

Acknowledgments

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Introduction

Background

The Atlantic Canada social studies curriculum was planned and developed by regional committees whose deliberations were guided by considerations of the learners and input from teachers. The regional committees consisted of teachers, other educators, and consultants with a diverse range of experiences and backgrounds in education. Each curriculum level was strongly influenced by current social studies research as well as developmentally appropriate pedagogy.

Aim of Social Studies

The vision for the Atlantic Canada social studies curriculum is to enable and encourage students to examine issues, respond critically and creatively, and make informed decisions as individuals and as citizens of Canada and of an increasingly interdependent world.

An effective social studies curriculum prepares students to achieve all essential graduation learnings. In particular, social studies, more than any other curriculum area, is vital in developing citizenship. Social studies embodies the main principles of democracy, such as freedom, equality, human dignity, justice, rule of law, and civic rights and responsibilities. It provides opportunities for students to explore multiple approaches that may be used to analyse and interpret their own world and the world of others. Social studies presents unique and particular ways for students to view the interrelationships among Earth, its people, and its systems. The knowledge, skills, and attitudes developed through the social studies curriculum empower students to be informed, responsible citizens of Canada and the world, and to participate in the democratic process to improve society.

In particular, the social studies curriculum

- integrates the concepts, processes and ways of thinking drawn from the diverse disciplines of history and the social sciences, including geography, economics, political science, sociology, and anthropology—it also draws from the humanities, literature, and the pure sciences
- provides the multidisciplinary lens through which students examine issues affecting their lives from personal, provincial, national, academic, pluralistic, and global perspectives

Purpose of Curriculum Guide

This curriculum guide is intended to advance social studies education and to improve social studies teaching and learning, while recognizing and validating the effective practices that already exist in many classrooms.

This curriculum guide has three purposes.

- Outline detailed curriculum outcomes to which educators and others can refer when making decisions concerning learning experiences, instructional techniques, and assessment strategies in the kindergarten social studies program.
- Inform both educators and members of the general public about the philosophy and scope of social studies education for the primary level in the Atlantic Provinces.
- Promote the effective learning and teaching of social studies for students enrolled in kindergarten classrooms.

Guiding Principles

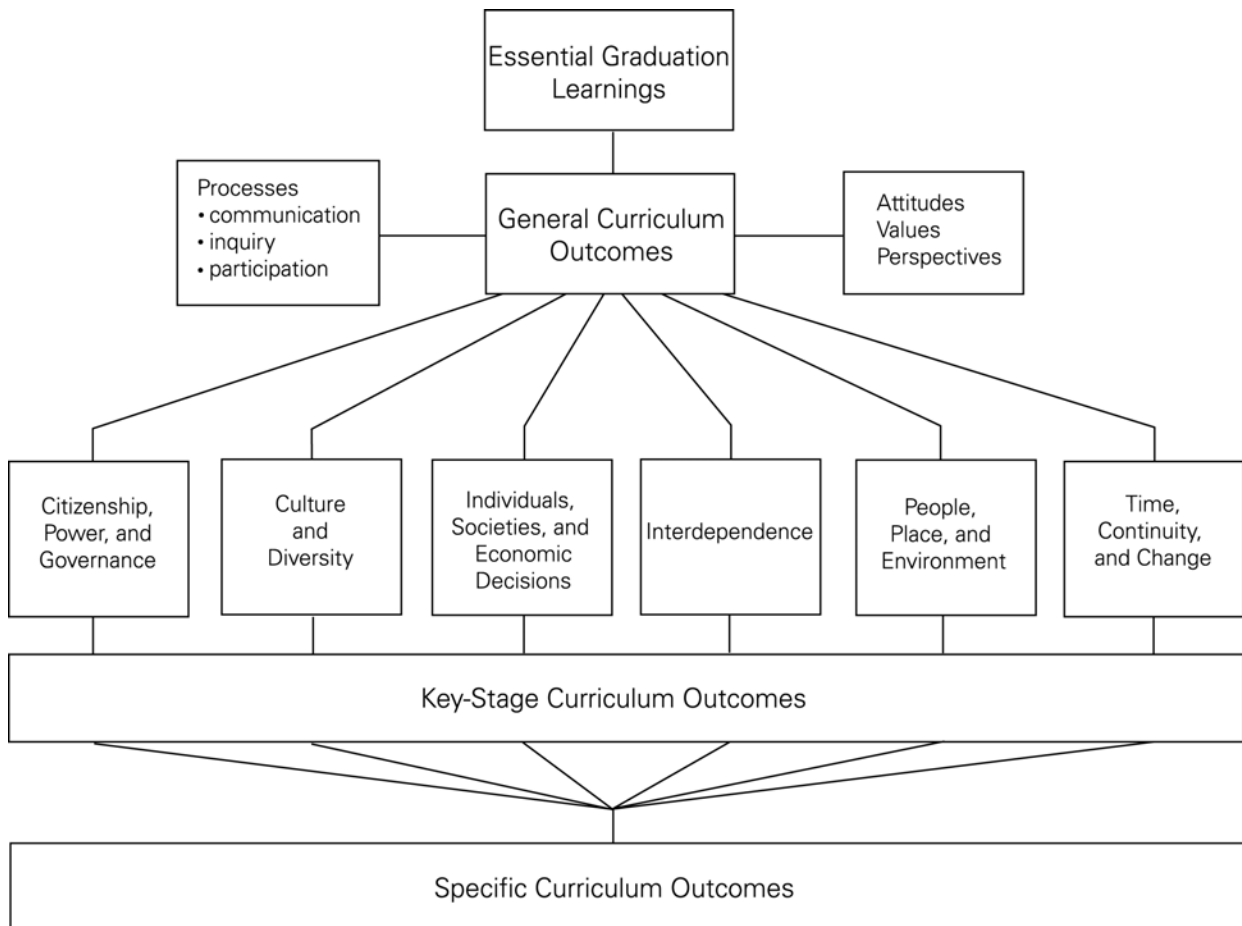
All kindergarten to grade 8/9 curricula and resources should reflect the principles, rationale, philosophy and content of the *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum* (1999) by

