



EXPLORING
Social Studies
West Virginia

Research-Based Curriculum

Introduction

Exploring Social Studies: West Virginia Edition is a research-based, integrated English language arts curriculum in a non-textbook format that specifically addresses West Virginia content standards for history—social science, English language arts, and English language development. The series is a full-year, 100 percent standards-aligned, stand-alone curriculum. *Exploring Social Studies* builds literacy skills and social studies content knowledge with high-interest, leveled readers and primary sources. The lessons align with the C3 Framework from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the best practices prescribed in the 2025 West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Social Studies.

Exploring Social Studies Contributors

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Meeting the Standards through Inquiry

The West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Social Studies and the C3 Framework are guidelines to help teachers meet the challenge of teaching social studies. The C3 Framework is organized around the inquiry process of questioning, investigating, using evidence, and communicating conclusions. Students will consider or pose questions and then investigate those questions through the disciplinary lenses of civics, economics, geography, and history. Students develop problem-solving and critical-thinking strategies independently and collaboratively as they engage in informed inquiry in social studies (West Virginia Department of Education 2024). The C3 Framework calls for teachers to move students beyond memorizing narratives and toward becoming critical evaluators of our past and present society. The C3 Framework is organized in four dimensions as a means of engaging students in rigorous learning of the concepts, skills, and disciplinary tools they need to prepare for college, career, and civic life. The four dimensions are known as the Inquiry Arc (NCSS 2013).

Exploring Social Studies encourages an inquiry-based approach to social studies instruction that satisfies the West Virginia College- and Career-Readiness Standards for Social Studies and C3 Framework expectations. This approach enables students to deeply analyze primary sources in a variety of formats. This also helps students build their own understandings of historical events through multiple perspectives and facilitates authentic discussions among students. Specific essential questions encourage meaningful research where students exercise critical thinking to ask relevant questions. Key student-facing texts and teacher lessons deal specifically with citizenship and democratic values. Activities encourage students to get involved in their schools and communities and become responsible citizens who take action to solve problems.

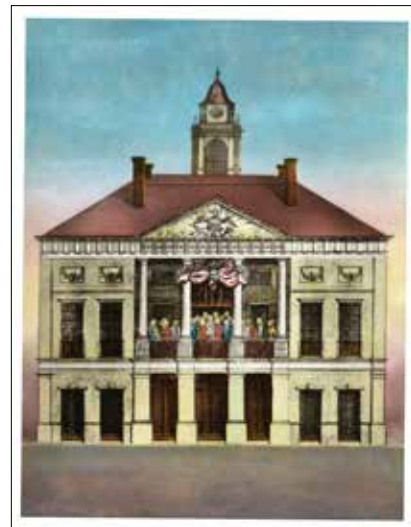


Primary Sources

The term *primary source* covers a wide range of materials linked by their connections to the past. Have your students ever held a map of colonial Virginia or read a historical diary entry from Salem? Have they seen colonial bank notes or the Bill of Rights? By their nature, primary sources increase students' content knowledge while allowing them to practice critical-thinking skills. Primary sources are engaging; they catch students' attention with special characteristics that stand out against a backdrop of textbooks and worksheets. Colors, textures, handwriting, graphics, and other features make primary sources inherently interesting (Potter 2005). Holding a letter written by a historical figure, examining a map that was carried into battle, or touching a document created centuries ago help students connect with their subject matter in a unique way.

According to Lee Ann Potter (2003), the three main reasons to teach with primary sources are that "they are a part of the past; they are with us today; and touching them allows us, quite literally, to touch and connect with the past" (372). Primary sources are materials created by participants from or witnesses to important events. They give firsthand accounts or provide direct evidence of a subject being studied. Primary sources can be printed texts, such as pamphlets, newspapers, and reports. They can be manuscripts and archival materials, such as diaries, letters, clothing, and tools. Visual materials include photographs, maps, and sketches that serve as primary sources. Audio and visual recordings are also important. And more recently, internet materials have become a category of their own (Lucy Scribner Library 2022).

The primary source kits included in this program are an extension of a series that began in 2001. For over 20 years, students around the world have benefited from the primary source photographs and document reproductions with accompanying lesson plans included in the *Exploring History through Primary Sources* series. The series has been awarded the Association of American Publishers' Distinguished Achievement Award as well as critical acclaim from educators.



Content-Area Readers

Exploring Social Studies includes high-interest, nonfiction readers filled with fascinating photos and primary source images. These books are perfect for improving students' social studies knowledge while simultaneously developing their reading and writing skills. Designed by Teacher Created Materials, our award-winning readers are utilized daily by teachers and students in classrooms around the world.

