



## Characteristics of Highly Effective Teaching and Learning *Social Studies*

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The [Kentucky Academic Standards \(KAS\) for Social Studies](#) is organized around the inquiry practices 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 complete the inquiry process by communicating evidence-based conclusions.

The inquiry process is critical for effective student understanding of civics, economics, geography and history. Inquiry instruction requires teachers and students to ask questions that drive student investigation of the subject matter and eliminates the “skills vs. content” dilemma in social studies as both are needed to successfully engage in inquiry. Students will engage in inquiry using the tools, conceptual understandings and the language of political scientists, economists, geographers and historians at a developmentally appropriate level. Students will craft arguments, apply reasoning, make comparisons, corroborate their sources and interpret and synthesize evidence as political scientists, economists, geographers and historians.

### Section One: Learning Climate

**Learning Climate:** a safe environment supported by the teacher in which high, clear expectations and positive relationships are fostered; active learning is promoted.

#### Teacher Characteristics:

- A. Teacher creates learning environments where students are active participants as individuals and as members of collaborative groups. The teacher:
  1. Creates, questions, shares, discusses, reasons, and analyzes the processes involved in inquiry and disciplinary thinking within civics, economics, geography and history; and
  2. Promotes engaging in meaningful discussions/democratic discourse and respecting diverse opinions, well-supported positions, and a sensitivity to cultural differences and similarities.
  
- B. Teacher motivates students and nurtures their desire to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment which develops compassion and mutual respect. The teacher:
  1. Motivates students and nurtures their desire to learn in a safe, healthy and supportive environment which develops compassion, mutual respect, tolerance of ambiguity and courage; and
  2. promotes the demonstration and advocacy of civic dispositions such as individual responsibility, self-discipline/self-governance, civility, respect for rights

of others, honesty, respect for law, open-mindedness, critical mindedness, negotiation and compromise, persistence, civic mindedness, compassion and patriotism.

- C. Teacher cultivates cross cultural understandings and the value of diversity.
- D. Teacher encourages students to accept responsibility for their own learning and accommodates the diverse learning needs of all students.
- E. Teacher displays effective and efficient classroom management that includes classroom routines that promote comfort, order and appropriate student behaviors. The teacher:
  - 1. Facilitates cooperative groups, project-based tasks, authentic work, dialogue/debate/discussion, service learning, and student presentations; and
  - 2. Encourages students to function as members of a learning community.
- F. Teacher provides students equitable access to technology, space, tools and time.
- G. Teacher effectively allocates time for students to engage in hands-on experiences, discuss and process content and make meaningful connections. The teacher:
  - 1. Promotes social interaction inquiry and disciplinary thinking within civics, economics, geography and history; and
  - 2. Fosters lifelong learning, inquiry, civic participation, democratic principles and processes.
- H. Teacher designs lessons that allow students to participate in empowering activities in which they understand that learning is a process and mistakes are a natural part of learning.
- I. Teacher creates an environment where student work is valued, appreciated and used as a learning tool. The teacher:
  - 1. Knows each student individually, responds to each one insightfully, and builds a constructive relationship with every student.

**Student Characteristics:**

- A. Student accepts responsibility for his/her own learning.
- B. Student actively participates and is authentically engaged.
- C. Student collaborates/teams with other students. The student:
  - 1. Demonstrates and advocates civic dispositions such: as individual responsibility to the group, self-discipline/governance, civility, respect for rights of other individuals, honesty, and respect for law, open-mindedness, critical mindedness, persistence, compassion, civic mindedness, patriotism, negotiation and compromise;

2. Exhibits mutual respect for differing perspectives and respects diverse opinions; and
  3. Makes informed and reasoned decisions for the common good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.
- D. Student exhibits a sense of accomplishment and confidence. The student:
1. Expresses and defends personal points of view and positions within the school and/or community; and
  2. Thinks critically and makes value-based decisions.
- E. Student takes educational risks in class. The student:
1. Refutes, defends, and supports his/her beliefs and opinions on controversial issues.
- F. Student practices and engages in safe, responsible and ethical use of technology.