- being meaningful, significant, challenging, active, integrative, and issues-based
- being consistent with current research pertaining to how children learn
- incorporating multiple perspectives
- promoting the achievement of Essential Graduation Learnings (EGLs), General Curriculum Outcomes (GCOs), and Key-Stage Curriculum Outcomes (KSCO)
- reflecting a balance of local, national, and global content
- promoting achievement of the processes of communication, inquiry, and participation
- promoting literacy through the social studies
- developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes for lifelong learning
- promoting the development of informed and active citizens
- contributing to the achievement of equity and supporting diversity
- supporting the realization of an effective learning environment
- promoting opportunities for cross-curricular connections
- promoting resource-based learning
- promoting the integration of technology in learning and teaching social studies
- promoting the use of diverse learning and assessment strategies

Program Design and Components

Overview

This social studies curriculum is based on *Foundation for the Atlantic Canada Social Studies Curriculum* (1999). Specific curriculum outcomes (SCOs) were developed to be congruous with key-stage curriculum outcomes (KSCOs), general curriculum outcomes (GCOs), and essential graduation learnings (EGLs). In addition, the processes, as well as the attitudes, values, and perspectives of social studies are embedded in the SCOs.



Essential Graduation Learnings

The Atlantic Provinces worked together to identify abilities and areas of knowledge considered essential for students graduating from high school. These are referred to as essential graduation learnings. Some examples of learning in social studies that help students move toward attainment of the essential graduation learnings are given below.

Aesthetic Expression

Graduates will be able to respond with critical awareness to various forms of the arts and be able to express themselves through the arts.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- give examples of how culture is transmitted

Citizenship

Graduates will be able to assess social, cultural, economic and environmental interdependence in a local and global context.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- recognize that laws influence their personal lives

Communication

Graduates will be able to use the listening, viewing, speaking, reading, and writing modes of language(s) as well as mathematical and scientific concepts and symbols to think, learn, and communicate effectively.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- use maps, globes, and pictures to describe location and place

Personal Development

Graduates will be able to continue to learn and to pursue an active, healthy lifestyle.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- identify various factors that influence their decisions as consumers

Problem Solving

Graduates will be able to use the strategies and processes needed to solve a wide variety of problems, including those requiring language, mathematical, and scientific concepts.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- demonstrate an understanding of cause and effect and change over time

Technological Competence

Graduates will be able to use a variety of technologies, demonstrate an understanding of technological applications, and apply appropriate technologies for solving problems.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- identify and describe examples of interactions among people, technology, and the environment

General Curriculum Outcomes (Conceptual Strands)

The general curriculum outcomes (GCOs) for the social studies curriculum are organized around six conceptual strands. These general curriculum outcomes statements identify what students are expected to know and be able to do upon completion of study in social studies. Specific social studies concepts are found within the conceptual strands (see Appendix A). Examples of key-stage curriculum outcomes, by the end of grade 3, are given for each general curriculum outcome.

Citizenship, Power, and Governance

Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the rights and responsibilities of citizenship and the origins, functions, and sources of power, authority, and governance.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- identify examples of their rights and responsibilities as citizens
- demonstrate an understanding of equality, human dignity, and justice

Culture and Diversity

Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of culture, diversity, and world view, recognizing the similarities and differences reflected in various personal, cultural, racial, and ethnic perspectives.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- identify some characteristics unique to one's self and other characteristics that all humans share
- identify groups to which they belong

Individuals, Societies, and Economic Decisions

Students will be expected to demonstrate the ability to make responsible economic decisions as individuals and as members of society.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- give examples of economic decisions made by individuals and families
- distinguish between needs and wants

Interdependence

Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interdependent relationships among individuals, societies, and the environment—locally, nationally, and globally—and the implications for a sustainable future.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- recognize and describe the interdependent nature of relationships
- identify and explore interactions among individuals, groups, and societies

**People, Place,
and Environment**

Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the interactions among people, places, and the environment.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- use maps, globes, and pictures to describe location and place
- use location, distance, scale, direction, and size to describe place

**Time, Continuity,
and Change**

Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the past and how it affects the present and the future.

By the end of grade 3, students will be expected to

- use basic concepts and vocabulary associated with time, continuity, and change
- demonstrate an understanding that views of the past are shaped by diverse perspectives

Processes

The social studies curriculum consists of three major processes: communication, inquiry, and participation (see Appendix B for a Process-Skills Matrix). The processes are reflected in the suggestions for learning and teaching, and the suggestions for assessment are found in social studies curriculum guides. These processes constitute many skills—some of these skills are responsibilities shared across curriculum areas while others are critical to social studies.

Communication

Communication requires that students listen, read, interpret, translate, and express ideas and information.

Inquiry

Inquiry requires that students formulate and clarify questions, investigate problems, analyse relevant information, and develop rational conclusions supported by evidence.

Participation

Participation requires that students act both independently and collaboratively in order to solve problems, make decisions, and negotiate and enact plans for action in ways that respect and value the customs, beliefs, and practices of others.

**Attitudes, Values,
and Perspectives**

Listed below are major attitudes, values and perspectives in primary social studies that have been organized according to the six conceptual strands and the three processes of the foundation document. Some attitudes, values, and perspectives are embedded in more than one strand or process—this is consistent with the integrative nature of social studies.

