. At the time of the interview, Dr. Witten served as regional chair for the Illinois Council of Social Studies. His research topics include the American West, historical inquiry, and performance assessment. He has organized training of current western Illinois high school civics teachers through funding from the McCormick Foundation.

Dr. Witten discusses how Civics Education fits into pre-teaching experiences in clinical and student teaching, and into social studies methods classes which are required for social studies majors. In addition, he discusses the work done at WIU in training existing civics teachers on the new civics course requirements, including controversial topics, simulations, service projects, and inquiry. He examines the implementation of the new Social Studies Standards (2017), the C-3 framework, and their impact on WIU courses. Another topic discussed was the Teach in Rural Schools Scholarship, which awards up to \$12,000 to individual students who work four years in Illinois Rural Schools. Witten also discussed the challenges of understanding media literacy at both the high school and college levels, working to develop bilingual educators, balancing content and inquiry, continuing professional development in civics education to middle school teachers, and dealing with teacher shortage in Illinois. Examples of simulations were discussed as was historical travel experiences.

Subject Headings/Key Words: Social Studies; Social Studies Standards; C3 Framework (College, Career & Civic Life); teaching controversial topics; service projects; Illinois Council for Social Studies; regional offices of education in Illinois; Department of Education Grants – Learning Our Past and Exploring America

Notes to the Reader: Readers of the oral history memoir should bear in mind that this is a transcript of the spoken word, and that the interviewer, interviewee and editor sought to preserve the informal, conversational style that is inherent in such historical sources. The Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library is not responsible for the factual accuracy of the memoir, nor for the views expressed therein. We leave these for the reader to judge.

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