## **Section Two: Classroom Assessment and Reflection**

**Classroom Assessment and Reflection:** The teacher and student collaboratively gather information and reflect on learning through a systematic process that informs instruction.

### **Teacher Characteristics:**

- A. Teacher uses multiple methods to systematically gather data about student understanding and ability. The teacher:
1. Uses multiple methods to systematically gather data about student understanding and ability including service learning, authentic and performance assessments (scored discussions and criteria scored debates).
- B. Teacher uses student work/data, observations of instruction, assignments and interactions with colleagues to reflect on and improve teaching practice. The teacher:
1. Uses student work/data, observations of instruction, assignments and collaboration with colleagues to reflect on and improve social studies teaching practice; and
  2. Monitors progress in knowledge, skills and civic dispositions (individual responsibility, self-discipline, self-governance, civility, respect for rights of others, honesty, respect for law, open-mindedness, critical-mindedness, negotiation and compromise, persistence, civic mindedness, compassion and patriotism).
- C. Teacher revises instructional strategies based upon student achievement data.

- D. Teacher uncovers students' prior understanding of the knowledge, skills, concepts and civic dispositions to be addressed and addresses students' misconceptions/incomplete conceptions. The teacher:
  - 1. Co-develops scoring guides/rubrics with students and provides adequate modeling to make clear the expectations for performance such as the criteria in debates, discussions, writing assignments and responses, cooperative group work, inquiry-based investigations, and presentations.
- E. Teacher guides students to apply rubrics to assess their performance and identify improvement strategies.
- F. Teacher provides regular and timely feedback to students and parents that moves learners forward.
- G. Teacher allows students to use feedback to improve their work before a grade is assigned.
- H. Teacher facilitates students in self- and peer-assessment.
- I. Teacher reflects on instruction and makes adjustments as student learning occurs.

**Student Characteristics:**

- A. Student recognizes what proficient work looks like and determines steps necessary for improving his/her work.
- B. Student monitors progress toward reaching learning goals.
- C. Student develops and/or uses scoring guides periodically to assess his/her own work or that of peers.
- D. Student uses teacher and peer feedback to improve his/her work.
- E. Student reflects on work and makes adjustments as learning occurs.

**Section Three: Instructional Rigor and Student Engagement**

**Instructional Rigor and Student Engagement:** A teacher supports and encourages a student's commitment to initiate and complete complex, inquiry-based learning requiring creative and critical thinking with attention to problem solving.

## Teacher Characteristics:

- A. Teacher instructs the complex processes, concepts and principles contained in state and national standards using differentiated strategies that make instruction accessible to all students.
- B. Teacher scaffolds instruction to help students reason and develop problem-solving strategies. The teacher:
  - 1. Uses questions to develop knowledge, understanding and thinking relative to key disciplinary concepts. Focuses topics on authentic real world issues regarding civics, economics, geography and history.
- C. Teacher orchestrates effective classroom discussions, questioning, and learning exercises that promote higher-order thinking skills. The teacher:
  - 1. Facilitates meaningful discussions/democratic discourse and grade-level appropriate assignments where students are expected to defend their responses with facts, opinions, ideas and points of view.
- D. Teacher provides meaningful learning opportunities for students. The teacher:
  - 1. Connects social studies concepts across time (past, present, future) and place and among the disciplines of civics, economics, geography and history.
- E. Teacher challenges students to think deeply about problems and encourages/models a variety of approaches to a solution. The teacher:
  - 1. Challenges students to think innovatively, critically, creatively, socially, civically and ethically about problems faced by citizens and leaders and encourages/models a variety of approaches to conflicting perspectives on controversial issues and public policy.
- F. Teacher integrates a variety of learning resources with classroom instruction to increase learning options. The teacher:
  - 1. Provides authentic, creative and problem solving opportunities for all students using a variety of resources (e.g., newspapers, multimedia presentations, speeches, monuments, artifacts, literature, music, and artwork) into classroom instruction to maximize learning options and authentic creative and problem solving opportunities for all students.
- G. Teacher structures and facilitates ongoing formal and informal discussions based on a shared understanding of rules and discourse.
- H. Teacher integrates the application of inquiry skills into learning experiences. The teacher:
  - 1. Integrates the application of inquiry, value-based decision making on controversial issues, examination and evaluation of public policy, critical analysis

