



College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: State Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History

www.socialstudies.org/C3

What is the C3 Framework?

The result of a three year state-led collaborative effort, the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* was developed to serve two audiences: for states to upgrade their state social studies standards, and for practitioners—local school districts, schools, teachers and curriculum writers—to strengthen their social studies programs. Its objectives are to (1) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines, (2) build the critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills necessary for students to become engaged citizens, and (3) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

What are the guiding principles?

The C3 is driven by the following shared principles about high quality social studies education:

- Social studies prepares the nation’s young people for college, careers, and civic life.
- Inquiry is at the heart of social studies.
- Social studies involves interdisciplinary applications and welcomes integration of the arts and humanities.
- Social studies is composed of deep and enduring understandings, concepts, and skills from the disciplines. Social studies emphasizes skills and practices as preparation for democratic decision-making.
- Social studies education should have direct and explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.



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What are the instructional shifts for social studies?

The C3 Framework, like the Common Core State Standards, emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. It intentionally envisions social studies instruction as an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners. The Four Dimensions highlighted below center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings to enable students to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century.

C3 Framework Organization			
Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts	Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence	Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action
Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Civics	Gathering and Evaluating Sources	Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions
	Economics		
	Geography	Developing Claims and Using Evidence	Taking Informed Action
	History		

Connections to the Common Core State Standards for ELA and Literacy in History/Social Studies

The C3 Framework changes the conversation about literacy instruction in social studies by creating a context that is meaningful and purposeful. Reading, writing, speaking and listening and language skills are critically important for building disciplinary literacy and the skills needed for college, career, and civic life. Each of the Four Dimensions is strategically aligned to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

Why do we need the C3 Framework?

A number of motivating factors inspired this work:

- **Marginalization of the Social Studies**—The loss of instructional time at the elementary level and the narrowing of instruction in response to multiple-choice high-stakes testing has significantly impacted time, resources, and support for the social studies. The introduction of the Common Core State Standards provided an *opportunity* for social studies educators to re-frame instruction to promote disciplinary literacy in social studies in such a way as to allow social studies to regain a more balanced and elevated role in the K-12 curriculum.
- **Motivation of Students**—Children and adolescents are naturally curious about the complex and multifaceted world they inhabit. But they quickly become disengaged when instruction is limited to reading textbooks to answer end-of-chapter questions and taking multiple-choice tests that may measure content knowledge but do little to measure how knowledge is meaningful and applicable in the real world. The C3 Framework addresses this issue in fundamental ways.
- **The Future of Our Democracy**—Abundant research bears out the sad reality that fewer and fewer young people, particularly students of color and students in poverty, are receiving a high quality social studies education, despite the central role of social studies in preparing students for the responsibilities of citizenship. Active and responsible citizens are able to identify and analyze public problems, deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues, take constructive action together, reflect on their actions, create and sustain groups, and influence institutions both large and small. They vote, serve on juries when called, follow the news and current events, and participate in voluntary groups and efforts. Implementing the C3 Framework to teach students to be able to act in these ways—as citizens—significantly enhances preparation for college and career.

Collaboration is Key

For these reasons and many more, thousands of social studies experts, curriculum specialists, teachers and scholars from across the nation, and the following organizations were involved in the development of the C3 Framework.

American Bar Association	Education for Democracy
American Historical Association	National Council for Geographic Education
Association of American Geographers	National Council for History Education
Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools	National Council for the Social Studies
Center for Civic Education	National Geographic
Constitutional Rights Foundation	National History Day
Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago	National Social Studies Supervisors Association
Council for Economic Education	Street Law
Council of State Social Studies Specialists	World History Association

In the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, the call for students to become more prepared for the challenges of college and career is united with a third critical element: preparation for civic life. Advocates of citizenship education cross the political spectrum, but they are bound by a common belief that our democratic republic will not sustain unless students are aware of their changing cultural and physical environments; know the past; read, write, and think deeply; and act in ways that promote the common good. There will always be differing perspectives on these objectives.

The goal of knowledgeable, thinking, and active citizens, however, is universal.

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