

ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM INQUIRY JOURNEYS

Make the Shift to Inquiry in Social Studies

Inquiry Journeys engages K-5 students and supports teachers in inquiry-based investigations into Civics, History, Geography, and Economics.



Inspires Inquiry-Based Learning

Students build knowledge in Civics, History, Geography, and Economics through inquiry-based, student-led investigations.



Aligns to Social Studies and ELA Standards

State social studies and ELA standards are one-click away and aligned to every lesson.



Supports Culturally Responsive Education

Instructional strategies connect to the lived and historical experiences of students.



Provides Teacher-Ready Tools

Easy-to-use digital curriculum provides teachers with lesson plans, slide shows, handouts, and more.



Connects to High-Quality, Diverse Sources

Accurate and authentic sources originate from diverse authors and creators and help to build literacy skills across the curriculum.

How is Inquiry Journeys designed to maximize student learning through inquiry?

- In each unit of study (called an Inquiry), students investigate a complex Inquiry Question over the course of 4–6 weeks, gathering, evaluating, and interpreting evidence from diverse primary and secondary sources.
- Lessons are designed to connect to students' lived experiences, support student-led learning, and promote reflection and integration of new learning.
- Each Inquiry ends when students use their learning to create a project that has an impact outside the classroom.

How does Inquiry Journeys support teachers as they implement inquiry-based social studies?

- Provides slide presentations and student-ready handouts for every lesson plan
- Curates texts, videos, maps, and other diverse primary and secondary sources
- Includes integrated formative, intermediate, and summative assessments
- Delivers differentiated student-ready resources to meet learning needs

Spotlight on Literacy in Inquiry Journeys

Reading: Inquiry Journeys is a literacy-rich curriculum that guides students as they encounter a range of authentic texts, varied in length, format, and complexity.

Writing: Students engage in intentionally scaffolded writing tasks, with special attention given to crafting and critiquing developmentally appropriate claims, supported by evidence and reasoning.

Speaking and Listening: Students engage in a wide range of discussions and presentations to build knowledge and skills, share findings, and demonstrate learning to varied audiences.



Navigating School

How can we make school a great place for everyone?

Students need to understand the places and people around them to thrive at school. In this Inquiry, students explore their roles at school, investigating how they can make choices that will make school a great place for themselves and those around them.

Investigation Modules



School norms, behaviors, interactions

Creating maps of the school and classroom



Interviewing staff members about roles and duties

Leaders, helpers, and friends



Student roles and responsibilities

Being a helper



Encountering problems

Tactics to help resolve conflicts

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Written Project, students might collaborate on an original storybook to help future students navigate school.



My Team and Self

How can we unite to build a powerful class community?

Successful teams can do just about anything! But to understand what you can accomplish as a team, you need to understand who makes up the team and how those individuals can work together. This Inquiry explores essential elements of personal identity to help students recognize how they can contribute to their class community and their own learning in amazing ways.

Investigation Modules



Self-portraits: historical and student-generated

Family, culture, identity



Brainpower and brain growth

Strengths, challenges, growth mindset



Case Study: Apollo 11 & the power of different skills

Classmate interviews, celebrating unique strengths



Cooperation and teamwork

Setting shared goals

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 3D Project, students might create works of art to teach visitors about how knowing themselves and their classmates helps them form a strong team.



Past, Present, and Future

How can we use wisdom from the past to build a better future?

Understanding our past experiences and how our memories shape us is integral to planning for our future. Students explore concepts of time and memory, discovering and sharing stories and memories that have helped them learn and grow.

Investigation Modules



Past, present, future

Learning from stories



Chronological order

Timelines



Increments and measures (months, weeks, days)

Natural cycles and patterns (night & day, seasons)



Learning from experiences

Relationship between actions and outcome

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 2D Project, students might create a visual display of illustrations and advice that shares the wisdom they've gained from past experience.







Families Near and Far


How can we bring families together to form stronger communities?

