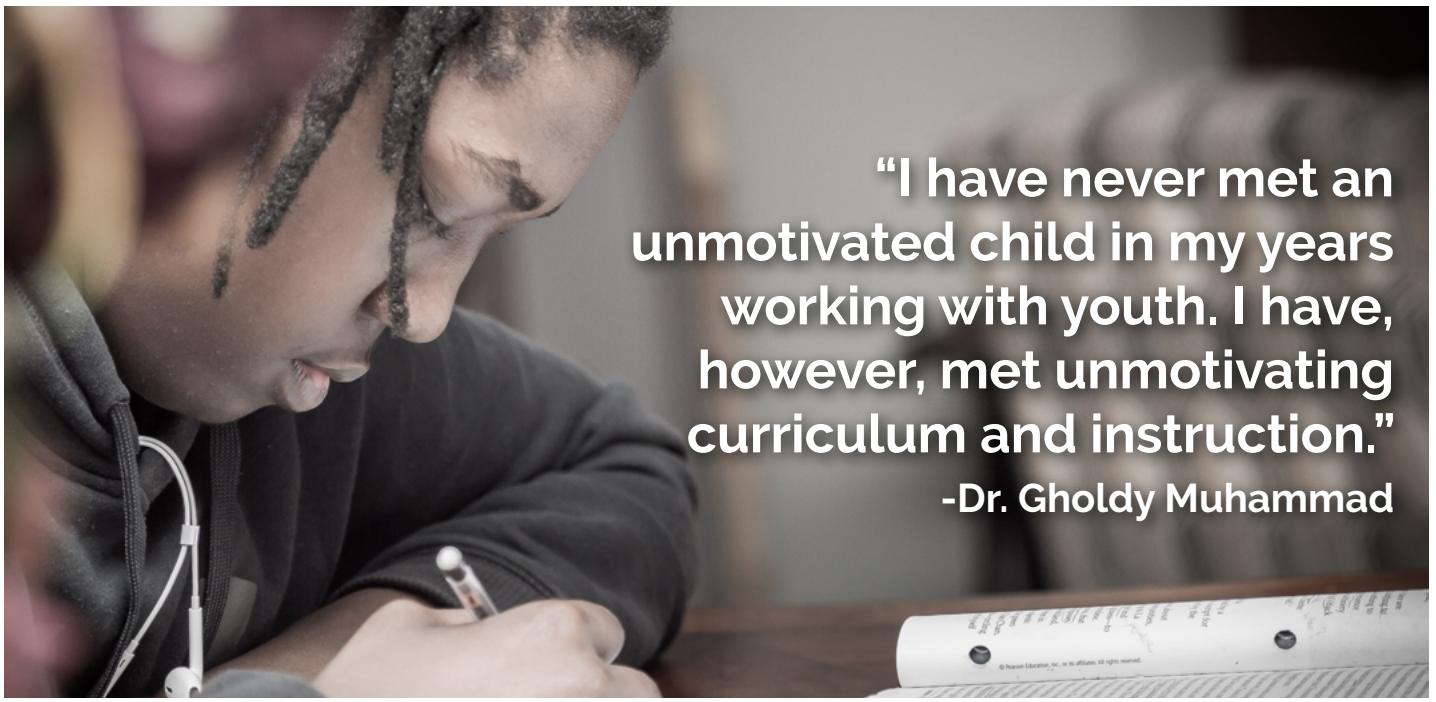


Social Studies Curriculum Review Guide

High-Quality Instructional Materials in Social Studies





“I have never met an unmotivated child in my years working with youth. I have, however, met unmotivating curriculum and instruction.”

-Dr. Gholdy Muhammad

The Need for High-Quality Instructional Materials

The world needs social studies education, now more than ever. Schools and districts have begun to rebuild their social studies programs after years of neglect. They have come to understand that a robust, inquiry-based K–12 social studies program is central to their mission of helping students become active and informed participants in our democracy.

