

Iowa Core – Davenport Schools
Priority Essential Concepts and Skills for 8th Grade Social Studies
with Details and Examples

Introduction

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

*Definition of Social Studies
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)*

The founders of our country emphasized that the vitality and security of a democracy depends upon the education and willingness of its citizens to participate actively in society. This level of participation requires civic competence. In other words, it is imperative that our future generations gain an understanding of the core concepts of social studies. Life in the United States within our democratic system is constantly changing which creates varying social circumstances. As a result, citizens need to adapt to such changes in order to sustain vital democratic traditions. Meeting this need is the mission of the social studies.

In social studies, students develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions, including but not limited to:

- Possessing basic knowledge and ways of thinking drawn from many academic disciplines
- Expressing ideas in written form
- Reading reflectively and critically
- Analyzing their own and others' opinions on social issues
- Becoming motivated to participate in civic and community life as active and informed citizens

As we work to carry on the ideals of the founders, we are compelled to revisit our fundamental beliefs and institutions and to construct new social contexts and relationships. The Iowa Core for Social Studies reflects the belief that the informed social studies student comprehends and applies to personal and public experiences the core content perspectives of the many academic fields of the social studies. Our entire social experiences, as well as our republic, are established upon the principles of individual citizenship. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the education of those future citizens.

For that reason, the Iowa Core for Social Studies has been structured around five core social studies content areas. They are:

- Behavioral Sciences
- Economics
- Geography
- History
- Political Science/Civic Literacy

For each area, knowledge and skills have been identified and defined in terms of detailed understandings that students should be able to apply. It is of key importance that students possess the knowledge and skills associated with the economic, political, and social forces that make up the human systems in which they live. In addition, they must possess the historical knowledge which created the spatial, temporal, and cultural perspectives present in our world.

The Iowa Core for Social Studies is premised upon a rigorous and relevant K – 12 social studies program. Engaging students in the pursuit of active informed citizenship will require a broad range of understandings and skills. It will also require an articulated curriculum which connects students to the social world through informed instructional experiences led by teachers who are committed to active civic participation. This represents a bold step toward a vision of social and civic literacy for all of Iowa’s students.

Behavioral Sciences

Behavioral sciences include, but are not limited to, the areas of sociology, anthropology and psychology. In addressing these disciplines the actions and reactions of humans are studied through observational and experimental methods.

Grade 8 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the influences on individual and group behavior and group decision making.*

Examples:

- Understand that various factors affect decisions that individuals make.
- Understand role, status, and social class affect interactions of individuals and social groups.
- Understand that each culture has distinctive patterns of behavior that are usually practiced by most of the people who grow up in it.
- Understand that standards used to judge behaviors vary for different settings and societal groups.
- Understand that technology is important in spreading ideas, values, and behavior patterns within a society and among different societies.
- Understand that the media may influence the behavior and decision-making of individuals and groups.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how to evaluate social research and information.*

Examples:

- Understand that human behavior is studied using scientific methods.
- Understand basic distinctions between information that is based on fact and information that is based on opinion.

Economics

Economics addresses the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. The concept of scarcity is understood to mean that available resources are insufficient to satisfy the wants and needs of everyone. Economics is therefore founded upon the alternative use of available resources and the study of choices.

Grade 8 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the functions of economic institutions.*

Examples:

- Understand the services that are available at banks and credit unions.
- Understand the process of interests and payments for goods.
- Understand the role banks play among savers, borrowers, and investors.
- Understand the types of specialized economic institutions found in market economies (corporations, partnerships, cooperatives, labor unions, banks, and nonprofit organizations).

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the function of common financial instruments.*

Examples:

- Understand checking accounts.
- Understand that bank accounts, loans and other services vary from one bank to another.

Geography

Geography is the study of the interaction between people and their environments. Geography therefore looks at the world through the concepts of location, place, human-environmental interaction, movement, and region.

****None of the Geography Essential Concepts and Skills are PRIORITIES for 8th grade.****

History

History is the study and analysis of the past. Built upon a foundation of historical knowledge, history seeks to analyze the past in order to describe the relationship between historical facts, concepts, and generalizations. History draws upon cause and effect relationships within multiple social narratives to help explain complex human interactions. Understanding the past provides context for the present and implications for the future.

Grade 8 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the effect of economic needs and wants on individual and group decisions.*

Examples:

- Understand economic concepts that help explain historical and current developments and issues in local, national, or global contexts.
- Understand reform, revolution, and social change in the world economy.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand cause and effect relationships and other historical thinking skills in order to interpret events and issues.*

Examples:

- Understand processes such as using a variety of sources, providing, validating, and weighing evidence for claims, checking credibility of sources, and searching for causality.
- Understand relationships between and among significant events.
- Understand facts and concepts drawn from history, along with methods of historical inquiry, to inform decision-making about and action-taking on public issues.
- Understand how and why events may be interpreted differently depending upon the perspectives of participants, witnesses, reporters, and historians.

Political Science/Civic Literacy

NOTE: The Essential Concepts and Skills listed in Social Studies – Political Science/Civic Literacy are the same as the Essential Concepts and Skills listed in 21st Century Skills – Civic Literacy.

Political science is the study of power and authority through the examination of political processes, governmental institutions, and human behavior in a civil society. In this context the study of civics is understood to include the form and function of government. Civic literacy encompasses civics but also addresses the individual's social and political participation.

Grade 8 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the rights and responsibilities of each citizen and demonstrate the value of lifelong civic action.*

Examples:

- Understand rights, roles and status of the individual in relation to the general welfare.
- Understand issues regarding personal, political, and economic rights.
- Understand what is meant by the "scope and limits" of a right.
- Understand participation in civic and political life can help bring about the attainment of individual and public goals.
- Understand the functions of political leadership and why leadership is a vital necessity in a democracy.
- Understand the importance of voluntarism as a characteristic of American society.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how the government established by the Constitution embodies the principles of democracy and republicanism.*

Examples:

- Understand the essential ideas of American government that are expressed in the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other documents.
- Understand the concepts of constitutional government as fundamental principles of American democracy.
- Understand the essential characteristics of limited and unlimited governments.
- Understand the basic concepts of a federal system of government.
- Understand values such as individual rights, the common good, self government, justice, equality, diversity, openness and free inquiry, truth, patriotism are fundamental to American public life.
- Understand the type of citizenry needed to establish and maintain constitutional government.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the purpose and function of each of the three branches of government established by the Constitution.*

Examples:

- Understand the primary responsibilities of each branch of government in a system of shared powers (legislative, executive, judicial) and ways in which each branch shares the powers and functions of the other branches.
- Understand how the legislative, executive, and judicial branches use checks and balances.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the similarities and differences among the complex levels of local, state and national government.*

Examples:

- Understand the relationship between state and local governments and the national government.
- Understand the powers and responsibilities of local, state and national governments.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand strategies for effective political action that impacts local, state and national governance.*

Examples:

- Understand the concept of civic responsibility.
- Understand the importance of political leadership, public service, and a knowledgeable citizenry in American democracy.
- Understand the concept of political leadership in the student's own school, community, state, and the nation.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how laws are established at the local, state and national levels.*

Examples:

- Understand the concept of public policy.
- Understand the sources, purposes, and functions of law, and the importance of the rule of law for the protection of individual rights and the common good.

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