

Fact Sheet
College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework
For Social Studies State Standards

State Guidance to improve the rigor of instruction in
Civics, Economics, Geography, and History

“Knowledge about our system of government, our rights and responsibilities as citizens, is not passed down through the gene pool. Each generation must be taught and we have work to do!”

*Associate Justice Sandra Day O’Connor
Co-Chair, Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools*

What is the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework?

The C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards is a powerful guide to help each state strengthen instruction in the social studies by establishing fewer, clearer, and higher standards for instruction in civics, economics, geography, and history, kindergarten through high school. The C3 Framework can also be used by teachers, school districts, and curriculum writers to strengthen their social studies programs to a) enhance the rigor of the individual disciplines, b) build critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills vital to engaged citizenship, and c) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

Who developed the C3 Framework?

Over twenty states and fifteen national social studies content organizations joined together in a voluntary effort to develop the C3 Framework for use by each state and school district in the nation. Over 3,000 social studies professionals, university scholars, as well as district and state administrators, reviewed and commented on the C3 Framework. A group of participating organizations funded the development of the Framework, with no taxpayer dollars. The National Council for the Social Studies (www.ncss.org) coordinated the publishing of the C3 Framework.

What are the Guiding Principles of the C3 Framework?

The C3 Framework is driven by the following shared principles about high quality social studies education:

- The social studies prepare the nation’s young people for success in college and career; as well as informed, engaged participation in civic life.
- Inquiry is at the heart of social studies instruction.
- The social studies involve interdisciplinary instruction and benefit from interaction with and integration of the arts and humanities.

- The social studies is composed of deep and enduring understandings, concepts, and skills from the disciplines. Social studies emphasize skills and practices that prepare students for informed and engaged participation in civic life.
- Social studies education has direct and explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.
- The C3 Framework informs the process by which states and school districts develop social studies standards.

What is the instructional emphasis of the C3 Framework?

The C3 Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. It intentionally envisions social studies instruction as an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners. The “Four Dimensions” of the C3 Framework center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century.

Is this part of the “Common Core State Standards” Initiative?

No. The C3 Framework was developed over a three-year period by a voluntary collaborative of states and content organizations. While the C3 Framework makes important, explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, the Framework was developed independent of the Common Core State Standards Initiative.

Why should states and school districts adopt and use the C3 Framework?

K-12 Education is driven by State Standards of Learning. The many social studies state standards present an overloaded list of dates, places and names to memorize-- information students quickly forget. This practice, combined with assessment systems that emphasize math and English over other critical academic subjects, has led to a marginalization of civics, economics, geography, and history; the result has been a drastic and harmful reduction of social studies instruction, instruction that provides the conceptual knowledge and skills that are critical for the future of our democracy. The C3 Framework will help states and districts provide students the tools and methods of clear, disciplined thinking that will enable them to traverse successfully the worlds of college, career, and civic life.

The C3 Framework is available free of charge at: www.socialstudies.org/C3

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