



THE SOCIAL STUDIES
STANDARDS STEERING
COMMITTEE PRESENTS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT

MARCH 2022



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Introduction

Social Studies education promotes the development of vital knowledge and skills for college, career, and civic life as students learn about themselves and their communities. The [National Council for the Social Studies](#) states, “The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” Social Studies education is critical for students spanning K-12.

The purpose of this document is to share the set of Guiding Principles that will frame the development of the Connecticut Social Studies Standards for Connecticut. While creating the Guiding Principles, developers referenced and incorporated the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (2010) and Connecticut Department of Education’s (CSDE) foundational work including: the [Connecticut State Board of Education \(Board\) Position Statement on Comprehensive Social Studies Education for All Students K-12 and Beyond](#) (2014), the [Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks](#) (2015), and the draft CSDE K-12 Universal Curricular Design Principles (2022).

These Guiding Principles will be essential in guiding the standards writing process, resulting in a draft of the Connecticut Social Studies Standards which will be presented to the Connecticut State Board of Education (Board) for their review, approval, and consideration for adoption. In addition to the Guiding Principles, the Connecticut Social Studies standards will be informed by the [National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment](#) (2010), the [College, Career & Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#) (2014), as well as position statements and other resources on critical content published by the National Council for the Social Studies.

Fifteen Guiding Principles

The following sections explain each of the Guiding Principles that will form the foundation to guide the standards writing process. The fifteen Guiding Principles are organized into four categories:

- structure;
- diversity & representation;
- content & knowledge; and
- skills.

Structure

The development of the Connecticut Social Studies Standards will follow a coherent, content-focused structure spanning Kindergarten through grade 12.

Principle 1: Social Studies standards are coherent, developmentally appropriate and vertically aligned.

The standards will be outlined by grade level for Kindergarten through grade 8 and by course for grades nine through twelve. The standards commence with application to the self and extend to the family, community, and then larger society. All grade levels and courses will have distinct standards for the core disciplines: History, Geography, Economics, and Civics.

Principle 2: Social Studies standards are measurable and ensure adequate attention to both content and skills.

The standards will articulate the measurable content knowledge and skills in order to support effective instructional and assessment practices in Social Studies. The standards will state the appropriate grade level content and skills. These will support students' development of discipline-specific and inquiry skills in Social Studies classrooms. The standards will drive grade-appropriate curricular, instructional, and assessment decisions at the district level.

Principle 3: Social Studies standards build upon the existing *Connecticut Elementary and Secondary Social Studies Frameworks (2015)* and promote best practices in Social Studies instruction.

The standards will represent the critical skills and knowledge that students will develop as they progress spanning Kindergarten through grade 12. Standards will focus on the discipline-specific content and skill development required in distinct Social Studies instruction. While the Social Studies standards may be utilized and integrated with other content areas, the Social Studies standards are equally valuable on their own.

Diversity & Representation

The development of the Connecticut Social Studies Standards will be defined through diverse content that promotes social justice and human rights. The standards will represent individuals, groups, and communities through inclusive language, aligned with the [American Psychological Association's guidelines](#). The National Council for the Social Studies reaffirmed this commitment in a [2021 position statement on human rights education](#), noting that: "The principles and practices of human rights support the universal values of equal justice, democracy, and dignity."

Principle 4: Social Studies standards represent a comprehensive and inclusive coverage of events, issues, and contexts.

The standards will recognize both contemporary and historical contexts from multiple perspectives, including dominant and counter narratives. This also creates opportunities for integrating the social and behavioral sciences in meaningful ways.

Principle 5: Social Studies standards use an intersectional lens when referencing people, groups, and communities.

The standards will use precise language that is inclusive of the worldview of people who have been underrepresented and marginalized. When referencing people, events, and issues, the standards will include strength-based narratives that counteract bias and stereotypes. This will represent a nuanced and inclusive lens and not simply frame history through a dichotomy of oppression. To this end, the identities, roles, and contributions of people, events, and issues in a local context (town, city, state) are an important element of authentic Social Studies experiences and will be recognized as such in the standards.