of conflicting sources of information, cause and effect, problem and solution, interpretive analysis of historical artifacts and primary and secondary source documents into learning experiences.

- I. Teacher clarifies and shares learning intentions/goals and criteria for success with students.

#### **Student Characteristics:**

- A. Student articulates and understands learning intentions/goals and criteria for success.
- B. Student reads with understanding a variety of texts. The student:
  1. Synthesizes information from a variety of primary and secondary source documents and multiple viewpoints.
- C. Student applies and refines inquiry skills. The student:
  1. Analyzes the credibility of historical data, proposes and advocates for solutions to real-world issues through dialogue, debate, discussion, speech writing and other modes of communication; and
  2. Initiates leadership and mediation strategies in collaborative projects, class discussions, dialogue and debates.

#### **Section Four: Instructional Relevance**

**Instructional Relevance:** A teacher's ability to facilitate learning experiences that are meaningful to students and prepare them for their futures.

#### **Teacher Characteristics:**

- A. Teacher designs learning opportunities that allow students to participate in empowering activities in which they understand that learning is a process and mistakes are a natural part of the learning.
- B. Teacher links concepts and key ideas to students' prior experiences and understandings, uses multiple representations, examples and explanations.
- C. Teacher incorporates student experiences, interests and real-life situations in instruction. The teacher:
  1. Implements lessons that include students' and teachers' local and personal histories;
  2. Stimulates students to investigate and respond to the human condition in the contemporary world;
  3. Encourages students to consider multiple perspectives and share their point of view, values and beliefs;

4. Offers student choice in the formulation of goals, selection of activities, materials, instructional strategies and assessment of Social Studies curricular outcomes;
  5. Considers the age, maturity, and concerns of all students in connecting social studies content and pervasive social issues to their lives; and
  6. Builds student background knowledge through various learning experiences (e.g., field trips, multimedia presentations, historical fiction, technology, community resource people).
- D. Teacher selects and utilizes a variety of technology that supports student learning.
- E. Teacher effectively incorporates 21st Century Learning Skills that prepare students to meet future challenges. The teacher:
1. Connects student learning to the world of work through the exploration of careers and the application of essential social studies skills into their lives; and
  2. Encourages students to consider multiple perspectives and share their point of view, values and beliefs.
- F. Teacher works with other teachers to make connections between and among disciplines.
- G. Teacher makes lesson connections to community, society, and current events. The teacher:
1. Encourages students to be involved in service learning projects;
  2. Utilizes the experience and expertise of a variety of community resource people;
  3. Connects learning to community, society, current events, multiple points of view and global perspectives; and
  4. Encourages students to develop a commitment to social responsibility, justice, action, citizenship, civic values and reflective concern for the common good.