Families take many forms; there's no single definition. In this Inquiry, students identify the roles and responsibilities that contribute to a family. They explore what makes their family unique and the differences they may encounter among different families and cultures.

Investigation Modules

-  Exploration of different family structures
Families around the world
-  Customs and traditions
Exploring holidays and food traditions
-  Responsibilities, needs, and wants of a family
Compare and contrast different family roles
-  Diverse family types
How families help each other

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Written Project, students might collect recipes to create an original cookbook that celebrates the diversity of traditions in the classroom community.







Our Special Location


How can we help others appreciate our special location?

Our geographic location shapes who we are and how we live. During this Inquiry, students investigate how location and climate shape daily life, and how goods and services meet community needs.

Investigation Modules

-  Maps and globes: symbols, directions, location
Mapping important community locations
-  Landforms, bodies of water, local and regional climates
Effects of climate and landscape on way of life
-  Community goods and services
Characteristics of rural, urban, and suburban communities
-  Community workers and helpers
Symbols that represent our community

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Multimedia Project, students might use cardboard boxes to create a 3D map of their community with symbols and signage, inviting other students to their class for a miniature guided tour.



Civic Engagement


How can we work together for the good of the community?

You are never too young to engage in civic life. In this Inquiry, students explore different forms of participation and investigate key civics topics such as rights, fairness, responsibilities, rules, and laws.

Investigation Modules

-  Responsibilities as community citizens
Purpose and function of rules and laws
-  Difference between fact and opinion
Making informed choices
-  Historical changes in rules and laws
Case Study: Women and girls in sports
-  Working together to overcome challenges
Case study: Americans with Disabilities Act

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Presentation Project, students might collaborate to plan a video PSA that investigates an issue in their school community they would like to address.







Meeting Needs and Wants


How can we work together to meet community needs and wants?

Communities are created to meet our common needs. In this Inquiry, students are introduced to the concepts of needs and wants, scarcity and abundance, the ways that producers and consumers interact, and how individuals and communities make choices about how to use their resources.

Investigation Modules

-  Understanding needs and wants
Money Wise: prices, saving, spending, and giving
-  Producers and consumers
Market Economy: supply and demand
-  Planned vs. unexpected expenses
Financial literacy and evaluating financial decision-making
-  Community needs and wants
Generating ideas to meet community needs

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Multimedia Project, students might demonstrate their understanding of community needs and wants by designing original products for “sale” at a model marketplace or makers fair.







Our Changing Landscape

How can we respond to our changing landscape?

Our relationship to the physical world around us begins with our own geographical location and the physical features of that location. In this Inquiry, students explore access to and dependency on natural resources, how and why we modify the landscape, and the impacts that modifications can have on land, water, and living things.

Investigation Modules

-  Identifying geographic features
Natural resources of community and state
-  Basic human needs
Freshwater, issues of scarcity
-  Types of modifications to the environment
Population growth and landscape changes
-  Responses to environmental problems
Innovation in fresh food production

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 3D Project, students might design and share with other students an interactive game in which everything is traced back to its source as a natural resource.







Innovation


How can we innovate to improve the world around us?

Innovation touches every facet of life – past, present, and future. In this Inquiry, students consider how innovation changes society as a whole as they make their own blueprints for inventing a better world.

Investigation Modules

-  Sparks and impacts of innovation
Using evidence to evaluate impact of innovation
-  Spotlight on George Washington Carver
Characteristics of effective innovators
-  Impact of Industrial Revolution’s innovations
Transcontinental Railroad
-  Modern innovations
Improving communities through innovation

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Presentation Project, students might inform the community through a living history museum of the innovations and innovators who have brought about significant changes to daily life.



Global Connections

How can we act as global citizens?

Is it possible to touch a country and its people without ever setting foot there? In this Inquiry, students explore the geographic ways they are connected to distant places and the people who live there through the movement of people, goods, and ideas.