Principle 6: Social Studies standards are responsive to the cultural and linguistic diversity in Connecticut schools and communities.

The standards will be inclusive and reflective of the students in Connecticut's classrooms. A diverse set of content and skills provides culturally and linguistically responsive Social Studies learning experiences.

Content & Knowledge

The expectations of what every Connecticut student will know and be able to do as a result of the Connecticut Social Studies standards. This will be informed by state and national frameworks and standards, as referenced in the introduction.

Principle 7: Social Studies standards prioritize the core four disciplines.

The standards will reflect the four core disciplines of Civics, History, Economics, and Geography in every grade and subject level. The goal for students is to engage with integrated Social Studies disciplines in order to apply and transfer learning to understand, better, and engage with the world around them. For example, students may study current issues (e.g. international relations, environmental justice, racial equity) by examining the physical and human geography of a region through the lens of historical trends, public policy, and economic decision making. In this way, democratic values and global connections will be prioritized in order to promote student engagement and the transfer of learning for the common good.

7a. History- The core discipline of history focuses on the processes associated with historical thinking, which means wrestling with issues of causality, connections, significance, and context with the goal of developing credible explanations of historical events and developments based on reasoned interpretation of evidence. The study of history involves understanding the contexts of given historical eras and the perspectives of different individuals and groups within geographic units that range from the local to the global ([C3, p. 87-88](#)).

7b. Civics- The core discipline of civics focuses on the knowledge of the principles and foundations of Constitutional Democracy in the United States. The political system established by the U.S. Constitution is an important subject of study within civics, along with learning about state and local governments, markets, courts and legal systems, civil society, international institutions, and the techniques available to people for preserving and bettering their communities and society as a whole ([C3, p. 88-89](#)).

7c. Economics- The core discipline of economics is focused on how people choose to use resources and the ways in which individuals, businesses, governments, and societies make decisions to allocate human capital, physical capital, and natural resources. The study of economics provides students with the concepts and tools to understand regional, national, and global economies ([C3, p. 85-86](#)).

7d. Geography- The core discipline of geography focuses attention on place and space and seeks to understand why humans deal with them in ways that they do and with what consequences. Geographic inquiry promotes environmental literacy and helps people understand and appreciate their own place in the world, fosters curiosity about Earth’s wide diversity of environments and cultures, and aids in personal and societal decision making and problem-solving ([C3, p. 86-87](#)).

Principle 8: Social Studies standards promote democratic values, agency, and civic engagement.

The standards will provide students the opportunity to analyze their rights and responsibilities, how they have developed over time, and the interconnectedness of all people within the United States. The standards will emphasize how the agency of different individuals and groups emerged and changed over time.

Principle 9: Social Studies standards include global perspectives and issues through multicultural and multinational lenses.

The standards will promote students' ability to engage with global and local issues. The standards will provide students opportunities to analyze topics through multicultural and multinational lenses throughout the study of local, national, and global issues. Consideration of recent events pertaining to geopolitical, environmental, economic, and human rights issues amplify the urgency for students to understand and contextualize world events and issues.

Principle 10. Social Studies standards recognize the rich, diverse, and complex history of the United States.

The standards will encompass a comprehensive and rigorous Social Studies education recognizing the diverse heritage and perspectives of the United States as an asset and source of national pride. Additionally, the standards must acknowledge, examine, and interrogate the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of systemic racism. This requires the exploration of diverse topics related to power and bias (e.g. sexism, gender bias, issues of disability, immigration, or religion) by representing the contributions and experiences of diverse individuals and groups in the teaching of United States history.

Principle 11: Social Studies standards provide the flexibility to include local connections.

The standards will encourage the inclusion of local context to provide students with rich, authentic learning experiences about the roles of people, events, and issues. Local connections reinforce the importance of learning about the past and make contemporary connections. Local resources offer opportunities for students to learn about their communities and understand the importance of public memory.

