

CONNECTICUT STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
Hartford
Position Statement on
Comprehensive Social Studies Education for All Students
K-12 and Beyond

July 9, 2014

The Connecticut State Board of Education believes that the first guiding principle that forms the foundation for educating all students in Connecticut's public schools, regardless of a student's age, grade level, or school configuration is: that schools must provide challenging and rigorous programs of study to all students to prepare them to become fully educated, responsible citizens.

To achieve this guiding principle, all schools in Connecticut must provide meaningful and relevant programs in social studies. A comprehensive social studies education integrates the study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence and embeds the goals of college, career and civic readiness education for all. In addition, a meaningful and relevant social studies education integrates the study of civics, economics, geography, history and the other social sciences through an inquiry-based instructional approach that is grounded in rich local, state, national and global historical content.

The Board believes that Connecticut's schools must increase their efforts to provide a comprehensive social studies education that motivates and prepares all students to achieve the essential literacy and critical-thinking skills indispensable to understanding our nation and the world, including contemporary issues and their related historical, geographic, economic and cultural factors. Similarly, social studies skills such as deep, critical reading and evidence-based writing skills are needed to close the achievement gap. To achieve this goal, the Board supports an inquiry-based approach to social studies education that promotes a deep understanding of the history of our nation and the world; promotes culturally responsive education, tolerance and diversity; and values cultural understanding and empathy. Likewise, the Board believes that adequate time and resources must be provided so that students can build a sound foundation of content knowledge and social studies skills that enhances their success in a globally complex economy and prepares them to enter and compete in a diverse and globally driven workforce where economics, geography, technology and culture play a vital role. Additionally, a comprehensive social studies education encourages students to display ethical and moral behaviors, motivates students to participate in civics and service learning activities, and inspires students to take social studies out of the classroom and into their local communities.

The Board believes that every student becomes a citizen and every student deserves a high-quality, comprehensive, rigorous social studies education that is rich in content and that builds interdisciplinary literacy, problem-solving, critical-thinking and effective communication skills. The Board believes that every Connecticut student must receive a comprehensive, rigorous social studies education that promotes the understanding that the diverse heritage of the United States is our greatest strength. The Board also believes a challenging and comprehensive social studies education provides students with the knowledge and skills necessary to close the achievement gap in our schools and provides all students with the educational foundation necessary to become active and responsible citizens in our communities, state, nation and world.

The Board further believes that teachers play a vital role in helping students develop into informed and thoughtful citizens who participate in their communities, act politically and exercise moral and civic virtues. It is critical for teachers at all levels to instill the importance of social studies in their students by developing meaningful, value-based, challenging and active curricula. As a part of a quality social studies program, all students must be held to expectations of high achievement as defined by the Connecticut Social Studies Framework. Therefore, social studies instruction should be meaningful and relevant and include inquiry-based instructional methodology that promotes competence in local, national and global historical content and concepts.

Comprehensive Social Studies Education for all Students K-12 and Beyond: Guidelines for Policymakers

The Connecticut State Board of Education provides the following guidelines to support collaboration among the state's various stakeholders to build a content-intensive, high-quality, comprehensive, coordinated and culturally responsive social studies program for all Connecticut students, K-12. High-quality social studies instruction should be content rich, inquiry based, and address the core social studies areas of civics, economics, geography, history and the social sciences. Areas of historical instruction should include local, state, national and global content. The realization of this vision is critical for our students' futures as active and engaged citizens and promotes their ability to succeed in a globally competitive economy.

- **Responsibilities of Department of Education**

- Lead a statewide effort to increase the quality of social studies education at the elementary, middle and high school levels.
- Develop, adapt and publish a rigorous social studies framework that clearly identifies a sequenced progression of key social studies content, concepts and skills that all students need in preparation for college, career and civic life.
- Provide oversight and resources for social studies education through the services of a dedicated, full-time, highly qualified Social Studies Education Consultant at the State Department of Education.
- Provide appropriate professional development opportunities for social studies educators.
- Ensure all Connecticut schools and districts provide high-quality social studies education for all students in elementary, middle and high school.
- Partner with higher education institutions, businesses and nonprofit organizations to strengthen social studies instruction and student interest in civics, economics, geography, history and other social science career paths.
- Ensure that social studies educators at all grade levels hold the appropriate teaching certification.
- Encourage all schools and districts to address local, state and global content and concepts within their social studies curricula.
- Work with professional social studies organizations in Connecticut to provide professional development programs, honor excellence in social studies education, and promote high-quality social studies instruction for all students.