These readers bring the past to life and foster content-area literacy through reading and writing activities focused on social studies content. In addition to the content-area readers, every level of the series comes with two standards-based reader's theater scripts.

Think of these readers as individual chapters from a traditional social studies textbook, only they offer so much more. These leveled books differentiate instruction, develop academic vocabulary, and increase comprehension of civics, economics, geography, and history. Teachers will be able to plan instruction easily and efficiently by utilizing timelines provided for each reader, which are paired with standards-based learning objectives and engaging reading and writing activities outlined in every lesson.

The content-area readers included in this program are part of a series that began in 2004. Students around the world have benefited from the unique readers produced by the Teacher Created Materials team. The *Primary Source Readers* series was awarded the Association of American Publishers' Golden Lamp Award as well as Teacher Raves from *Scholastic Instructor* magazine. The *Building Fluency through Reader's Theater* series was awarded the Association of American Publishers' Distinguished Achievement Award and the Teachers' Choice Award from *Learning* magazine.



Student Inquiry Handbooks

Each level of *Exploring Social Studies: West Virginia* includes a Student Inquiry Handbook. These books provide practice activities for each of the West Virginia social studies standards. Each book is divided into five sections: Civics, Economics, Geography, History, and West Virginia History. The activity pages have their corresponding standards included in the top margins. This way, students will always know what they are learning.

Students will learn about their local, state, and federal governments. They'll also focus on the symbols of the United States and West Virginia. Students will study important economics topics. They will then relate economics to their lives in West Virginia. The geography section includes activities about maps, national parks, and diverse cultures in the state and around the world. In the history sections, students will study both primary and secondary sources. They will create time lines to look back at the past in North America and West Virginia.

Teachers have the flexibility to use the West Virginia Student Inquiry Handbook in a variety of ways in their classrooms.

Whole-Group Instruction

- Use the activity pages to preview new social studies content.
- Complete the activities as independent practice following social studies lessons.
- Use the activities as review materials before social studies tests.
- Incorporate the activities to engage students in deeper lessons on the content.

Small-Group Instruction

- Instruct students on content-area reading using the text-based activities in this book.
- Work in differentiated groups to reinforce teaching from whole-class social studies lessons.

Independent Work

- Complete activities as seat work or at learning centers after introducing content.
- Assign activities as homework or morning work to reinforce learning.



Student Inquiry Handbooks also available for grades 6–8.

Social Studies Literacy

The goal of literacy in social studies is to develop students' curiosity about the people and the world around them and to promote effective citizenship in a culturally diverse world. Studying relationships among people and between people and the environment helps students make better sense of the world in which they live. Another important goal of literacy in social studies is to introduce students to the idea of looking at the world and current issues through a historical lens. To accomplish these goals, students must learn how to investigate and reflect on various social, economic, cultural, religious, and geographical topics.



Each lesson in *Exploring Social Studies* offers multiple opportunities to foster curiosity, study relationships, and reflect on new learning. With these skills well in hand, students can understand the complexity of available information and consider perspectives they might otherwise overlook, which empowers them to become independent learners.

Reading Across the Content Areas

It is often regarded as the task of the English language arts teacher to guide students through the effective use of comprehension strategies as they read, but this is not true in today's classrooms. Although students read in almost every subject area, some teachers may overlook the need for guiding students through their reading tasks. Comprehension strategies best serve students when they are employed across the curricula and in the context of learning. It is only then that students can independently and successfully use the strategies while reading. Students will spend the majority of their adulthood reading nonfiction expository texts. With this in mind, teachers at all levels and in all subject areas must actively pursue ways to enhance students' abilities to understand nonfiction texts.

To become effective and efficient readers, students must utilize comprehension strategies automatically and independently. Students need to read *widely, critically, deeply, closely, and socially* (Allyn and Burns 2018). Only through engaging in meaningful activities with diverse, rigorous texts will students become independent thinkers who not only understand what they read, but also question and explore beyond it. *Exploring Social Studies* supports learners throughout the reading process.

The Reading Process

Teachers can optimize reading materials with students by utilizing the three-part framework of the reading process to facilitate social studies learning. To become effective and efficient readers, students must employ a wide range of literacy skills. Students develop these skills by actively engaging with content-rich text, building a breadth of knowledge and a deep understanding of vocabulary related to the content (Duke and Cartwright 2021). Deep and purposeful interactions with diverse, challenging texts allow for students to evolve into independent thinkers who comprehend text and are able to question and delve deeper into it. *Exploring Social Studies* serves as a valuable resource that supports students through each stage of the reading process.