By Conceptual Strand**Citizenship, Power, and Governance**

- develop attitudes that balance rights with responsibilities
- recognize the purpose of law
- value the benefits of active, participatory citizenship

Culture and Diversity

- appreciate the uniqueness of each individual
- value the positive interaction between individuals and groups
- appreciate and value the traditions of cultures

Individuals, Societies, and Economic Decisions

- appreciate the wide range of economic decisions that they make and their effects
- recognize the varying impact of economic decisions on individuals and groups
- recognize the value of volunteerism to society

Interdependence

- appreciate the complexity of the interactions between human and natural systems
- recognize that their values and perspectives influence their interactions with the environment
- value the need for individual as well as collective action to support peace and sustainability

People, Place, and the Environment

- value maps, globes, and other geographic representations as valuable sources of information and learning
- appreciate and value geographic perspective and literacy
- recognize the complexity of global interdependence

Time, Continuity, and Change

- value their society's heritage
- value their family and cultural heritage
- recognize that the collective history influences the present

By Process

Communication

- respectfully listen to others
- respect other points of view
- value the importance of communication skills

Inquiry

- appreciate that there is a variety of strategies to solve problems and make decisions
- analyse problems from a variety of different perspectives
- appreciate the value of critical and creative thinking

Participation

- value both independent and group work
- learn to recognize, analyse, and respond appropriately to discriminatory practices and behaviours
- take increasing responsibility for their own and the group's work

Contexts for Learning and Teaching

The Primary Years

The primary grades are the foundational years during which the basic curriculum concepts, values, and skills are developed.

Children are introduced to formal education that provides a necessary complement to the child's experiences at home and in the community. The primary years (K–3), the critical years for learning, may be the key to success in all other years. It is during these years that there is a shared responsibility for literacy and numeracy skills to support learning across the curriculum. Teaching strategies must be varied and always aimed at meeting individual needs and bringing children to the highest level of achievement possible.

To create a seamless, more integrated approach to learning at the primary level, it is necessary to incorporate concepts, values, and skills across all subject areas. A primary child's approach to learning is very much a hands-on, minds-on approach and therefore experiences that provide for this are critical to achievement. The primary child is very interested in the immediate environment and therefore the school environment must be stimulating and appropriately challenging.

Each child is a unique individual. Within any group of children a range of differences in rates and ways of learning, in experiences and in interests is expected and respected. Individual differences are celebrated and built upon. A viable goal for the individual is to achieve a personal best as he/she works towards excellence. Improving performance and realizing potential is more important than competition and comparisons to others.

The primary child has many ways of understanding the world. A basic need for all primary learners is to make sense of their experiences. A vision of the child as an active learner, building a personal knowledge of the world through interactions with people, materials, and ideas should guide all educational planning.

The Primary Learner

Understanding the nature of the primary learner is essential in providing a balanced education. Education, therefore, should enhance the development of the whole child. The development of children in this age group is discussed in the context of the following five dimensions:

Aesthetic

Each child has an aesthetic dimension. Children are exposed to artistic processes and products in a variety of genres and cultures. They are provided opportunities to create, perceive and communicate through the arts. Critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving skills are developed and applied in practical learning experiences. An

appreciation for and experience in those things that constitute the arts add to children's understanding of the world, their culture and community. Children, with an aesthetic sensibility, value culture, environment, and personal surroundings.

Emotional

Each child has an emotional dimension. The primary child learns best in a safe, supportive environment. Positive feelings towards self, others, and learning are continuously promoted by the school. As children move from kindergarten to grade six, they are encouraged to become independent and more responsible for their own learning. There is a relationship between success and self-esteem. Learning is structured so that every child experiences success. Children are encouraged to become more reflective and introspective. They are given opportunities to consider ideas that are both of general and personal significance.

Intellectual

The child has an intellectual dimension. Intellectual development is the process of deriving meaning from experience through acquiring and constructing knowledge. The ultimate goal is that children develop strategies that will help them solve complex problems. They learn to reason and communicate effectively and take responsibility for their own learning. They ask questions and question the answers. They develop an understanding of how human beings know and comprehend. They become thoughtful and reflective learners.

Primary children are generally functioning at a more concrete level intellectually and the general progression from concrete experiences to semi-concrete to abstract is the most effective way of meeting the learning needs of young children. Primary children are usually very literal in their interpretations and adults working with them must be aware of this.

Physical

The child has a physical dimension. Physical well-being is essential to living and learning. Opportunities for movement and the development of a variety of motor skills are provided, and development of respect for the body and the desire to care for it are promoted. The curriculum fosters knowledge of and positive attitudes towards nutrition, physical fitness, and safety. As children move into the upper elementary grades they are encouraged to take on more responsibility for their decisions about their own health. Kindergarten into puberty and a growing awareness of sexuality warrant consideration in the late elementary grades. Sensitive inclusion of those with unique physical challenges is modelled and promoted.

The special role of physical activity as leisure is considered. Leadership, good sportsmanship, consideration for others, loyalty and honesty are encouraged. Children learn that physical activity as a special form of human endeavour can lead to high levels of performance. They also learn that enjoying physical activity and benefiting from it in terms of enhanced health and well-being are equally important.

Social

Each child has a social dimension. Learning to interact co-operatively with other people is an essential life skill that can be taught and practised in schools. The classroom is a community of learners. Taking turns, sharing materials, collaborating to solve problems, and working in co-operative groups for a variety of real purposes provide opportunities for children to learn social skills essential to living in any community.

Equity and Diversity

The Atlantic Canada social studies curriculum is designed to meet the needs and interests of all students. The curriculum should provide for the inclusion of the interests, values, experiences, and language of each student and of the many groups within our local, regional, national, and global communities.