But as instructional leaders seek to procure curriculum, they are encountering a serious challenge: While there are powerful frameworks that define social studies skills and competencies, and a multitude of standards documents that dictate required content, there is little or no guidance as to what constitutes an effective curriculum, or what criteria define high-quality instructional materials. As a result, teachers are often left to fend for themselves or make do with instructional materials that have not been vetted for rigor, coherence, or deep standards alignment.

inquirED has created a Curriculum Review Guide to help address this lack of guidance and to support instructional leaders as they develop and search for social studies curriculum.

Organization and Definitions

The Curriculum Review Guide provides evaluation rubrics across five key domains, listed in Table 1.1. Each domain contains a series of associated criteria and indicators that further define high-quality instructional materials in social studies. As you explore the domains and their associated criteria and indicators, it is important to keep in mind what we mean by curriculum and high-quality instructional materials.

A *curriculum* is a coherent set of high-quality instructional materials, academic lessons, and content that teachers use to lead students toward mastery of standards.

High Quality Instructional Materials (HQIMs) meet the demands of college- and career-ready standards. HQIMs must include fully developed lessons with instructional supports, cohesive unit structure, multimodal assessments, and integrated professional learning.

About inquirED

inquirED was founded by teachers with the mission of bringing inquiry-based social studies to every classroom. Its elementary social studies curriculum, *Inquiry Journeys*, is used in schools and districts across the country to help students develop deep social studies content knowledge and build the inquiry skills essential for a thriving democracy.

Domains of High-Quality Instructional Materials in Social Studies

The five domains were designed to reflect the goals of national guidelines, such as the C3 Framework and the Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy, as well as the requirements of newly-revised state standards. Most importantly, however, the domains, seek to organize the practical demands of schools for actionable resources and support.



Integrates Inquiry-Based Instruction

Units are designed as deep explorations of social studies content that are structured by compelling and supporting questions – and culminate in informed action. Lessons integrate student-centered strategies to promote critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.



Supports Culturally Responsive Education

The curriculum supports instruction that connects to the cultural information and learning processes familiar to historically marginalized students. It provides diverse sources and prompts investigations that allow students to learn about themselves and analyze the factors shaping their world.



Utilizes Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment

Units and lessons support the development and assessment of knowledge and skills called for by national and state social studies standards, as well as the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy.



Connects to High-Quality, Diverse Sources

Sources of content are accurate and authentic, including multiple perspectives that originate from diverse authors and creators. Sources include a range of media types, including printed texts, web-based information, videos, images, audio, etc.



Provides Instructional Supports and Continuous PD

Curriculum provides tools to differentiate and customize instruction. Units and lessons integrate continuous professional learning to develop teacher capacity for inquiry-based social studies instruction and culturally responsive practice.



INTEGRATES INQUIRY-BASED INSTRUCTION

Units are designed as deep explorations of social studies content that are structured by compelling and supporting questions – and culminate in informed action. Lessons integrate student-centered strategies to promote critical thinking, collaboration, and creative problem-solving.

Criteria	Indicators
<p>Investigates Compelling and Supporting Questions Are the units coherently designed to engage students in the creation and sustained investigation of compelling and supporting questions? (C3 Dimension 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Engages students in the investigation of a compelling question that connects social studies content to students' background knowledge and lived experiences.□ Uses supporting questions to connect individual lessons across a unit into a sustained investigation.□ Prompts students to generate and reflect upon their own investigation questions throughout a unit.
<p>Builds Disciplinary Knowledge and Skills Do lessons prompt students to evaluate sources and evidence as they build content knowledge across social studies disciplines? (C3 Dimensions 2&3)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Provides opportunities across units for students to build disciplinary content knowledge and skills in History, Civics, Geography, and Economics.□ Integrates the analysis and evaluation of sources and arguments (claims, evidence, and reasoning) across social studies disciplines.□ Engages students in learning experiences that reflect the practice of social scientists.
<p>Prompts Informed Action to Validate & Deepen Learning Do units culminate in informed action, providing students an opportunity to use their learning to respond to real-world challenges? (C3 Dimension 4)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Allows students to reflect upon learnings from their unit, and identify key ideas and concepts to share with an audience.□ Prompts students to identify opportunities in their local community to take action related to their key learnings.□ Guides students through a process of brainstorming, feedback, revision, and implementation/presentation.
<p>Promotes Student-Centered Learning Experiences Do instructional strategies used across lessons promote independent learning and ownership of the learning process?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Structures lessons to engage students in active, inquiry-based investigations of content.□ Requires the integration of student ideas and contributions to carry out investigations.□ Provides opportunities for students to create assessment criteria and engage in a process of structured peer feedback.