- **Responsibilities of School Districts**

- Develop and implement a coherent and coordinated social studies curriculum that is aligned with learning expectations set forth in the Connecticut Social Studies Framework.
- Provide a safe, effective learning environment at all grade levels.
- Provide meaningful professional development, resources, instructional materials and technologies to support inquiry-based learning and the development of student and teacher compelling created questions in social studies.
- Promote civic virtue, allow students to practice democratic processes and encourage meaningful connections between classroom and real-world experiences.
- Promote classroom instruction that is based in critical thinking, discourse, service learning and extracurricular activities that connect to democratic processes.
- Provide professional development to teachers in social studies content, pedagogy and interdisciplinary instruction.
- Employ "highly qualified teachers" who are knowledgeable about the content, methods and pedagogy of

social studies.

- Provide time for teachers to collaborate and develop rich social studies lessons, inquiry investigations, and interdisciplinary project-based assessments that facilitate student achievement.
- Encourage community participation in social studies events such as the state and National History Day programs, Model Congress and Model U.N. programs, and the Connecticut Geography Bee during and beyond the school day to promote the importance of social studies education, active citizenship and democratic dialogue.
- Promote opportunities to learn about local history, including the exploration of local roots in agricultural and manufacturing heritage, and participation in place-based learning within the community. Community partnerships should include collaboration with local historical societies, libraries, veterans' organizations, the municipal government and service providers to bring social studies out of the classroom and into the community at large.

- **Responsibilities of Elementary Grades**

- Provide students a meaningful, value-based, challenging and active social studies curriculum, aligned with the Connecticut Social Studies Framework, that includes local and state history.
- Provide comparable instructional time and resources to social studies as is provided for other core content areas.
- Provide students with multiple opportunities every week to experience social studies inquiry that develop students' abilities to question, apply disciplinary concepts, analyze sources and communicate results.
- Develop and implement interdisciplinary, project-based assessments that provide opportunities for choice, research, deep reading from multiple points of view, critical thinking, evidence-based writing and varied presentations of learning that involve audiences outside the classroom.
- Provide social studies enrichment opportunities that foster student engagement and develop habits of mind, along with foundational skills and inquiry, as a scaffold to future learning and real-world participation in civics and social studies.

- **Responsibilities of Middle Grades**

- Provide students a meaningful, challenging, inquiry-based and active social studies curriculum, aligned with the Connecticut Social Studies Framework that includes, but is not limited to, local and state history.
- Provide comparable instructional time and resources to social studies as is provided for other core content areas.
- Promote classroom instruction that is based in critical thinking, discourse, inquiry, questioning, service learning and extracurricular activities that connect to democratic ideals, student involvement in school governance and simulations of democratic processes.
- Provide opportunities in the classroom that develop students' abilities to work collaboratively to formulate questions; develop and apply interdisciplinary tools and concepts; and analyze sources, communicate learning and take action.
- Develop and implement interdisciplinary, project-based assessments that provide opportunities for choice, research, deep reading from multiple points of view, critical thinking, informed evidenced-based writing, and varied presentations of learning that involve audiences outside the classroom.
- Ensure a curriculum that is content rich and focuses on developing a strong sense of national identity, ethics, group and other-centeredness, and a global perspective.
- Promote civic virtue and encourage meaningful connections between classroom and real-world experiences.
- Provide opportunities for students to explore careers in social studies.
- Encourage students to participate in social studies competitions and enrichment activities, such as History Day in Connecticut.

- **Responsibilities of High School Grades**

- Provide students a content-rich, meaningful, challenging, inquiry-based and active social studies curriculum, aligned with the Connecticut Social Studies Framework.
- Provide all high school students with a wide variety of choice when selecting social studies electives in the social science disciplines.
- Expose students to a variety of cultures, ideologies and philosophies that may be different from their own.
- Develop and provide inquiry-and project-based assessments that offer a wide variety of choice and actively encourage civic engagement.
- Instruct students in the art of academic and professional writing.
- Instruct and provide students with the opportunity to collaborate and communicate by using a wide range of technology.
- Provide students with learning opportunities that will allow them to engage in social/civic discourse with their peers and teachers that revolve around contemporary, domestic and global issues.
- Expose students to multiple forms of media to increase literacy across differing forms of print and electronic information.
- Provide opportunities for students to challenge themselves academically by offering rigorous Advanced Placement or equivalent college-level courses.
- Maintain class sizes that encourage discourse and a more personalized instructional experience.
- Develop and implement academic extra curricular activities that engage students and facilitate critical thinking activities.
- Advise students, when selecting/enrolling in appropriate courses for the next academic year, to select courses that will increase their understanding of civics, economics, geography, history and other social sciences.
- Encourage staff to continually model good academic and civic behavior for students.

