

Iowa Core in Social Studies Instructional Shifts Overview

The Iowa Core in Social Studies embraces and articulates best practices in a social studies classroom. In a social studies classroom, ideas and the questions that frame them, matter. Disciplinary knowledge is necessary, but not sufficient for powerful social studies teaching and learning. Social studies is about making and supporting arguments with a range of sources; providing students opportunities to work individually and collaboratively in order to communicate conclusions and take informed action. In each of these ways, teachers are taking deliberate steps to help their students become ready for college, career, and civic life. These ideas and practices set a challenge for students and thus require teachers to shift instruction to meet these new challenges.

These shifts articulate ways that teachers can strengthen their instruction, while also impacting the design of curriculum and assessment. They represent the ambitions set forth in the standards, but also reflect exemplary practices that can be found right now in thousands of social studies classrooms. The goal of this overview is to clearly communicate a coherent set of instructional practices and elevate these practices as models for enhancing social studies teaching and learning in all classrooms.

Shift	Description	Connection to Anchor Standards
<i>Craft Questions that Spark and Sustain an Inquiry</i>	The Iowa Core in Social Studies sets an expectation that teachers create compelling and supporting questions to drive their unit level instruction. Compelling questions represent enduring disciplinary problems and issues. Supporting questions help unpack the compelling question to provide knowledge and insights to the overall inquiry. Together compelling and supporting questions allow students to analyze disciplinary concepts. In doing so students will need considerable guidance from adults to construct questions suitable for inquiry. As students progress the Iowa Core in Social Studies expects that students understand the relevance and importance of the questions under investigation, generate their own questions, and that this understanding spirals and builds along the inquiry experience.	• Constructing Compelling Questions • Constructing Supporting Questions
<i>Integrate Skills and Content Purposefully</i>	The Iowa Core in Social Studies focuses on disciplinary skills and key conceptual knowledge associated with civics, economics, geography, and history. The standards guide the curricular content necessary for a rigorous social studies program. Curricular content specifies the particular ideas to be taught and the grade levels at which to teach them; conceptual content is the bigger set of ideas in the anchor standards for each course guide selection of appropriate and relevant content. The specific curricular content outlined in the standards helps to support and guide teachers into key curricular areas. No longer should students be repeating the exact same content each year but the content should be covered at a deeper level while exploring this content teachers should be fully integrating critical skills. This will help students ground their inquiries and build disciplinary skills and conceptual knowledge. The notion of content as separate from skills is an artificial distinction. Skills, particularly those in the disciplines, exist for the purpose of developing content knowledge. The Iowa Core in Social Studies require active (skills---based) development and application of content knowledge. In essence, students will come to know disciplinary content as they apply skills to be fully college, career, and civic ready.	• Gathering and Evaluating Sources • Developing Claims and Using Evidence • See your content specific standards

<i>Provide Opportunities for Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action</i>	This shift provides students with opportunities to communicate the results of their inquiries and, in cases where it is curricularly appropriate, to take informed action. The Iowa Core in Social Studies do not prescribe the actions that are appropriate for a particular classroom context or for a specific inquiry. The standards guide students as they move from academic inquiry to communicating their conclusions. There is an expectation that social studies students practice citizenship in the same way they practice historical thinking, economic decision-making or geographic reasoning. As a result, students will need tangible opportunities both inside and outside of the classroom to consider, debate, plan for, and undertake action oriented experiences that would culminate their academic inquiries.	• Taking Informed Action
<i>Engage in Rigorous, Student-Centered Learning</i>	Civic readiness is a key component of the Iowa social studies standards. The idea of collaboration is hard-wired into inquiry, but collaboration means more than just pairing up with other students to develop questions or analyze sources. When using an inquiry approach informed by the standards in the classroom, the importance of collaboration as an element of civic life is clear. Students collaborate to develop questions and rely on one another to examine the importance of those questions. When engaging with disciplinary content, students “work together to apply civic virtues and principles in school settings.” Students are expected to communicate their conclusions to a “range of audiences”, both in and out of the classroom. Students join efforts to critique and construct arguments and explanations as well as further refining their understanding. Perhaps most importantly students assess their individual and collective capacities for addressing problems and then apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures in making classroom decisions. In all the places where the social studies standards emphasize civic life, collaboration is fundamental to student success.	• Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions • Taking Informed Action