Before Reading

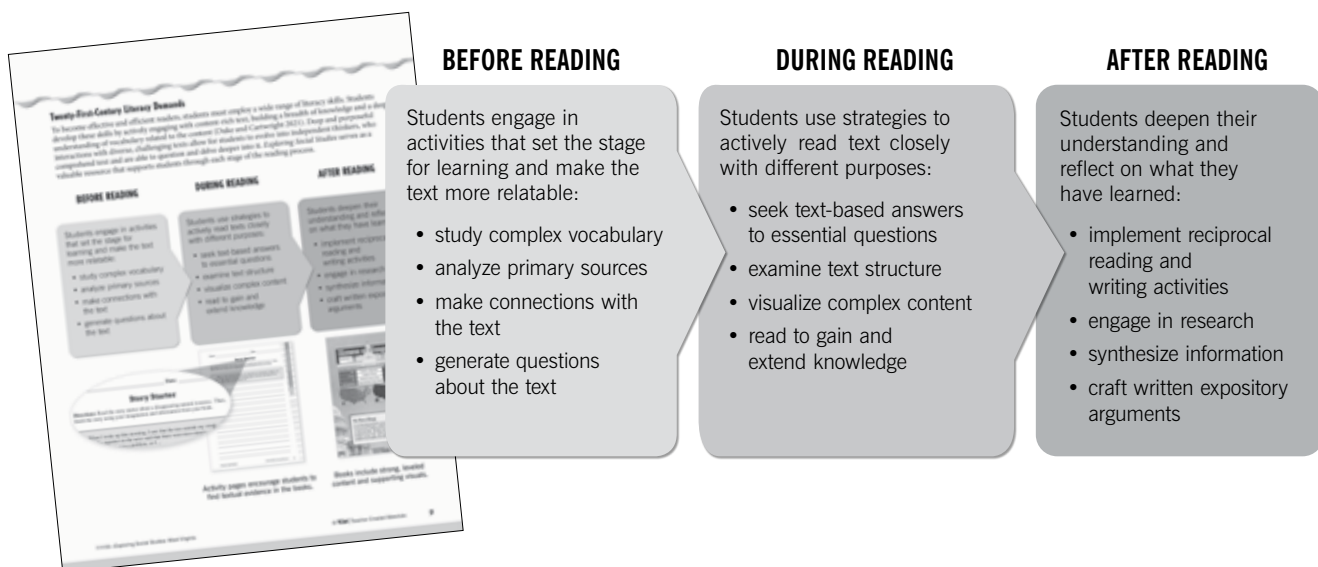
Prior to beginning a reading activity, teachers can set the stage for learning by generating interest in the topic, activating and building prior knowledge, and setting the purpose for reading. Teachers should also introduce key concepts and vocabulary to provide a critical foundation for conceptual understanding.

During Reading

In the during reading step, students actively read text aloud. In this stage of the reading process, students are engaged in answering questions (either self-generated or teacher-generated), monitoring their comprehension of the text, clarifying the purpose for reading, visualizing the information, and making connections.

After Reading

Students expand their understanding of the material after reading the text. During the final stage of the reading process, students build connections among the bits of information they have read, deepening their understandings and reflecting on what they have learned.



Developing Academic Vocabulary

There is a strong connection among phonics, vocabulary knowledge, reading comprehension, and academic success. Throughout *Exploring Social Studies*, vocabulary instruction is integral to the literacy lessons. Students cannot readily learn content from words they do not understand (National Reading Panel 2000). Students need explicit vocabulary instruction before reading a text to better understand the content.

Reading is even more complicated for English learners and struggling readers. It is not enough to give students lists of words and have them look up definitions in dictionaries or glossaries. Learners need context-embedded vocabulary activities that acquaint them with the necessary and most central words for comprehension of the content. *Exploring Social Studies* includes vocabulary activities designed to familiarize students with new vocabulary words, promote authentic practice, and encourage the understanding of meanings in context.



Writing Across the Curriculum

Writing is the means through which students can articulate complex ideas and synthesize concepts. Writing is a tool that students use to investigate and share their understanding of social studies. Writing allows students to translate complex ideas into words and language they understand. With this in mind, each lesson in *Exploring Social Studies* features activities that encourage students to take action by using what they have learned and applying it through writing. There are opportunities for students to write analytically from both text and visual sources. A wide variety of writing assignments encourage discussion, develop critical-thinking skills, and help students become actively engaged. Writing is woven throughout the lessons and includes diverse activities that allow students to demonstrate mastery of content.



