

SYRACUSE CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP 1.0

SOCIAL STUDIES TRUTHS WE MUST LIVE BY

We know that...

Social Studies is a **discipline**, not simply a content area. Instruction should be **driven by inquiry** that employs **content as a vehicle for understanding larger concepts and developing specific skills**.

Social studies should be part of **daily** instruction at all grade levels.

Social studies **cannot solely be taught through the Common Core ELA modules** and domains.

Local **curriculum maps** (on eLearning) and the **NYS Social Studies K-12 Framework** define what social studies should be taught at each grade level. **Textbooks do not dictate** instructional progressions or activities.

We are responsible for implementing instruction aimed to satisfy the requirements of both the Common Core and the **NYS Social Studies Learning Standards**.

So...

We must design learning experiences that ask students to **develop social studies-specific skills and build understandings of broad social studies concepts** as they use content to create **answers to compelling questions**. We don't want kids to just memorize content for content's sake.

We must structure our plans to incorporate social studies content, concepts, and skills in an **integrated and cohesive** way. This does not mean we must only do social studies for exactly 40 minutes within an isolated standalone period every day.

We have to look for times when social studies content, concepts, and/or skills line up with ELA and build off of that foundation to optimize student learning. We must also look for when the social studies curriculum isn't covered by ELA and **plan in an equally thoughtful way to cohesively address those gaps**.

We have to use **authentic sources, documents, and artifacts** to engage students in learning about the **required curriculum** at the grade levels we teach.

We must be sure that we **plan instruction that touches on each aspect of our report card indicators during every 10-week marking period**. Our report card indicators are aligned with NYS Standards.

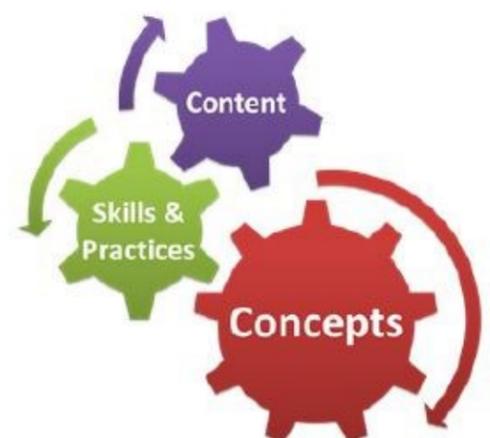
DOING SOCIAL STUDIES IS TEACHING LITERACY...



Authentic social studies instruction is inherently based on a foundation of critical literacy skills. The only way to engage in learning new content, make meaning of broad concepts, or develop specific social studies skills is to employ the skills outlined in the Common Core standards for literacy (reading, writing, listening, etc.). Likewise, the only ways to demonstrate true understanding or mastery is through critical Common Core literacy skills (speaking, presenting, writing, creating, etc.).

... BUT TEACHING LITERACY IS NOT ALWAYS DOING SOCIAL STUDIES

While "Doing Social Studies" is inherently an exercise in critical literacy, we must remember that engaging students in literacy instruction does not mean we are engaging them in true social studies. For instance, we could be reading about the United States Constitution for information (content-based), but if we're only reading for comprehension, we cannot call that social studies. If we take that content about the Constitution and discuss it in context of the time it was written or an event today (the social studies skill of contextualization or perspective-taking), or link that content to big ideas like government or human rights (social studies concepts), then we are really "Doing Social Studies".



THE STRUCTURE OF THE NEW SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM

The New York State K-12 Social Studies Framework defines the concepts, content, and skills that should be the focus of our work with students (<http://www.engageny.org/resource/new-york-state-k-12-social-studies-framework>). This curriculum spirals up through the grade levels, asking students to engage in more complex thinking as they progress through their school careers. The repetition of particular content and concepts is intentional. As students become more sophisticated learners, they examine our past and present in a multifaceted way, looking at events using multiple perspectives and viewpoints. Many core concepts are revisited throughout the years while specific content varies at each grade level.

THREE MAJOR CHANGES AND SHIFTS TO THE NEW SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM



SHIFT 1: DEVELOPING QUESTIONS AND PLANNING INQUIRIES

(ASKING COMPELLING QUESTIONS THAT MATTER)

Compelling questions focus on enduring issues and concerns. They deal with curiosities about how things work; interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts; and unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response. Example: Why do we need rules?

In contrast, **supporting questions** focus on descriptions, definitions, and processes on which there is general agreement within the social studies disciplines, and require students to construct explanations that advance claims of understanding in response. Example: What are some rules that families follow?

Determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into consideration the multiple points of view represented in an argument, the structure of an explanation, the types of sources available, and the potential uses of the sources.

SHIFT 2: EVALUATING SOURCES AND USING EVIDENCE

Whether students are constructing opinions, explanation, or arguments, they will gather information from a variety of sources and evaluate the relevance of that information. In this section, students are asked to work with the sources that they gather and/or are provided for them. It is important for students to use online and print sources, and they need to be mindful that not all sources are relevant to their task. They also need to understand that there are general Common Core literacy skills, such as identifying an author's purpose, main idea, and point of view, that will help in evaluating the usefulness of a source.

The focus here for students is the concept of **argumentation**. In contrast to opinions and explanations, argumentation involves the ability to understand the source-to-evidence relationship. That relationship emphasizes the development of claims and counterclaims and the purposeful selection of evidence in support of those claims and counterclaims. Students will learn to develop claims using evidence, but their initial claims will often be tentative and probing. As students delve deeper into the available sources, they construct more sophisticated claims and counterclaims that draw on evidence from multiple sources. Whether those claims are implicitly or explicitly stated in student products, they will reflect the evidence students have selected from the sources they have consulted.

SHIFT 3: COMMUNICATING CONCLUSIONS AND TAKING INFORMED ACTION

Having worked independently and collaboratively through the development of questions, the application of disciplinary knowledge and concepts, and the gathering of sources and use of evidence and information, students formalize their arguments and explanations. Products such as **CRQ and DBQ essays, reports, and multimedia presentations** offer students opportunities to represent their ideas in a variety of forms and communicate their conclusions to a range of audiences. Students' primary audiences will likely be their teachers and classmates, but even young children benefit from opportunities to share their conclusions with audiences outside their classroom doors.

In social studies, students use disciplinary knowledge, skills, and perspectives to inquire about problems involved in public issues; deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues; take constructive, independent, and collaborative action; reflect on their actions; and create and sustain groups. It is important to note that taking informed action intentionally comes at the end of Shift 3, as student action should be grounded in and informed by the inquiries initiated and sustained within and among the disciplines. In that way, action is then a purposeful, informed, and reflective experience.