SUPPORTS CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE EDUCATION

The curriculum supports instruction that connects to the cultural information and learning processes familiar to historically marginalized students. It provides diverse sources and prompts critical investigations that allow students to see themselves and analyze the factors shaping their world.

Criteria	Indicators
<p>Designed to Activate Lived Experiences Do units and lessons require the activation of students' cultural background knowledge and ways of knowing to build new knowledge and skills?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Integrates students' questions, identities, and background knowledge into unit and lesson design.□ Prioritizes collaborative learning strategies that allow students to process new knowledge and skills collectively.□ Provides teachers with tools to customize learning experiences in connection with students' identities, homes, and communities.
<p>Develops Critical Thinking and Analysis Does the curriculum prompt students and teachers to identify and examine contemporary and historical instances of racism and oppression?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Prompts students to question and critique dominant narratives in the past and present.□ Presents different perspectives on the same event or experience, especially perspectives of marginalized people and communities.□ Supports teachers and students in engaging with difficult topics and participating in culturally sensitive learning activities.
<p>Affirms and Nurtures Learner Identities Does the curriculum provide authentic opportunities for students to understand and reflect upon their own identities and the identities of others (mirrors and windows)?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Presents the achievements and contributions of diverse individuals and communities throughout units.□ Encourages student perspective-taking and empathy toward people from backgrounds, cultures, and contexts different from their own.□ Integrates knowledge of self and reflection on personal strengths and challenges into unit structure and lesson strategies.
<p>Challenges Spaces of Marginality Does the curriculum integrate sources and resources created by historically marginalized people throughout its units and lessons?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Includes primary and secondary sources and artifacts created by the communities and cultures being investigated.□ Represents historically marginalized people and communities through their strengths, skills, and knowledge rather than perceived flaws or deficits.□ Presents historically marginalized people's perspectives and expertise on a wide range of subjects in the social sciences.



UTILIZES STANDARDS-BASED INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

Units and lessons support the development and assessment of knowledge and skills called for by national and state social studies standards, as well as the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy.

Criteria	Indicators
<p>Aligns Units and Lessons to Disciplinary Indicators Do units and lessons align to C3 Indicators and/or state standards to build content and skills across the disciplines of History, Civics, Geography, and Economics?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Integrates multiple social studies disciplines within each unit – and all disciplines across a curriculum year.<input type="checkbox"/> Aligns lesson objectives to grade-appropriate C3 Indicators for History, Civics, Geography, and Economics.<input type="checkbox"/> Targets lesson objectives to grade-appropriate, state-specific disciplinary standards.
<p>Develops C3 Framework Inquiry Skills Do units and lessons provide authentic opportunities to develop supporting questions, evaluate sources, and take informed action?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Prompts students to generate, reflect upon, and answer their own supporting investigation questions throughout a unit.<input type="checkbox"/> Provides opportunities to practice protocols for evaluating disciplinary sources and arguments.<input type="checkbox"/> Inspires students to solve a real-world problem in response to the compelling question of the unit.
<p>Aligns Units and Lessons to CCSS ELA Indicators Do units and lessons align to the Common Core State Standards in English Language Arts & Literacy?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Provides lesson objectives aligned to grade-appropriate CCSS ELA Standards.<input type="checkbox"/> Embeds the practice of ELA and disciplinary literacy skills within the context of a sustained investigation of social studies content.<input type="checkbox"/> Includes texts that are discipline-specific and scaffolded for grade-level understanding.
<p>Provides Coherent Assessment System Do units and lessons contain diverse formative and summative assessments that monitor progress toward social studies standards mastery?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Embeds formative assessment throughout units to evaluate student learning and inform social studies instruction.<input type="checkbox"/> Supports assessment through the use of specific, observable, and measurable look fors that demonstrate understanding.<input type="checkbox"/> Provides summative assessments that allow students to demonstrate understanding of social studies concepts and tools through different modalities.