Citizenship and Responsive Teaching

Whether students are studying American history, world geography, or economics, an underlying goal of social studies education is to prepare students to fulfill their citizenship responsibilities. *Exploring Social Studies* incorporates primary sources into the program as an effective way to teach critical thinking about complex content. Many primary sources reinforce responsible citizenship actions, such as voting and petitioning the government (Potter 2005). By using an inquiry-based approach, students are put into the position of being historians who must analyze primary sources. Rather than being told what to think, students discover social studies for themselves by studying multiple perspectives and points of view.

The learning materials in *Exploring Social Studies* reflect our world today. The materials allow students to drive their own learning and meet their individual needs as learners. The images in the student readers and the primary source collections represent our world in a way students can relate to and understand. Special callouts in the lessons allow students to compare and contrast the texts to their own lives and experiences. This helps foster classroom discussions and critical thinking. Specific activities in the student texts encourage students to get involved in their schools and communities. These activities support the goal of civic engagement in today's youth. The culminating activities allow students to show what they have learned in engaging and collaborative ways. Students work in groups to identify and solve problems in their schools, communities, nation, or the world.

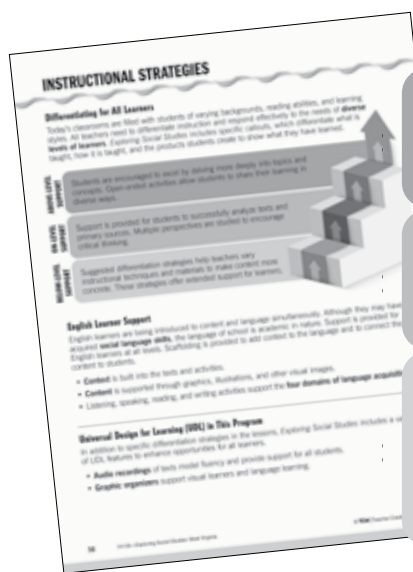


Instructional Strategies and Differentiation for Deeper Learning

Today's classrooms are filled with students of varying backgrounds, reading abilities, and learning styles. All teachers need to differentiate instruction and respond effectively to the needs of diverse levels of learners. This series uses complex and compelling texts to teach social studies content. These texts have been leveled with a focus on scaffolding the readability to make the content accessible. A range of reading levels is provided in each kit to give teachers the flexibility to use a variety of groupings and instructional settings to teach social studies.

Exploring Social Studies includes specific callouts that differentiate what is taught, how it is taught, and the products students create to show what they have learned. Suggested differentiation strategies help teachers vary instructional techniques and materials to make content more concrete for all learners. Support to successfully analyze texts and primary sources is provided throughout the series. Multiple perspectives are studied to encourage critical thinking. Students are encouraged to excel by delving more deeply into topics and concepts. Open-ended activities allow all learners to share their learning in diverse ways.

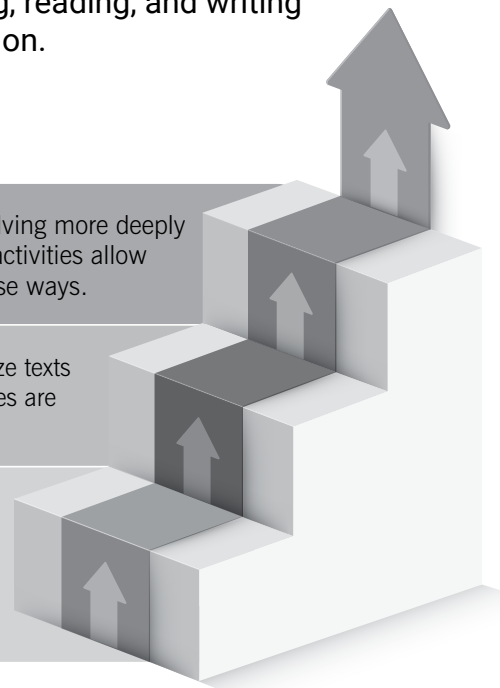
English learners are being introduced to content and language simultaneously. Although they may have acquired social language skills, the language of school is academic in nature. Support is provided for emerging, expanding, and bridging English learners. Scaffolding is provided to add context to the language and to connect the content to students. Extra time is given to practice applying vocabulary from the text. Context is built into the texts and activities. Content is supported through graphics, illustrations, and other visual images. Listening, speaking, reading, and writing activities support the four domains of language acquisition.