The society of Atlantic Canada, like all of Canada, is linguistically, racially, culturally, and socially diverse. Our society includes differences in race, ethnicity, gender, ability, values, lifestyles, and languages. Schools should foster the understanding of such diversity. Social studies curriculum promotes a commitment to equity by valuing, appreciating, and accepting the diverse and multicultural nature of our society, as well as by fostering awareness and critical analysis of individual and systemic discrimination.

In a school setting characterized by mutual trust, acceptance, and respect, student diversity is both recognized and valued. All students are entitled to be respected and valued and are responsible for respecting and valuing all other people. All students are entitled to an educational system that affirms their gender, racial, ethnic, and cultural identity. The educational system should promote the development of a positive self-image that includes pride in their identity. Educators should ensure that classroom practices and resources positively and accurately reflect diverse perspectives and reject prejudiced attitudes and discriminatory behaviours.

Principles Underlying the Social Studies Curriculum

Empowering and effective social studies is **meaningful, significant, challenging, active, integrative, and issues-based.**

- **Meaningful** social studies encourages students to learn through purposeful experiences designed around stimulating ideas, social issues and themes, and discourages the memorization of disconnected pieces of information.
- **Significant** social studies is student-centred and age-appropriate. Superficial coverage of topics is replaced by emphasis on the truly significant events, concepts, and principles that students need to know and be able to apply in their lives.
- **Challenging** social studies occurs when teachers model high expectations for their students and themselves, promote a

thoughtful approach to inquiry, and demand well-reasoned arguments.

- **Active** social studies encourages students to assume increasing responsibility for managing their own learning. Exploration, investigation, critical and creative thinking, problem solving, discussion and debate, decision making, and reflection are essential elements of this principle. This active process of constructing meaning encourages lifelong learning.
- **Integrative** social studies crosses disciplinary borders to explore issues and events, while using and reinforcing informational, technological, and application skills. This approach facilitates the study of the physical and cultural environment by making appropriate, meaningful, and evident connections to the human disciplines and to the concepts of time, space, continuity, and change.
- **Issues-based** social studies considers the ethical dimensions of issues, and addresses controversial topics. It encourages consideration of opposing points of view, respect for well-supported positions, sensitivity to cultural similarities and differences, and a commitment to social responsibility and action.

The Social Studies Learning Environment

The Effective Social Studies Classroom

With the accelerating pace and scope of change, today's students cannot expect facts learned in isolation to equip them for life.

Problem solving, critical and creative thinking, and informed decision making are essential for success in the future. The social studies learning environment must support the development of these critical attributes to prepare students as lifelong learners.

Today's students come with increasingly diverse backgrounds and experiences. An effective instructional environment must incorporate principles and strategies that support this diversity, while recognizing and accommodating the varied learning styles, multiple intelligences, and abilities of individual students.

Teaching approaches and strategies must actively engage all students in the learning process, through their involvement in a wide variety of experiences. The nature and scope of social studies provide unique opportunities to do this.

Responding to the Need for Equity and Diversity

In order to contribute to the achievement of equity and the support of diversity in education, the social studies curriculum must

- reflect and affirm the racial/ethnocultural, gender, and social identities of students
- reflect students' abilities, needs, interests, and learning styles
- provide materials and strategies that reflect accurately and fully the reality of Canada's diversity, and that foster an understanding of multiple perspectives and group and individual similarities and differences
- address ability, cultural, racial, gender, lifestyle, linguistic, and socio-economic issues in an accurate, respectful, fair, and analytical and balanced manner
- reflect the variety of roles and wide range of experiences available to all members of society
- promote the concept that all people should have equal access to opportunity and outcomes
- expect that all students will be successful, regardless of gender, racial, ethnocultural or socio-economic background, lifestyle, or ability
- include assessment and evaluation tools and practices that take into account gender, ability, learning styles, and the diverse racial, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds of students

To establish and maintain an effective social studies environment, teachers must

- recognize students as being intelligent in a number of different ways, and encourage them to explore other ways of knowing, both inside and beyond the classroom
- value the inclusive classroom and engage all learners in meaningful activities
- acknowledge and value the ways in which gender, race, ethnicity, and culture shape particular ways of viewing and knowing the world
- incorporate new approaches, methodologies, and technologies with established effective practices
- have an extensive repertoire of strategies from which to select those most appropriate to the specific learning task
- use varied and appropriate resources to help students achieve the outcomes in a particular learning situation
- provide opportunities to integrate knowledge, skills, and attitudes
- provide repeated opportunities for reflection so that it becomes an integral part of the learning process

To create a social studies environment inviting to all participants, instructional practices must

- foster a learning environment that is free from bias and unfair practices based on ability, race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or socio-economic status
- promote opportunities to develop positive self-images that will enable students to transcend stereotypes and develop as individuals
- promote communication and understanding among those who differ in attitude, knowledge, points of view, and dialect, as well as among those who are similar
- help students explore and understand why different people have different perspectives
- encourage and enable students to question their own assumptions, and imagine, understand, and appreciate realities other than their own
- ensure the equitable sharing of resources, including teacher attention and support
- provide opportunities for students to work co-operatively in a variety of groupings
- enable students to examine and critique age-appropriate materials, resources, and experience that exhibit bias and prejudice
- use the multidisciplinary lens of social studies to examine historical and current equity and bias issues
- promote opportunities in non-traditional careers and occupations for members of both genders
- encourage students to challenge prejudice and discrimination that result in unequal opportunities for some members of society

The Atlantic Provinces, through CAMET and their departments of education, are committed to using accepted equity principles and practices in approving new social studies curricula and resources.