Investigation Modules



Relative location and geographic features
Latitude, longitude, and grid systems



Physical and human geographic characteristics
Geography's effect on culture, goods, and services



Domestic and global trade
Using natural resources and raw materials



Cultural Diffusion
Globalization and interdependence

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 2D Project, students might inform their peers of the origins stories of various products by creating a wordless storybook that traces the journeys of these products.



Migration and Movement

How can we honor and respect our many cultures?

Throughout the history of the United States, immigration has played a large part in shaping our culture, politics, and economy. In this Inquiry, students explore the timeless themes of immigration as they uncover the meaning and value of cultural identity.

Investigation Modules



Identifying push and pull factors
The impact of conflict on movement



Waves of immigration to the US
Identifying themes of immigration experiences



Cultural identity and immigration
Evolving identities



Diverse communities
Community connections

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Multimedia Project, students might educate their community by hosting an exhibition night focusing on the stories of local landmarks named after immigrants.



The 20th Century Civil Rights Movement

How can we take steps toward equality and justice?

All people in the United States have the right to equal protection under the law. In this Inquiry, students investigate how citizens exercise their rights and responsibilities in our democracy through the lens of the Civil Rights Movement.

Investigation Modules



Rights and responsibilities
Segregation



Civil rights movement
Changemakers in the civil rights movement



The March on Washington
Civil Rights Act of 1964



Learning from examples
Positive footsteps for change

Action Module



Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Written Project, students might celebrate the contributions Civil Rights supporters by creating a graphic novel highlighting their efforts and impact.







Natural Resources of the US


How should we use the natural resources of the United States?

Each region of the United States is unique; together, they provide people with the different resources they need to survive. In this Inquiry, students explore the rich natural resources across the US, how people use them, and the ways everyone can help sustain them.

Investigation Modules

-  Regions of the US
Climate, geography, and resources
-  Renewable vs. non-renewable energy
Energy from the earth, air, water, and sun
-  Case study of the Dust Bowl
Economic, social, and environmental stress
-  Promoting a working landscape
Sustainability

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Written Project, students might create brochures to support an initiative to protect a natural resource in their community.







Our State's History


How can we help tell the story of our state

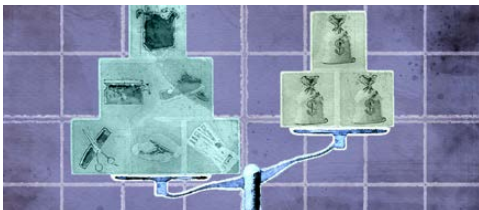
The historical roots of early state and local history are not buried, but alive in the artifacts and monuments around us, as well as the stories that we tell. In this Inquiry, students learn about the first peoples to live in their state and the major events of their state's history.

Investigation Modules

-  First evidence of humans in our state
Historic Native American cultures
-  State-specific history and developments timeline
Researching and telling our state's story
-  Rights and freedom in state history
US Policy and Native Americans' Freedom
-  Historical Sources and Perspectives
Memorializing state history

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 3D Project, students might honor a person or event from state history by creating and presenting a scale prototype of a monument for their community.







Economic Choices

How can we make economic decisions that positively impact our own lives and communities?

Throughout our lives, the economic decisions we make affect us and others in our community in profound ways. In this Inquiry, students explore their role as a consumer, producer, and economic decision-maker.

Investigation Modules

-  Goods, services, producers, consumers
Supply and demand
-  Opportunity costs
Costs and benefits
-  Exploring our region's economic story
Market demand and resources
-  Making economic choices that work toward goals
The role of banks

Action Module

-  Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Multimedia Project, students might design a business plan to address a community need, conducting research and developing a way to produce and sell a valuable good or service.



Native America

How can we better honor the cultural heritage of this land?

Ever since their first encounter with Europeans, Native Americans have been misrepresented in both the popular imagination and the historical record. This Inquiry challenges students to explore diverse historical sources to form a deeper understanding of Native America's rich and varied cultures and histories.