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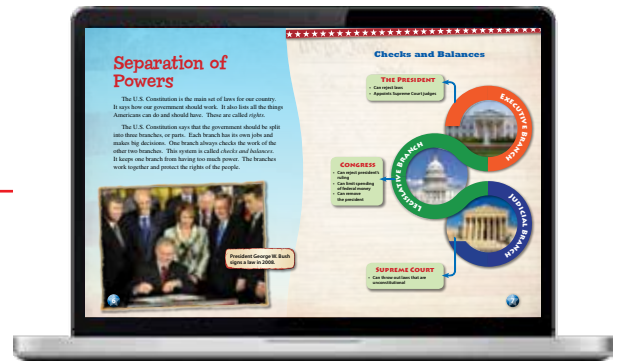
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Digital Learning Resources

Research shows that “technology—when implemented properly—can produce significant gains in student achievement and boost engagement” (Alliance for Excellent Education 2014, 1). Students need to use technology to explore and create rather than use it for practice or test preparation. The Digital Learning Resources provided in *Exploring Social Studies* offer opportunities to add greater accessibility beyond print resources through images, audio recordings, videos, and interactive eBooks. These resources enhance student learning in a variety of instructional settings, support English language acquisition, and further content and literacy learning. To support formative assessment implementation and evaluation of student work, several rubrics are also provided for each grade level in the Digital Learning Resources.



Assessment

“In education, assessment refers to the wide variety of methods or tools that educators use to evaluate, measure, and document the academic readiness, learning progress, skill acquisition, or educational needs of students” (Abbott 2015, 1). Assessment is an indispensable learning and teaching tool in today’s classrooms. Teachers use the data gained from assessments to guide their instruction. They need to know whether to scaffold a lesson, differentiate an assignment, or make other instructional decisions to support the diverse learners in the classroom. *Exploring Social Studies* offers multiple assessment opportunities. The assessments require students to demonstrate chronological thinking, comprehension of content-area readers, and the ability to write evidence-based responses.

Norman Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) outline (1997) has become an exceptional tool educators can use to evaluate the intellectual requirements intended by assessment tasks. Assessment within *Exploring Social Studies* covers DOK Level 1 questions with multiple-choice quizzes. These quizzes ask students to recall, identify, and recognize concepts. DOK activities for Levels 2 and 3 are covered by the student activity sheets within each lesson and the document-based assessments. Students are asked to demonstrate mastery of the concepts covered in each lesson by utilizing strategic thinking and reasoning. DOK activities for Level 4 are covered by the culminating activities within each primary sources kit. Culminating activities offer high levels of engagement while allowing students to demonstrate a deeper knowledge of the content.

Rubrics are provided to support formative assessment and evaluation of student work. For each grade-level resource, a *Fluency Rubric* is provided to assess the components of reading fluency. Going beyond decoding accurately, students become fluent by reading accurately, with expression, and at a good pace. Each grade-level resource includes a *Document-Based Assessment Rubric*. This tool will assist in evaluating student progress in their critical-thinking and problem-solving skills. The responses require higher-order thinking skills from students. The questions offer opportunities for students to display their organizational and communication skills in writing.



Program Contributors and Consultants

With decades of classroom experience and a wealth of historical knowledge and educational expertise, Emily R. Smith, M.A.Ed., Andrew Greene, M.A.Ed., and the editorial staff of Teacher Created Materials have put together an engaging and unique social studies program for West Virginia students. *Exploring Social Studies* utilizes 12 reader's theater lessons and 100 nonfiction texts to deliver a research-based, history—social science program that students and teachers will enjoy throughout the school year.

Along with more than 70 contributors to the series (see Appendix A), three education experts provided additional insight during the development of the program. Each focused on an important research-based aspect on which *Exploring Social Studies* is based: literacy best practices, a strong social studies foundation, and key English language support. Essays written by these experts on this foundational research for the program are included in the teacher's guides within the series as well as Appendix A of this document.

Lead Contributors and Consultants

Diane Lapp, Ed.D., offered her insight regarding language arts integration in a social studies framework. Dr. Lapp is a distinguished professor at San Diego State University. She is also an instructional coach at Health Sciences Middle School in San Diego. Throughout her career, Dr. Lapp has taught students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Her major areas of research and instruction relate to the planning and assessment of very intentional instruction and learning.