As a result, an effective social studies learning environment ensures student achievement by

- enhancing students' understanding, knowledge, and valuing of their own heritage and cultural background
- emphasizing inquiry and discovery by students rather than teacher presentation of information, facts, and conclusions
- encouraging student responsibility for involvement and participation in the learning process
- providing students with direct and vicarious experiences and opportunities to develop and to apply social studies skills, strategies, and processes in real, purposeful situations
- teaching students how to process and act upon information about the world in a rational and critical manner
- encouraging the effective use of various technologies, and community, media, and print resources in appropriate situations

Resource-Based Learning

Effective social studies teaching and learning are resource-based. Resource-based learning actively involves students, teachers, and teacher librarians in the effective use of a wide range of print, non-print, and human resources.

Resource-based learning fosters the development of individual students by accommodating their diverse backgrounds, various learning styles, needs, and abilities. Students who use a wide range of resources in various mediums of learning have the opportunity to approach a theme, issue, or topic of study in ways that allow for differences in learning styles and abilities.

Resource-based learning supports students as they develop information literacy. Information literacy is the ability to access, interpret, evaluate, organize, select, produce, and communicate information in and through a variety of media technologies and contexts to meet diverse learning needs and purposes. When students engage in their own research with appropriate guidance, they are more likely to take responsibility for their learning and to retain the information they gather for themselves.

In a resource-based learning environment, students and teachers make decisions about appropriate sources of information, tools for learning methods of access and how to access them. A resource-based approach raises the issues of selecting and evaluating a wide variety of information sources. The development of the critical skills needed for these tasks is essential to the social studies processes.

The range of possible resources include

- print—books, magazines, newspapers, documents, and publications
- visuals—maps, illustrations, photographs, pictures, and study prints
- artifacts—concrete objects, educational toys, and games
- individual and community—interviews, museums, field trips
- multimedia—films, audio and video tapes, laser and video discs, television, and radio
- information technology—computer software, databases, CD-ROMs
- communication technology—Internet connections, bulletin boards, e-mail

Resource-based learning implies the need to provide appropriate resources and professional development for teachers. Guidelines and policies for the selection of appropriate materials should also be in place.

Literacy through Social Studies

It is necessary that administrators, teachers, teacher librarians, other library/resource/media centre staff, parents, and community agencies collaborate to ensure students' access to available resources to support resource-based teaching and learning.

Literacy plays a vital role in the learning experiences of social studies. It promotes the students' ability to comprehend and compose spoken, written, and visual texts that are commonly used by individuals and groups to participate fully, critically, and effectively in society. The multiplicity of communication channels made possible by technology and the increasing cultural and linguistic diversity of the world calls for a broadened view of literacy. Thus, the goals of literacy learning through the social studies are to foster language development and the critical engagement necessary for students to design their own futures.

The ability to read is critical for success in school. Therefore, it is paramount that teachers are sensitive to this process in social studies instruction. Reading in the content area of social studies requires that attention be given to setting the stage and using various strategies to help students address the reading assignment itself. Writing in the social studies is also important and needs to be thought of as a process by which students discover what they know about a particular topic. In social studies there is an abundance of writing activities in which to engage students. In addition to reading, writing, and speaking, other textual modes such as audio and visual media also play a part in social studies classrooms.

Strategies to promote literacy through social studies include those that help students comprehend the meaning of words, symbols, pictures, diagrams, maps, and other genres. Students will investigate a range of media at different times and places and have many opportunities to comprehend and compose in unfamiliar contexts. Most will be able to debate, persuade, and explain in a variety of genres, including the artistic and technological. The social studies program will help students become culturally sensitive and effective cross-cultural communicators.

Critical literacy in texts includes awareness of stereotyping, cultural bias, author's intent, hidden agendas, silent voices, and omissions. Students are encouraged to be aware that texts are constructed by authors who have purposes for writing and make particular choices when doing so. Critical literacy approaches aid students in comprehending texts at a deeper level and also assist in the construction and reconstruction of their text. Students are encouraged to view texts from a variety of perspectives and to interpret the various levels of meaning in a given text.

Literacy for active citizenship involves understanding different perspectives on key democratic struggles, learning how to investigate current issues, and participating creatively and critically in community

Integration of Technology in Social Studies

problem-solving and decision-making. Exercising civic rights and responsibilities is a practical expression of important social values, and requires specific personal, interpersonal, and advocacy skills.

Technology, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT), plays a major role in the learning and teaching of social studies. Computers and related technologies are valuable classroom tools in the acquisition, analysis, and presentation of information. These technologies provide further opportunity for communication and collaboration allowing students to become more active participants in research and learning.

ICT and related technology (digital video and digital cameras, scanners, CD-ROMs, word processing software, graphics software, video-editing software, html editors, and the Internet, including the World Wide Web, databases, electronic discussions, e-mail, audio, and video conferencing) afford numerous possibilities for enhancing learning and teaching. Computer and other technologies are intended to enhance the social studies learning environment. In that context, technological resources can provide a variety of opportunities.

- The Internet and CD-ROMs increase access to information. This gives teachers and students quicker and easier access to extensive and current information. Research skills are key to efficient use of these resources. Questions of validity, accuracy, bias, and interpretation must still be applied to information available on the Internet and CD-ROMs.
- Interactions and conversations via e-mail, video and audio conferencing, student-created websites, and online discussion groups provide connections between students and people from cultures around the world. This exposure to first-hand information will enable students to directly employ inquiry skills.
- Students present what they have learned in a wide variety of forms (e.g., graphs, maps, text, graphic organizers, websites, multimedia presentations) that fit their learning styles. These presentations can be shared with others, both in their classroom and beyond.
- Students are actively involved in their learning through controlling information gathering, processing, and presentation. For example, Geographic Information Systems (GIS) software enables students to collect data on a community, plot the data using Global Positioning Systems (GPS), and analyse and present their findings by creating maps that demonstrate their learning.

Assessing and Evaluating Student Learning in the Primary Social Studies Classroom

Introduction

Assessment and **evaluation** are essential components of teaching and learning in social studies.

