

The Links between the C3 Framework and the NCSS National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

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The C3 Framework

The newly released College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards, commonly known as the C3 Framework, represents the culmination of a three-year effort to enhance social studies state standards through disciplinary and multi-disciplinary concepts and practices that embody an approach to the teaching of the social studies that is based on inquiry and investigation.¹ The C3 Framework includes descriptions of the structure and tools of four core disciplines (civics, economics, geography, and history), as well as the habits of mind common in those disciplines.

The C3 Framework centers on an inquiry arc—a set of interlocking and mutually supportive ideas that frame the ways students learn social studies content. It calls upon students to use the disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history as they (1) develop questions and plan investigations; (2) apply disciplinary concepts and tools; (3) gather, evaluate, and use evidence; and (4) work collaboratively to communicate conclusions and take informed action. Unlike *standards*, the document serves as a *framework* to focus primarily on an inquiry-based approach to acquiring important conceptual understandings.

It is not intended to prescribe the content necessary for a rigorous social studies program but is designed to guide states in their efforts to upgrade their social studies standards and to inform the pedagogical approaches of social studies educators across the nation.

The NCSS National Curriculum Standards

The National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment, which were published by NCSS in 2010, also advocate a pedagogy that supports critical thinking and disciplinary habits of mind. The national standards are a guide for identifying or updating content standards.² The Learning Expectations of the national standards focus on:

- Purposes
- Questions for Exploration
- Knowledge: what learners need to understand
- Processes: what learners will be capable of doing
- Products: how learners demonstrate understanding

Unlike the C3 Framework, the 2010 NCSS Standards present ten themes of social studies that can guide curriculum

developers as they identify specific content to be delivered and concepts to be acquired:

- 1 **CULTURE:** the study of culture and cultural diversity
- 2 **TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE:** the study of the past and its legacy.
- 3 **PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS:** the study of people, places, and environments.
- 4 **INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AND IDENTITY:** the study of individual development and identity
- 5 **INDIVIDUALS, GROUPS, AND INSTITUTIONS:** the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.
- 6 **POWER, AUTHORITY, AND GOVERNANCE:** the study of how people create, interact with, and change structures of power, authority, and governance.
- 7 **PRODUCTION, DISTRIBUTION, AND CONSUMPTION:** the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.

8 SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY, AND SOCIETY: the study of relationships among science, technology, and society.

9 GLOBAL CONNECTIONS: the study of global connections and interdependence.

10 CIVIC IDEALS AND PRACTICES: the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic.

The Learning Expectations outlined in the national standards for the early, middle, and high school levels describe democratic dispositions/purposes, knowledge, and intellectual processes that students should exhibit in student products. The Essential Social Studies Skills and Strategies represent the abilities involved in the thinking, reasoning, researching, and understanding that learners engage in as they encounter new concepts, principles and issues. Student Products describe how students demonstrate acquired learnings and provide teachers with a vehicle to assess student achievement. Snapshots of Practice provide educators with images of how the standards might look when enacted in classrooms.



Complementary Resources

Both these documents are powerful tools to guide and strengthen social studies teaching and learning. The inquiry arc of the C3 Framework features the four dimensions of inquiry that should drive all social studies instruction. It is purposefully designed to promote rigorous study aligned to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies. And like the Common Core State Standards, the C3 Framework is based on evidence

that aims at college and career readiness. As a core area in the K-12 curriculum, social studies prepares students for college and career, including the disciplinary practices and literacies that are needed for college-level work in social studies academic courses and the critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative skills needed for the workplace.

The Learning Expectations of the 2010 National Curriculum Standards, though developed before the publication of the Common Core State Standards, offer similar pedagogical approaches. And though there is no explicit alignment to the Common Core Standards, the NCSS Standards feature important elements of value to social studies educators. The Ten Themes, Student Products, and Snapshots of Practice offer specific ideas and details to help teachers envision what the approach may look like in classroom settings. This is particularly helpful in developing lesson plans and curriculum.

The Table demonstrates the overarching similarities of the pedagogical approaches of the C3 Framework and the 2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards.

As the Table demonstrates, there is a significant correspondence between the four dimensions of the Inquiry Arc, and

The C3 Framework Inquiry Arc's Four Dimensions	NCSS National Curriculum Standards: Learning Expectations	The Enhanced Contributions of the C3 Framework
1. Develop questions and plan investigations	Questions for Exploration	Builds on NCSS National Standards by focusing on the process of constructing compelling and supporting questions to develop inquiry skills.
2. Apply Disciplinary Concepts and Tools	Knowledge: what learners need to understand	Develops student knowledge of disciplinary content and concepts in purposeful, meaningful ways.
3. Gather, Evaluate, and Use Evidence	Processes: what learners will be capable of doing	Addresses the implementation needs of the NCSS National Standards by intensely focusing on developing skills for gathering and evaluating sources and making claims based on evidence. Intentionally aligns to the goal of the Common Core State Standards to draw evidence from informational text to draw conclusions.
4. Communicate Conclusions and Take Informed Action	Products: how learners demonstrate understanding	Develops skills to paraphrase information, construct summaries, make arguments, communicate conclusions, and apply learning as described in the Common Core State Standards.

the following four Learning Expectations of the National Curriculum Standards:

- Questions for Exploration
- Knowledge
- Processes
- Products

In meeting objectives outlined in the National Curriculum Standards, the C3 Framework has also added enhancements, as indicated in the third column of the Table. Its focus on compelling and supporting questions develops the focus of the national standards on Questions for Exploration. The C3 Framework also makes specific suggestions for improving disciplinary knowledge, developing skills for gathering and evaluating sources, making claims based on evidence, and communicating conclusions that link social studies learning expectations to the Common Core Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy

in History/Social Studies, which were published after the National Curriculum Standards were developed.

A fundamental purpose of education in the United States is to prepare young people for civic life, and social studies is especially valuable for that purpose. Whether used separately or in tandem, both the C3 Framework and the National Curriculum Standards are intended to achieve a common purpose—to describe and promote the acquisition of the disciplinary and multi-disciplinary concepts and practices that are needed for college, career, and civic life. As Aristotle first argued, learning to be an active and responsible citizen requires experience. The C3 Framework, informed by the 2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards and social studies experts across the nation, describes a system of disciplinary inquiry in social studies that supports such experiences. As students inquire and communicate the results of

their work, they are practicing the arts and habits of civic life needed for the twenty-first century. ●

Notes

1. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History* (Silver Spring, Md.: NCSS, 2013). Accessible online at www.socialstudies.org/C3.
2. National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* (Silver Spring, Md.: NCSS, 2010).

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