Andrea Johnson, Ph.D., provided history—social science content knowledge to the series. Dr. Johnson is an assistant professor of history at California State University, Dominguez Hills. She specializes in the intersection of religion and social activism in California and the American South. Her previous work includes studies of abolitionists, the impact of religious imagery on the promotion of the civil rights and California farm labor movements of the 1950s and 60s, and religion and culture.

Eugenia Mora-Flores, Ed.D., worked with the editors to offer English language development support. Dr. Mora-Flores is a professor at the Rossier School of Education at the University of Southern California. She teaches courses on first and second language acquisition, Latino culture, and literacy development. Her research interests include studies on effective practices in developing the language and literacy skills of English learners in grades pre-K–12. Dr. Mora-Flores also works as a consultant in the areas of language development and writing.

Emily R. Smith, M.A.Ed., is an award-winning content director and former elementary teacher. Ms. Smith attended the College of William and Mary, where she earned her American studies degree and her education degree. Her team has created social studies, mathematics, differentiation, and technology products, as well as professional resources, since 2000 at Teacher Created Materials. Her experience and insight are valuable tools as she strives to create thoughtful, original products and deliver them in flexible and innovative ways.

Andrew Greene, M.A.Ed., served as the editorial lead on the series. Mr. Greene attended the University of Northern Iowa, where he earned his elementary education degree. With 10 years of teaching experience in elementary classrooms in California and Iowa, Mr. Greene was able to ensure that all lessons in *Exploring Social Studies* are easily accessible and highly engaging for teachers and students alike. He also has an undergraduate degree in history and infused his passion for social studies throughout the series.

Appendix A

Instruction and Materials to Build Democratic Values

By Diane Lapp, Ed.D.

Being an educator means that you probably think a lot about school. You may remember that, as a student, you liked school and even secretly liked tests. You probably did pretty well. We are teachers, and liking school and learning is just who we are and what we do.

Realizing this, let's have some fun and take a quiz. Number your paper from 1 to 10.

What Do You Know?

1. Can you remember who the president was during the Korean War?
2. What are the first 10 amendments to the Constitution called?
3. How is the U.S. House of Representatives elected?
4. Who wrote the Declaration of Independence?
5. What caused the fall of the Roman Empire?
6. Can you name the Great Lakes?
7. In what continent is Ethiopia located?
8. What are the three branches of the U.S. government?
9. What were the causes of the Great Depression?
10. While you're looking up the answers, how about explaining the Jim Crow system or how the United States got involved in World War I?

How did you do? What did you remember from your studies of history, geography, economics, and civics? Why is it that many of us probably couldn't remember all the details of our K–12 social studies instruction, but we have a mental time line of the big events of history that allows us to visualize geographical locations, economic connections, and government involvement? We are generally able, as citizens, to understand our nation and how the societies of the world function and affect each other. This knowledge, which allows our membership in an informed citizenry, is well grounded in the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies.

The C3 Framework was designed in collaboration with 15 professional organizations. It is currently the guiding document of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). This document was designed to aid educators as they select and develop

curriculum and related instruction “to teach content, develop inquiry-based critical-thinking skills, improve reading comprehension and expository writing ability, and promote an engaged and knowledgeable citizenry in history and the related social sciences” (NCSS 2013, 1).

The C3 Framework, an instructional tool, has been shared by the NCSS to guide the social studies instructional decisions of educators. The C3 Framework is not intended to mandate particular content to be taught, how it is to be taught, or when it is to be taught.

If you peruse the Framework, it becomes obvious that teachers are being urged to engage students in learning experiences that cause them to become self-actualized learners who inquire about the world in which they live, and also to identify how to actively investigate the phenomena they notice around them. To support student inquiry, teachers are encouraged to select materials and to design instruction that cause students to pose questions and pursue their own investigations. Instruction that promotes students’ beliefs that they are capable of identifying and pursuing knowledge will result in their having a high degree of self-efficacy, which is exactly what will promote their continued involvement with social science issues as engaged and literate citizens. Students who are supported in developing their own sense of inquiry, as well as an awareness of how to pursue their own learning, will realize that their voices can shape the political landscapes of their schools and their future environments.

Purposeful instructional planning involves selecting materials that align well with standards and encourage collaboration around topics involving historical thinking designed to advance one’s civic engagement. *Exploring Social Studies* advances such thinking through inquiry-based lessons integrating history, geography, economics, and civics. Student engagement is fostered through hands-on exploration of topics shared via interactive ebooks and recordings that move beyond a traditional paper and pencil format. Multiple perspectives of a topic are shared, causing students to become critical evaluators of historical events. With that in mind, students realize that their questions become the foundation for their further investigations. Such inquiry-based learning is a hallmark of *Exploring Social Studies*.