**Student Characteristics:**

- A. Student poses and responds to meaningful questions. The student:
  1. Demonstrates and advocates for their values, beliefs, personal perspectives and points of view through debate, dialogue and writing.
- B. Student uses appropriate tools and techniques to gather, analyze and interpret quantitative and qualitative data.
- C. Student develops descriptions, explanation, predictions models and arguments using evidence.
- D. Student works collaboratively to address complex, authentic problems which require innovative approaches to solve. The student:

1. Demonstrates and advocates for collaboration, compromise, and cooperation; and
  2. Demonstrates respect and accountable talk when participating in interactive activities, group work, debates and classroom discussions.
- E. Student communicates knowledge and understanding in a variety of real-world forms. The student:
1. Understands that social studies is important to future success (e.g., citizenship, civic engagement, career, education);
  2. Utilizes their personal experience to make connections to the past, present and future; and
  3. Utilizes their personal experiences, historical data, and research to make connections and form value-based opinions on social, political, geographical, and economic issues.
- F. Student communicates knowledge and understanding for a variety of purposes. The student:
1. Reflects the importance of citizenship and civic values in our global society through classroom discussions, written assignments, community involvement and/or service projects.

## **Section Five: Knowledge of Content**

**Knowledge of Content:** A teacher's understanding and application of the current theories, principles, concepts and skills of a discipline.

### **Teacher Characteristics:**

- A. Teacher demonstrates an understanding and in-depth knowledge of content and maintains an ability to convey this content to students. The teacher:
1. Demonstrates an in-depth understanding of the social studies content in the grades and courses assigned;
  2. Facilitates to students the social studies content knowledge, skills and dispositions essential for understanding, appreciation and real world application and communication;
  3. Provides intensive and recurring cross-cultural study of groups; and
  4. Provides a clear and accurate examination of the past, present and future social world (its flaws, strengths, dangers, conditions, problems and promise) and human achievement and failures.
- B. Teacher maintains on-going knowledge and awareness of current content developments. The teacher:

1. Keeps abreast of current developments and research in the field of social studies and participates in professional learning (e.g., curriculum advisory committees, higher education, professional organizations, community affairs, professional magazines, study and travel); and
  2. Participates and contributes to professional learning communities.
- C. Teacher designs and implements standards-based courses/lessons/units using state and national social studies standards.
- D. Teacher uses and promotes the understanding of appropriate social studies content vocabulary. The teacher:
1. Uses a variety of content vocabulary literacy strategies (e.g., verbal and visual word association, Frayer Model).
- E. Teacher provides essential supports for students who are struggling with the social studies content. The teacher:
1. Provides appropriate interventions and modifications (e.g., self-assessments, study sheets, break down content into manageable chunks, graphic organizers, peer tutor) while utilizing each student's multiple intelligences and learning styles.
- F. Teacher accesses a rich repertoire of instructional practices, strategies and resources, and applies them appropriately. The teacher:
1. Demonstrates an understanding of the conceptual nature of social studies content and interconnects knowledge, skills, beliefs, values, perspectives and attitudes within multiple disciplinary content areas;
  2. Provides learning experiences that develop civic-minded, responsible citizens by integrating and engaging students in the culture, economics, civics, geography and history of the past, present and future;
  3. Utilizes challenging resources (artifacts, primary and secondary sources), and implements them appropriately according to the particular learning needs of his/her students and aligns them with the cognitive demand of the social studies content; and
  4. Demonstrates proficiency in the use of tools and technology related to social studies (e.g., maps, charts, graphs, GPS) and other techniques to gather and manage, analyze and interpret historical data.

### **Student Characteristics:**

- A. Student demonstrates growth in social studies content knowledge. The student:
1. Demonstrates an understanding of content knowledge through authentic presentations, written and oral expressions.
- B. Student uses and seeks to expand appropriate social studies vocabulary.

- C. Student connects ideas across content areas. The student:
  - 1. Makes connections among the disciplines of social studies (civics, economics, geography and history); and
  - 2. Makes connections to the other content areas (e.g., Math, Science, Humanities, Reading, Writing, World Languages).
  
- D. Student uses ideas in realistic problem solving situations. The student:
  - 1. Applies concepts to real world situations and multiple perspectives and communicates these ideas verbally and in writing using accountable talk; and
  - 2. Uses critical thinking, observing, reading, writing, non-linguistic representations and discussion to effectively analyze artifacts, primary and secondary sources for historical perspectives and interpretations.