Investigation Modules

- Diversity across native america
Cultural areas investigation
- Storytelling as a historical source
Folktales investigation
- Artifacts as historical sources
Analyzing, documenting artifacts
- Identifying perceptions of the "First Thanksgiving"
Comparing narratives

Action Module

- Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 2D Project, students might share the true stories of inspiring Native Americans through a series of honorary portraits to be displayed in the school building.



The Colonial Era

How can facing the complexities of America's past help us to meet the challenges of the present?

The European settlement of North America created a collision of worlds that led to profound global impacts. In this Inquiry, students go beyond a single narrative to explore the complex web of events and cross-cultural interactions that helped shape both the past and present of our nation.

Investigation Modules

- The Columbian Exchange
Migration to the Americas
- Jamestown Colony source analysis
Plymouth Colony source analysis
- Colonial geography, economics, and culture
Slavery in the colonies
- Social roles in Colonial America
Colonial resistance

Action Module

- Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Presentation Project, students might address the representation of cultural groups in colonial era artworks through a presentation to the school community.



The American Revolution

How can we promote life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all?

The American Revolution reshaped society, culture, and government in the American colonies and territories. In this Inquiry, students explore the events, causes, and consequences of the Revolution, uncovering how diverse groups and individuals shaped the course of US History.

Investigation Modules

- Pre-war timeline of important events
The development of colonial identity
- British and American strengths and weaknesses
Major battles and the homefront
- Source analysis of Capitol paintings
Founding fathers case studies
- Declaration of Independence
The Constitution, conflict, and compromise

Action Module

- Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a Written Project, students might create a magazine to inform their community about contemporary events that align to (or don't live up to) the ideals of the Declaration of Independence.



Rights and Responsibilities

How can we contribute to a healthy democracy?

The concept of freedom can be applied to the relationships between individuals, governments, religious groups, tribes, or other organizations. This Inquiry explores the concept of freedom in parallel with a study of the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and branches of government.

Investigation Modules

- Absolute monarchy
Preamble to the Constitution
- Checks and balances, branches of government
The Constitution in crisis
- Constitution, Bill of Rights applied to our lives
Amending the Constitution
- Protections and limitations on freedom
Creating arguments through images

Action Module

- Using the lessons and resources in the Action Module for a 2D Project, students might design and create a mural that illustrates their rights and responsibilities as Americans to encourage young people to be more active in their community.



Frequently Asked Questions

- **Which Inquiry Units should be used at a specific grade level? Can the scope and sequence be customized?**

Contact inquirED (info@inquired.org) for a standard scope and sequence that suggests specific Inquiries for each grade level K-5. inquirED can also help schools and districts customize their scope and sequence, moving units of study up or down a grade level to best match state social studies standards within each grade band.

- **Why is there no textbook for Inquiry Journeys?**

As a fully-digital curriculum, Inquiry Journeys can engage students and support teachers beyond the limits of traditional textbooks. Students can experience a wide-variety of sources from diverse authors and creators across a varied range of media types, including maps, documents, photographs, websites, videos, paintings, personal narratives, and more. Teachers can easily access and adapt resources, and make use of PD videos and professional learning sessions. All lessons can be kept up-to-date with the most current and relevant information and resources.

- **How does Inquiry Journeys align to standards?**

Inquiry Journeys was built directly from the College Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework, which served as a blueprint for state standards across the United States. Lessons use C3 Indicators as target and supporting standards. State-specific standards will be integrated into the online platform for 2022-2023 partners. Additionally, inquirED uses the Common Core State Standards for ELA/literacy (CCSS-ELA) as supporting standards for all units in the Inquiry Journeys curriculum.

- **What kind of support system is included with a subscription to Inquiry Journeys?**

inquirED's Partner Experience team provides implementation coaching through a mixture of targeted workshops, live professional learning sessions, and direct consultations. Additionally, teachers have access to inquirED's Inquiry Hub, a dynamic online learning space where they can find PD sessions, resources, quick tips, and on-demand technical support.