Lessons begin with overviews that identify objectives and key information to support more extensive planning. In each lesson, students are also introduced to primary source documents and activities that involve their close engagement with texts. In addition to reading, students use these informational sources as the foundation to participate in language and writing experiences that foster literacy as well as social studies development.

Teachers also receive implementation support through the Professional Development Library that reinforces students’ work through independent or small-group activities where they are asked thought-provoking questions that invite deep thinking and analysis of social science events and issues. As students work, teachers have

the opportunity to listen in on their discussions and dialogues and assess their engagement and learning. When students are purposefully engaged, they are learning.

Student concentration, persistence, and engagement are characteristics of effective learning. Positive student engagement has an excellent chance of occurring when purposeful teachers select very powerful materials that support the learning expectations for every student. *Exploring Social Studies* is one such material that has been designed to support the never-ending cycle: curricular planning, instructional implementation, success monitoring, and feedback to propel every student forward. This effective social studies material, placed in the hands of a powerful teacher, will ensure that students develop a sense of self in a world of people and events governed by values and rules. Their developing knowledge will support their action-oriented understandings of peaceful and prosperous survival among nations and environments.

History—Social Science Content Knowledge

By Andrea Johnson, Ph.D.

Today's standards and the C3 Framework from the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) are guidelines to help teachers meet the challenge of teaching social studies. The C3 Framework calls for teachers to move students beyond memorizing narratives and toward becoming critical evaluators of our past and present society to better prepare students for college, career, and civic life. The C3 Framework does not suggest a common set of content standards, but rather it recommends skill levels applicable to a variety of content standards defined by individual localities. Concepts and values important at the local and national levels can still be taught, but students also learn skills that can help them transform society.

Exploring Social Studies is designed to help teachers implement inquiry-based learning. In these kits, students are not tied to a traditional text. Instead, they meet the four dimensions of the C3 Framework by exploring diverse aspects of social studies and developing comprehension skills through a series of short content-area readers that also contain primary sources. In Dimension 1 of the C3 Framework, teachers are encouraged to think about Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries. The *Exploring Social Studies* curriculum is designed to help with this process. Each unit is framed by an essential question, and lessons conclude with revisiting primary sources and reflecting on the text. In addition, the readers contain activities that require students to be engaged in planning their own inquiries through activities such as journaling, scrapbooking, cartoon analysis, and debates.

Dimension 2 calls for students to work toward Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools from Civics, Economics, Geography, and History. To apply such concepts and tools, it is necessary that students have exposure to a broad curriculum in social studies as provided by *Exploring Social Studies*.

Students need an understanding of our history to value the institutions and systems of government we have now. Students also need a diverse understanding of the past so that they understand historical experiences and re-examine current policy while developing a growing understanding of people who may come from a different class or ethnic group or express gender in a different way than themselves. Students also need the other social sciences, such as geography, economics, and civics, to help them understand the potential impact of choices they make. With knowledge of history, students can identify when change is necessary. Knowledge of the other social sciences can help students discover how change is possible and make predictions about expected outcomes. Every lesson contains a primary source activity and related handouts. Students completing the lessons will develop skills familiar to the historical discipline as they learn how a variety of primary sources work and apply their understanding of these sources in follow-up activities. Geography skills are reinforced through the frequent inclusion of maps and the discussions of the impact of events on multiple geographic areas of the state.

In Dimension 3, students work on Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence, becoming miniature researchers, seeking to identify and acquire academically appropriate sources, evaluating those sources, and making resulting claims. In particular, this process teaches them discipline-specific methodology. For instance, in this curriculum, students learn how to find and evaluate primary sources, just as professional historians do.

With Dimension 4, students work on Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. If we accept that a willingness to transform society for the better makes one a good participant in civic life, then students should be expected to critically examine information, assess its potential to affect society, and act accordingly. Suggested questions for the end of the unit include those that require students to go beyond their readings and think about the long-term impact of events and people, thus reinforcing not only the material, but also the concept that individuals can transform society.

I am glad that you have chosen *Exploring Social Studies*. This curriculum will help teachers of social studies rise to meet the challenges of teaching in the discipline while meeting the C3 Framework, and best of all, students will enjoy the escape from the traditional textbook and embrace the challenges of this inquiry-based learning model.

English Language Development Support

By Eugenia Mora-Flores, Ed.D.

