

Towards Inquiry & Inclusion in Social Studies

A Toolkit for Illinois Social Studies Teachers



Illinois
State Board of
Education



College of Education
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN



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Figure 1: Teacher and student looking at tablet. Two students in background viewing another tablet.

Welcome to the Towards Inquiry and Inclusion in Social Studies Toolkit. It was designed to support inquiry-based and inclusive teaching and learning experiences in K-12 classrooms across the state of Illinois. This toolkit is for K-12 social science teachers, curriculum leads, administrators, and others that are interested in, and support inquiry-based and inclusive social science experiences for students. Use it in ways that make sense to you and the students you serve. Print it, download it, share it, and most importantly, utilize it! The toolkit is divided into several sections.

- Inquiry and Inclusion will lead you through an understanding of the why behind inquiry and inclusion.
- Preparing for Instruction, has downloadable resources and templates aimed at supporting curricular and instructional preparation for inquiry-based and inclusive teaching and learning experiences.
- We conclude the toolkit with Resources arranged by grade level and the four core areas of inquiry-based learning as defined by the revised Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science.

Enjoy!

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Inquiry and Inclusion

Inquiry-based learning and inclusion are largely a move towards justice in K-12 social studies. Together inquiry-based learning and inclusive social science has the potential to break down barriers, build new ways to understand the world and our experiences within it, and to create spaces for students of all ages to transform their lives and communities. Inquiry-based learning creates spaces for students to act on their curiosities and to understand their power to transform the world. Inclusive social science teaching and learning experiences creates opportunities for students to observe themselves, their cultures, and the contributions and struggles of others. By learning about the contributions that we all make to society, students may begin to recognize their own potential, moving away from deficit notions towards asset-based ones that recognize the community and cultural wealth existent in all communities, in all families, and in all children.



Figure 2: Teacher collaborating with students in a classroom. Additional students in the background.

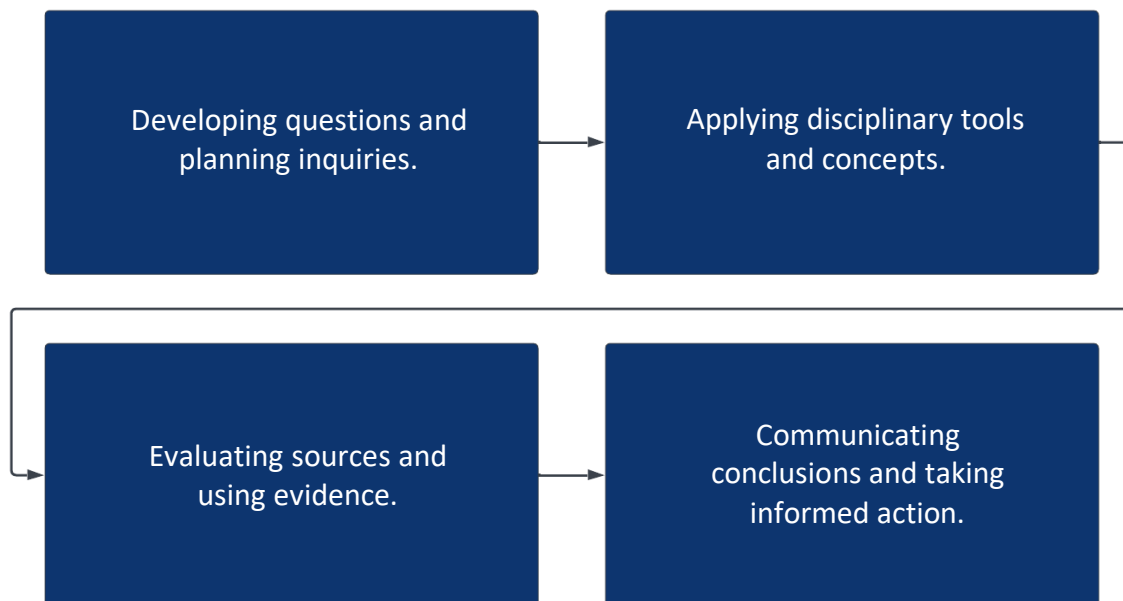
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Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science

In 2017, The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) released [the College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework](#) to guide states, districts', teachers, and other educational stakeholders towards more inquiry-based social studies teaching and learning experiences in K-12 classrooms. The C3 framework has identified four core areas of inquiry-based learning:

- (1) developing questions and planning inquiries,
- (2) applying disciplinary tools and concepts,
- (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and
- (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