Skills

The Connecticut Social Studies Frameworks (2015) advocated for a substantial shift in the way that Social Studies was most commonly taught in the past. This change focused on meeting the changing needs of students in the Information Age through instructional shifts to student inquiry and disciplinary literacy practices, which includes opportunities for students to take informed action.

Principle 12: Social Studies standards emphasize the incorporation of student-centered questions and inquiries.

The standards will provide students with a rich Social Studies experience that is grounded in questions that frame and advance an inquiry. These questions come in two forms: compelling and supporting questions. Compelling questions focus on enduring issues and concerns. Supporting questions focus on descriptions, definitions, and processes. Social Studies educators have an important role to play in supporting students' ability to live productively as civic participants in a constitutional democracy, and Social Studies inquiry promotes inclusive and curious classroom environments.

Principle 13: Social Studies standards promote the application of disciplinary concepts and tools, including discipline-specific literacy practices.

The standards will promote the application of disciplinary concepts within Social Studies providing the intellectual context, organization, and systems for verifying knowledge. Social Studies disciplines—primarily history, civics, economics, and geography—provide the concepts and tools students need to study the specific content framed in the Connecticut Social Studies Standards. The Social Studies disciplines are the lenses students use in their inquiries and support the development of discipline-specific skills through Social Studies instruction.

Specific disciplinary tools and skills are as follows:

13a. History- The standards must engage students in understanding the past chronologically, thematically, and from various perspectives and using historical thinking skills and reasoning as a historian would in looking at primary and secondary sources and evidence, point of view, and interpretations.

13b. Civics- The standards must create opportunities for students to develop the skills of a political scientist and develop agency through participating in civic actions that are relevant, responsible, and informed.

13c. Economics- The standards must engage students in the application and analysis of essential economic concepts and decision making in local, national, and global contexts. The standards will support students' ability to engage with economic systems in real life contexts, such as needs and wants, markets and costs, incentives, and responsibilities of individuals.

13d. Geography- The standards must prompt students to develop foundational geographic and spatial thinking skills such as making and reading maps, globes, graphs, and grids. The standards will also promote practices associated with human geography through the comprehension of place, location, region, movement and human-environment interaction. This advances empathy for and understanding of cultures, rituals, and modes of survival and civilization.

Principle 14: Social Studies standards emphasize source literacy, specifically the processes associated with evaluating sources and using evidence.

The standards will provide students opportunities to analyze information and form conclusions as part of an inquiry-driven Social Studies experience. These skills include the focus on gathering and evaluating sources, developing evidence-based claims, and using evidence to support claims. Students should use digital literacy skills to craft well-reasoned explanations and arguments, which are at the core of Social Studies education.

Principle 15: Social Studies standards include opportunities for students to communicate conclusions and take informed action.

The standards will include opportunities for students to share their conclusions and practice civic engagement with audiences ranging from within their classrooms to the larger public community. Civic engagement is critical to preparation for civic life and is both a means for learning and applying social studies knowledge. Products such as written work and multimedia presentations offer students opportunities to represent their ideas in a variety of forms and communicate their conclusions to a wide range of audiences. A rich Social Studies experience should also provide regular opportunities for students to engage in classroom dialogue and collaborate to examine sources, use evidence to support claims, and learn from others' perspectives about complex topics and issues ([C3, p. 59](#)).

Conclusion

The fifteen Guiding Principles reflect the current needs that have been identified by the steering committee, which was inclusive of educational experts and practitioners in the field. The primary purpose of the principles is to guide the development of a set of standards that expands upon Connecticut's 2015 Social Studies Frameworks document. This will support upcoming state initiatives related to Social Studies, which will include the development of a model curriculum for Kindergarten through Grade 8. These standards will further the progress of Social Studies education by defining the desired structure, representation, content, and skills for high-quality Social Studies curriculum, instruction, and assessment. The secondary purpose of the principles is to ensure that all Kindergarten through grade 12 students have equitable access to consistent, high quality, dynamic Social Studies experiences. These standards are critical for affirming the importance of Social Studies as part of a comprehensive public school education.

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