Assessment is the systematic process of gathering information on student learning.

Evaluation is the process of analysing, reflecting upon, and summarizing assessment information and making judgments or decisions based upon the information gathered.

Without effective assessment and evaluation, it is impossible to know whether students have learned, whether teaching has been effective, or how to best address student learning needs. The quality of the assessment and evaluation in the educational process has a profound and well-established link to student performance. Research consistently shows that regular monitoring and feedback are essential to improving student learning. What is assessed and evaluated, how it is assessed and evaluated, and how results are communicated send clear messages to students and others about what is really valued—what is worth learning, how it should be learned, what elements of quality are considered most important, and how well students are expected to perform.

Teacher-developed assessments and evaluations have a wide variety of uses, such as

- providing feedback to improve student learning
- determining if curriculum outcomes have been achieved
- certifying that students have achieved certain levels of performance
- setting goals for future student learning
- communicating with parents about their children's learning
- providing information to teachers on the effectiveness of their teaching, the program, and the learning environment
- meeting the needs of guidance and administration personnel

Guiding Principles

In order to provide accurate, useful information about the achievement and instructional needs of students, certain guiding principles for the development, administration, and use of assessments must be followed. *Principles for Fair Student Assessment Practices for Education in Canada* (1993) articulates five basic assessment principles.

These principles highlight the need for assessment that ensures

- the best interests of the student are paramount
- assessment informs teaching and promotes learning
- assessment is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process and is clearly related to the curriculum outcomes
- assessment is fair and equitable to all students and involves multiple sources of information

While assessments may be used for different purposes and audiences, all assessments must give each student optimal opportunity to demonstrate what he/she knows and can do.

In the social studies classroom, there should be a balanced approach to assessment in which emphasis is given to the learning process as well as the products of learning.

Instruction and evaluation are centred around outcomes. Not only are outcomes used in providing structured teaching and learning, but they also provide a framework for assessment and evaluation.

Assessment

Assessment in the social studies is an integral and ongoing part of the learning process. Assessment can be used to shape instruction to better ensure student success. Assessment strategies should inform the daily instructional process. Moreover, students require frequent opportunities to assess and evaluate their own learning and performance.

To determine how well students are learning, assessment strategies have to be designed to systematically gather information on the achievement of the curriculum outcomes. In planning assessments, teachers should use a broad range of strategies in an appropriate balance to give students multiple opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Such strategies include, but are not limited to

- formal and informal observations
- work samples
- anecdotal records
- conferences
- portfolios
- learning journals
- questioning
- performance assessment
- peer- and self-assessment

Evaluation

Evaluation in social studies emphasizes assessment activities that incorporate the skills, perspectives, and knowledge of the many fields and disciplines within the social studies.

Evaluation involves teachers and others analysing and reflecting upon information about student learning gathered in a variety of ways. This process requires

- synthesizing information from multiple sources
- weighing and balancing all available information
- using a high level of professional judgment in making decisions based upon that information

Reporting

Reporting on student learning should focus on the extent to which students have achieved the curriculum outcomes. Reporting involves communicating the summary and interpretation of information about student learning to various audiences who require it. Teachers have the responsibility to explain accurately what progress students have made in their learning and to respond to parent and student inquiries about learning.

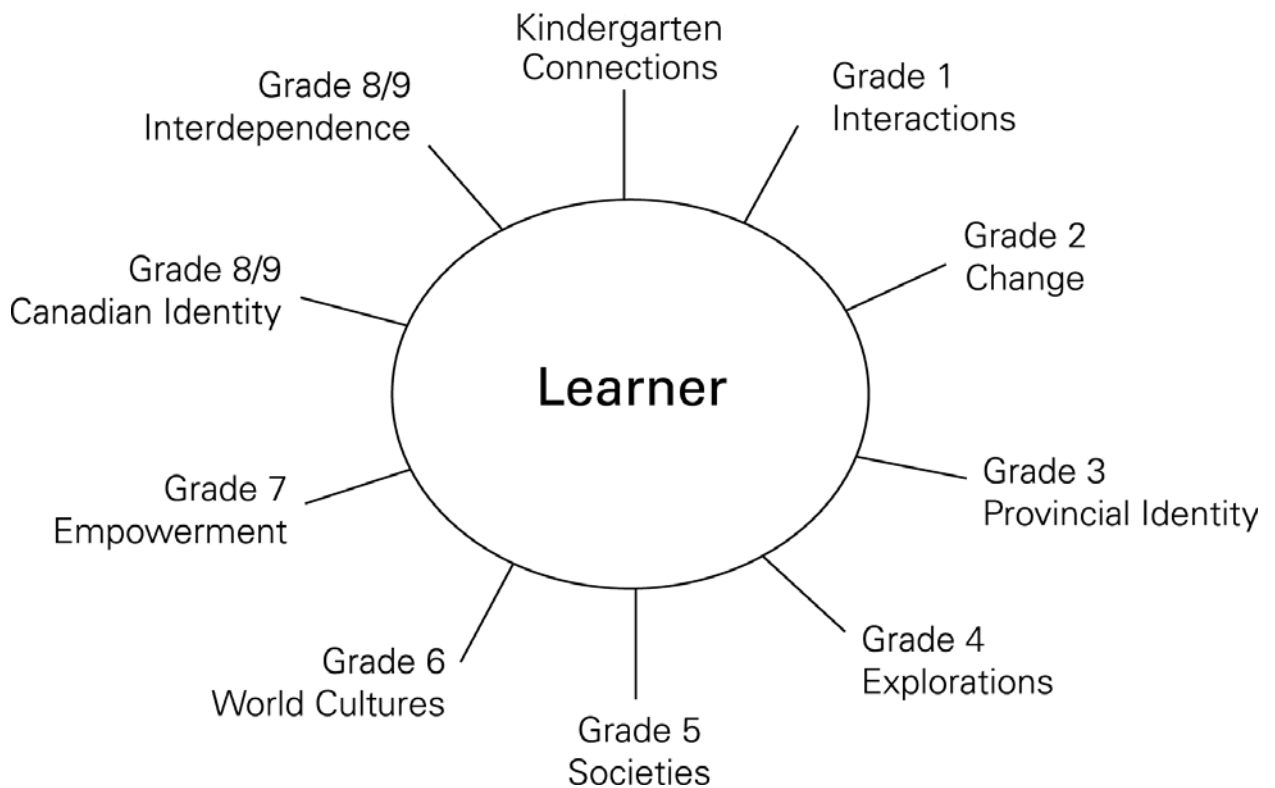
Narrative reports on progress and achievement can provide information on student learning that letter or number grades alone cannot. Such reports might, for example, suggest ways in which students can improve their learning and identify ways in which teachers and parents can best provide support.