- **Responsibilities of Teachers**

- Be reflective in planning, implementing and assessing a meaningful and engaging social studies curriculum.
- Recognize that students do not become responsible, participating citizens automatically and that teachers play a meaningful role in helping students develop into informed, thoughtful and active citizens.
- Develop rigorous, standards-based unit and lesson plans using the Connecticut Social Studies Framework and the National Council for the Social Studies, College, Career and Civic Readiness (C3) as guides.
- Develop safe learning environments where students can ask and answer questions, discuss and debate implications, and participate in compelling project-based assessments that call for critical thinking and evidenced-based writing.
- Develop an awareness of their values and how those values influence their teaching.
- Assess student learning from multiple perspectives and with multiple points of data.
- Model active, lifelong learning habits and a professional demeanor for students.
- Hold all students to high expectations as defined by the Connecticut state Social Studies Framework.
- Develop and/or expand repertoires of engaging, thoughtful teaching strategies that allow students to analyze content in a variety of learning modes.
- Provide frequent and varied opportunities for students to read, write and discuss social studies issues.
- Embed interdisciplinary connections in social studies lessons and inquiries.
- Vary the student and teacher roles and use a variety of approaches, strategies and materials to support students' independence, interests, and abilities.
- Create opportunities for learners to discuss civic values, engage in real-world problem solving, and make decisions that are respectful of the dignity and rights of individuals.
- Stay current in social studies content and pedagogy by actively participating in professional development

programs and conferences throughout one's career.

- Provide interdisciplinary and project-based assessments and use the results to inform instruction and measure student learning.
- Collaborate with peers to improve social studies education for all students.

- **Responsibilities of Higher Education Institutions**

- Develop and implement high-quality, research-based social studies/history programs within their schools of education.
- Attract and retain academically advanced students in the pursuit of social studies/history careers.
- Ensure that pre-service teachers are provided meaningful and relevant course work that is grounded in research-based methodology and the Connecticut Social Studies Framework.
- Employ the services of a social studies coordinator to provide leadership in the development, implementation, evaluation and refinement of curriculum and programs related to social studies education.
- Analyze data used to evaluate student achievement and program and curriculum effectiveness.
- Seek out and develop strategic partnerships with school districts to support and enhance the teaching of social studies at the elementary, middle and high school levels.
- Provide pre-service teachers with an opportunity to complete field-service requirements in urban, suburban and rural schools.
- Ensure that pre-service teachers are placed with highly qualified, master teachers that hold Connecticut certification in the fields of social studies and/or history for their student-teaching assignments.
- Encourage faculty involvement and leadership in social studies reform initiatives and various social studies/history organizations.

- **Opportunities for Families and Community to support Social Studies**

- Reinforce the fact that social studies/history education is important and relevant to becoming a well-rounded, informed citizen.
- Provide multiple opportunities to engage children in conversations about social studies issues and current events.
- Encourage children to read about historical and current events.
- Communicate and collaborate with school personnel to ensure that children are receiving a quality and content-rich social studies program.
- Become involved and engaged in social studies extracurricular activities and competitions.
- Advocate for strong social studies curricula within the community.
- Provide resources and support where appropriate to enhance the study of social studies within the school community.

- **Opportunities (to Support) for Business and Industry Stakeholders**

- Develop strategic partnerships with schools and districts that support and enhance the study of social studies.
- Provide students with meaningful internship opportunities where appropriate.
- Provide resources that expand student awareness of the local, state, national and global community in which they live.
- Actively sponsor, support and participate in extracurricular social studies activities.

- **Opportunities for Museums and Other Groups**

- Develop strategic partnerships with schools and districts that support and enhance the study of social studies.
- Encourage schools to use museums as a center for research and scholarship.

- Offer engaging, historically accurate, positive experiences for children of all ages and abilities in an environment where all children feel they can contribute.
- Develop in-house staff training programs to prepare museum educators with best-teaching practices so they are equipped to meet the needs of students in the 21st century.
- Provide educational materials, resources and outreach activities to school districts.
- Loan materials from museum collections, where appropriate, to schools.
- Encourage museums to display children’s work and involve schools in exhibition design.

References:

CSBE Position Statement on Principles of Underlying Education Prekindergarten through Grade 12, adopted April 6, 2005.

CSBE Position Statement on Culturally Responsive Education, adopted May 4, 2011.

CSBE Position Statement on Arts Education, adopted February 4, 2009.

CCSS Public Affairs Committee Webpage and the NCSS definition of social studies as, “the integrated study of social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence.”

“Revitalizing Civic Learning in Our Schools.” NCSS Position Statement.

http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/revitalizing_civic_learning.

“Powerful and Purposeful Teaching and Learning in Elementary School Social Studies.” NCSS Position Statement.

<http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/powerfulandpurposeful>.

“Social Studies in the Middle School.” NCSS Position Statement. <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/middleschool>.

“A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficacy.”

NCSS Position Statement. <http://www.socialstudies.org/positions/powerful>.

Social Studies Position Statement Outline (based on “[Position Statement on Science Education](#),” SDE, 2008.) See also:

“[Position Statement on English Language Arts Education](#),” SDE, 2008.