Classrooms today are filled with a range of diverse student populations with unique abilities and needs that contribute to their academic success. Part of the classroom dynamic includes students who come from countries outside the United States, who speak many different languages, and who contribute valuable cultural and familial

assets. Though language is part of all students' educations, students whose first language is not English require specialized attention to their language needs when working to develop academic English and content knowledge simultaneously.

As of 2014, all states in the United States have English learners (ELs) in their classrooms. The number of ELs ranges from one state to another, but the presence of ELs continues to grow with over 4.9 million currently enrolled in U.S. public schools (U.S. Department of Education 2017). Decades of research have continued to prove that programs that support students' primary language are most effective in educating ELs. A recent report, *Promoting the Educational Success of Children and Youth Learning English: Promising Futures* by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine (2017), reveals that a key instructional practice for ELs K–12 includes “developing academic language during content area instruction” (7). To become proficient in English and succeed academically, ELs need ample opportunities to access, use, and produce language through rich, contextualized content. This product does just that. It supports ELs in their academic language development by providing opportunities to learn English through the context of social studies.

Social studies explores the past, present, and future of a people. As part of this inquiry process, students are able to draw on personal experiences and the life histories of their families and communities. The personal connections that students draw upon help them learn and make the content of social studies meaningful and authentic. Even when specific historical details may be unfamiliar, the big ideas and concepts that transcend specific historical times make all history relevant. For English learners, when language may be challenging to understand, students can draw on familiar conceptual understandings that help them make meaning of what they are hearing, seeing, and learning.

The language of social studies, like other disciplines, has very specialized vocabulary that may seem unfamiliar to students, but as they begin to understand the meaning of these words, students can begin to make connections. For example, they may not know the word *senate*, but when they learn about the system of government, they can begin to make meaning of what the word means and use that knowledge to learn and remember the specialized vocabulary.

Seminal research by James Cummins (1991) describes the ability of English learners to use previously learned cognitive knowledge to develop a second language. He refers to this concept as Common Underlying Proficiencies. The proficiencies include knowledge, concepts, and skills. In other words, once a student learns something in any language, it is learned, regardless of the language. For example, a student learns about the concept of family and the diversity of families in their home country in their first language. When they enter school in the United States, they don't have to relearn the concept of family and diversity. However, they will need to learn the English words for how to describe family and diversity. With the familiar content of social studies and the concepts it reinforces, ELs are at a wonderful advantage to utilize a wide range of Common Underlying Proficiencies to guide their learning and academic language development.

The ability for ELs to make connections with social studies content further initiates the inquiry process. They will naturally want to ask questions and have many wonderings about why something happened, what might happen, when did it happen, and so on. Children are naturally inquisitive, and social studies presents experiences and content that encourage their curiosity. When students ask questions, it provides opportunities to further engage in discussions.

ELs need ample opportunities to interact with their peers and practice their oral language development. Research consistently shows that one of the most effective instructional practices to supporting ELs is talking and interacting with peers (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine 2017). When ELs engage in discussions, they practice using the language of analysis, inferencing, substantiating a claim, supporting a point of view, and other higher-order thinking processes. English learners will also have opportunities to hear other students use complex academic language and, through interactive opportunities, engage in feedback processes (Swain and Lapkin 1995). They can learn from others and develop their own language abilities through interaction.

Additionally, the conceptual nature of history allows students to draw on cognates. Cognates are words that have similar pronunciation, spelling, and meaning from one language to another. For example, cognates are words like *independence*—*independencia* and *declaration*—*declaración*. Drawing on students' primary languages whenever possible to support their access to English is always beneficial.

The resources available in social studies education further support ELs. The range of materials and resources that can tell the story of history and social studies from different perspectives and points of view enhances the learning experience. For example, if students were studying the Civil War, they could view a documentary, review primary sources, read books from different perspectives, review art and music from that era, and collectively get a strong understanding of the time and place. The varied visual and auditory access to content enhances the learning experience for ELs (Llosa et al. 2016). Imagine being new to a language and trying to learn about the Battle of Gettysburg by only reading a text in a language that is new to you. It would be very difficult. But if you view a video, look at still photos, and explore primary documents, a variety of ideas, concepts, and knowledge begins to emerge from your previously learned knowledge and the varied stimulation and presentation of content.

English learners benefit from interacting with their peers to access content, interact with content and one another, and practice using language to share their learning. Social studies content provides them an authentic vehicle for developing language and learning about themselves and the world they live in.

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