Effective communication with parents regarding their children's progress is essential in fostering successful home-school partnerships. The report card is one means of reporting individual student progress. Other means include the use of conferences, notes, and phone calls.

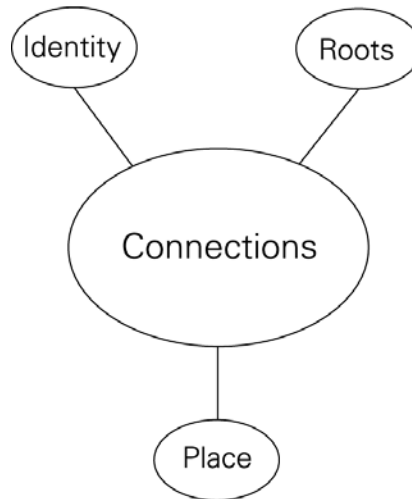
Curriculum Overview

Kindergarten–8/9 Social Studies Program

The social studies program for kindergarten to grade 8/9 is designed around ten conceptual organizers.



Kindergarten: Connections



Unit One: Identity

Students will be expected to

- K.1.1 demonstrate an understanding of themselves as unique and special
- K.1.2 identify needs and wants that are common to all children
- K.1.3 identify and describe groups to which they belong
- K.1.4 demonstrate an understanding that the need for co-operation is an important part of being a member of a group

Unit Two: Roots

Students will be expected to

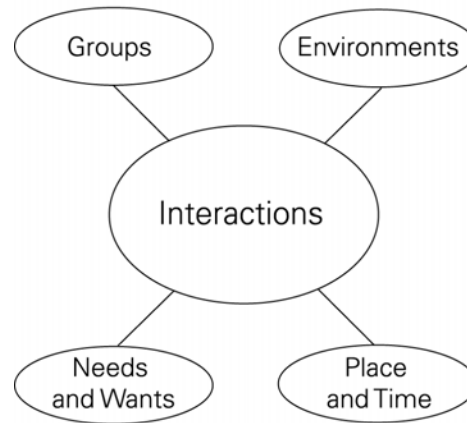
- K.2.1 demonstrate an understanding that families have historic roots
- K.2.2 demonstrate an understanding of how the roles of family members change over time
- K.2.3 recognize that families (local, national, and global) have varied traditions, rituals, and celebrations

Unit Three: Place

Students will be expected to

- K.3.1 describe some of the natural and constructed features of their community
- K.3.2 use basic mapping skills to identify, locate, and name familiar places within the community
- K.3.3 identify connections between their community and other communities (local, national, and global)

Grade 1: Interactions



Unit One: Groups

Students will be expected to

- 1.1.1 demonstrate an understanding of the importance of interactions between people
- 1.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of the similarity and diversity of social and cultural groups
- 1.1.3 demonstrate an understanding that people within groups have rights and responsibilities

Unit Two: Environments

Students will be expected to

- 1.2.1 recognize that environments have natural and constructed features (local, national, and global)
- 1.2.2 describe how peoples depend upon and interact with different natural environments
- 1.2.3 take age-appropriate action to practise responsible behaviour in caring for the environment

Unit Three: Place and Time

Students will be expected to

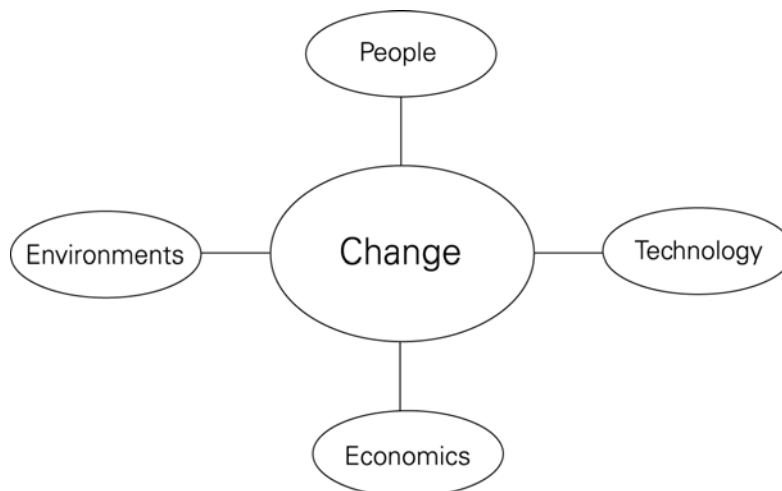
- 1.3.1 demonstrate an understanding that signs, symbols, direction, and scale are used to represent landmarks and locations
- 1.3.2 demonstrate an understanding that the way people live in their community evolves over time
- 1.3.3 demonstrate an understanding that Aboriginal peoples' relationship with place has changed over time
- 1.3.4 explain how interactions between communities (local, national, and global) have changed over time