CONNECTS TO HIGH-QUALITY, DIVERSE SOURCES

Sources of content are accurate and authentic, including multiple perspectives that originate from diverse authors and creators. Sources include a range of media types, including printed texts, web-based information, videos, images, audio, etc.

Criteria	Indicators
<p>Includes Sources Reviewed for Quality and Instructional Relevance Does the curriculum include sources that are vetted for credibility, accuracy, and bias and designed to scaffold source analysis? (C3 Dimension 1)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Ensures sources are accurate, timely, credible, and offer varied perspectives.□ Employs a multistage process of review that is transparent and available to the public.□ Examines all sources for issues of bias—including those of lesser quality—to develop source analysis skills.
<p>Incorporates Diversity of Voice and Authorship Does the curriculum include primary and secondary sources from diverse authors that relate the expertise, contributions, and perspectives of diverse people and cultures?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Integrates the perspectives of people of diverse races, classes, genders, abilities, identities, religions, and ethnicities throughout the curriculum.□ Includes primary and secondary sources that reflect the voices of the people and cultures being represented.□ Represents the expertise and scholarship of diverse peoples across a wide range of topics and disciplines in social studies.
<p>Provides Variety in Format and Type Does the curriculum differentiate learning through the use of a wide variety of source types?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Integrates sources on different platforms, including varied websites, outlets, and publishers to develop authentic media literacy skills.□ Presents primary and secondary sources in different formats and types (text, videos, images, etc.).□ Includes sources from different genres and subgenres to engage different readers and viewers.
<p>Updates Sources Based on Authentic Feedback Are sources in the curriculum continually updated, with a clear process to ensure continuous improvement?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">□ Solicits feedback from stakeholders including students, teachers, and instructional leaders.□ Updates content to reflect current scholarship and best practices in social studies.□ Employs a documented process for timely iteration of the curriculum.



PROVIDES INSTRUCTIONAL SUPPORTS AND CONTINUOUS PD

Curriculum provides tools to differentiate and customize instruction. Units and lessons integrate continuous professional learning to develop teacher capacity for inquiry-based social studies instruction and culturally responsive practice.

Criteria	Indicators
Supports Planning and Preparation Does the curriculum include actionable steps and specific resources to help teachers prepare for units and implement daily lessons?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Supports unit planning by providing representations of unit structure and flow.❑ Provides specific and comprehensive descriptions of resources provided and preparation required for all lessons.❑ Includes resources that support communication between classroom and home, and classroom and community.
Provides Tools to Differentiate Instruction Does the curriculum provide tools and resources to differentiate instruction for all learners?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Provides multimodal learning opportunities within lessons (visual, discussion, etc.).❑ Integrates diverse participation, discussion, and collaboration strategies to prompt all students to participate, respond to, and engage in investigations.❑ Includes scaffolded versions of assessments to gauge student understanding and monitor progress.
Integrates Curriculum-Based Professional Learning Does the curriculum support comprehensive professional learning to build instructional capacity?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Embeds professional learning within the curriculum to build capacity for inquiry-based social studies practice, taking informed action, and culturally responsive instruction.❑ Provides resources, tools, and training to support and strengthen the effectiveness of on-site instructional leaders.❑ Includes resources and support for Professional Learning Communities to guide collaborative analysis of curriculum implementation and student learning.
Utilizes Digital Tools to Support Instruction Does the curriculum utilize technology to support teacher implementation and enhance student experience?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">❑ Allows teachers to customize the content of units through the selection of alternative lessons, experiences, and performance tasks that meet the unique needs of their students.❑ Provides teacher-friendly, easy-to-use digital instructional materials.❑ Integrates with widely-used Learning Management Systems.

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