Unit Four: Needs and Wants

Students will be expected to

- 1.4.1 recognize that all people have needs and wants
- 1.4.2 demonstrate an understanding of the factors that influence how needs and wants are met
- 1.4.3 demonstrate an understanding of how communities depend on each other for the exchange of goods and services

Grade 2: Change



Unit One: People

Students will be expected to

- 2.1.1 describe changes in their lives and their reactions to these changes
- 2.1.2 demonstrate an understanding of how individuals and groups have contributed to change
- 2.1.3 explain how decisions made by individuals and diverse groups result in change (local, national, and global)
- 2.1.4 predict ways their community might change in the future and how they can contribute to that future

Unit Two: Technology

Students will be expected to

- 2.2.1 describe and evaluate the role of technology in their lives
- 2.2.2 demonstrate an understanding that people have changed technology over time to meet their needs, wants, and interests

Unit Three: Economics

Students will be expected to

- 2.3.1 give examples of how children and their families use economic decision making as consumers
- 2.3.2 explain how supply and demand affects price
- 2.3.3 demonstrate an understanding of the changing nature of work over time

Unit Four: Environments

Students will be expected to

- 2.4.1 explain how and why physical environments change over time
- 2.4.2 describe how people's interactions with their environment have changed over time
- 2.4.3 demonstrate an understanding of sustainable development and its importance to our future (local, national, and global)

How to Use the Four-Column Curriculum Layout

The curriculum has been organized into four columns to:

- illustrate how learning experiences flow from the outcomes
- illustrate a range of strategies for teaching and learning associated with a specific outcome or outcomes
- demonstrate the relationship between outcomes and assessment strategies
- suggest ways that teachers can make cross-curricular connections
- provide teachers with ideas for supplementary resources

Column 1: Outcomes

This column provides the specific curriculum outcomes and the accompanying delineations (subsets) describing what students are expected to know, be able to do, and value by the end of the year. The delineations are intended to help elaborate upon the outcomes.

Column 2: Suggestions for Learning and Teaching

This column offers a range of strategies from which teachers and students may choose. Suggested learning experiences can be used in various combinations to help students achieve an outcome or outcomes. It is not necessary to use any of these suggestions, nor is it necessary for all students to engage in the same learning experience.

Sensitive Topics

♥ The heart is used as a symbol to identify topics that need to be addressed with sensitivity. These topics are set in bold type in the text following the symbol.

Column 1

| UNIT 4: NEEDS AND WANTS | GRADE 1 |
|--|--|
| 1.4.2 Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the factors that influence how needs and wants are met. (continued) | |
| <p>Outcome</p> <p><i>Students will be expected to</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how needs and wants are met • identify different ways people's needs and wants are met • give examples of services/facilities that meet the needs and wants of people • recognize the need for people to co-operate with each other in their community to meet their various needs and wants • recognize the importance of volunteer work • identify some of the factors that influence their choices as consumers | <p>Suggestions for Learning and Teaching</p> <p>♥ Teacher Talk</p> <p>Very young children are aware of some of the influences that affect their choices as consumers. For example, brand names, peer pressure, what friends have, and advertising are influences they know about. Focus on the child as a consumer and help him/her explore good decision making practices. Teachers should be careful not to promote any fad, product, brand name, or place children in a situation that would make them uncomfortable or feel left out.</p> <p>• Teachers can select and use an appropriate book as a read aloud. The selected book should address that there are many things that influence their choices as consumers. Then have the class identify one fad, toy, clothing or item and ask: "Where is it advertised?" "How does it affect your needs/wants?" Alternatively, ask children "If you are hungry when you go to the supermarket, how may this affect what you buy?"</p> |
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Column 2

**Column 3:
Suggestions for
Assessment**

This column provides suggestions for ongoing assessment that is part of the learning experience. The assessment suggestions are grouped under a number of headings.

**Column 4:
Suggested Links**

This column provides links to other curriculum areas, resources, and other agencies (local, national, international).

Column 3

| GRADE 1 | UNIT 4: NEEDS AND WANTS |
|--|---|
| 1.4.2 Students will be expected to demonstrate an understanding of the factors that influence how needs and wants are met. <i>(continued)</i> | |
| <p>Suggestions for Assessment</p> <p>Formative</p> <p><i>Products Created/Written Evaluations/Portfolios</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the writings/drawings/pictures students create/gather the list of services/facilities in their community the clothesline of pictures <p>Summative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a class chart six ways "needs and wants" are met in society. Give an example for each. Note responses that children give that demonstrates how they meet their needs/wants. Discuss contributions each child provides. As a class visit a local facility that meets the needs of the community. If children demonstrate a natural curiosity about the volunteers they know about, arrange for the class to meet a volunteer and invite him/her to class. As a class have children make a "tree-and-leaf" representation that demonstrates how their community cares for children, the sick, seniors. Have children as a class or in groups, using simple materials such as blocks or Popsicle sticks, construct a model of a facility in their community that provides a service/facility. Observe their understanding of co-operation as they work on the project. As a class activity have children plan and participate in an example of co-operation to help out someone in their community. | <p>Suggested Links</p> <p>Resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Uncle Willie and the Soap Kitchen</i>, DyAnne GShaw-Ryan <i>The Clean-Up Surprise</i> <i>Alexander Who Used to Be Rich</i>, Judith Viorst <i>Berenstain Bears' Trouble with Money</i>, Stan & Jan Berenstain <i>Big Bird Goes to Hospital</i> (See Children's Workshop Video Series.) <i>Communities</i>, G. Saunders-Smith <p>Agencies/Groups</p> <p><i>National/International</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sparks, Brownies, etc. <p><i>Local</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> any service club member/volunteer supermarket, farm, factory |
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Column 4