Figure 3: C3 Framework Core Areas of Inquiry-Based Learning

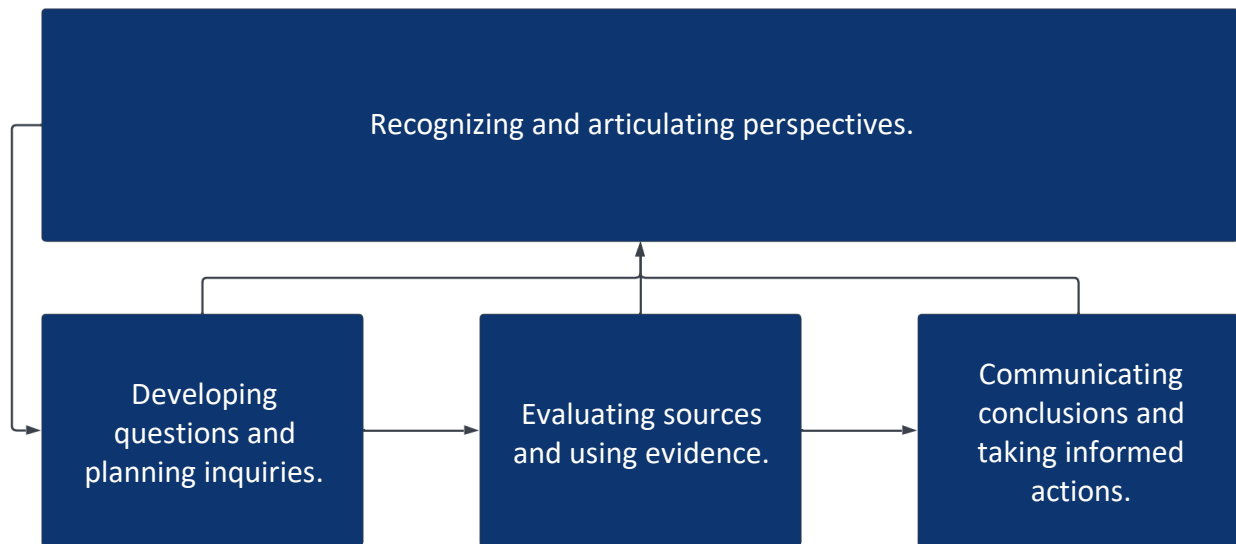


In 2019, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) began the process to revise the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science. The revised Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science were officially adopted for implementation during the 2022-2023 school year. The inquiry-based and disciplinary skills within the standards, alongside the Illinois Inclusive American History Mandates, have the potential to create culturally sustaining and justice-centered teaching and learning experiences in K-12 social science classrooms in Illinois. Like the C3 framework, the revised Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science are driven by the four core areas of inquiry-based learning that seek to create learning situations for K-12 students across the state of Illinois to take ownership of their learning.

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The Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science also draw explicit attention to the need for teachers and students to recognize, articulate, and analyze how perspective and systems of power influence and impact inequities and social transformation. The Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science Inquiry Skills (which complement the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science Disciplinary Skills) are composed of four core areas (1) recognizing perspective and articulating identities, (2) developing questions and planning inquiries, (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

Figure 4: Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science Core Areas



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Types of Inquiry

Preparing students for inquiry is a process. While the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science call for student-driven inquiry in all grades (K-12), teachers can, and do, play a role in the facilitation of students' questions, relevant data collection, emergent analyses, and transformative actions.



Figure 5: One student speaking and gesturing in a classroom while peers consider this contribution.

Table 1 details the teachers' role across several scaffolded stages of inquiry (see next page).

As you move from left to right, you will notice that students are taking on more responsibility and agency in the inquiry process. Each type of inquiry (structured, controlled, guided, and free) is determined by the role(s) of the teacher and students. Use this table to consider and plan for the facilitation of inquiry-based learning.

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Table 1: Teachers Role Across Stages of Inquiry

	Structured Inquiry	Controlled Inquiry	Guided Inquiry	Free Inquiry
Recognizing perspectives and articulating differences	<p>Teacher engages in reflection of how their own biases influence their practice.</p> <p>Teacher analyzes curriculum for inclusion of multiple perspectives, and for opportunities for students to analyze systems of power.</p>	<p>Teacher and students engage in reflection of perspectives, power, inequity, and justice.</p> <p>Teacher and students engage in reflection related to their biases. Teacher scaffolds/models this experience for students.</p> <p>Teacher and students analyze curriculum for inclusion of multiple perspectives, and for opportunities for students to analyze systems of power.</p>	<p>Teacher supports students in reflection of perspectives, power, inequity, and justice.</p> <p>Teacher and students engage in reflection related to their biases. Teacher scaffolds/models this experience for students.</p> <p>Teacher and students analyze curriculum for inclusion of multiple perspectives, and for opportunities for students to analyze systems of power.</p>	<p>Teacher supports students in reflection of perspectives, power, inequity, and justice.</p> <p>Students engage in reflection related to their biases.</p>
Developing questions and planning inquiries	<p>Teacher provides inquiry question and guides students through inquiry.</p> <p>Teacher gathers and vets resources for investigation.</p>	<p>Teacher provides menu of inquiry questions for students to choose from.</p> <p>Teacher provides 2-3 resources for each essential question</p>	<p>Teacher provides 1 or more inquiry questions.</p> <p>Students, with teacher support, gather and vet resources for investigation</p>	<p>Students create inquiry questions. Teacher is resource/partner/supporter.</p> <p>Students gather and vet resources for investigation. Teacher is a resource/partner.</p>
Evaluating sources and using evidence	<p>Teacher models evaluation of sources, and students reproduce analytical methods.</p> <p>Teacher models claim development and provides examples for students. Students reproduce methods shared.</p>	<p>Teacher models evaluation of sources, and students reproduce analytical methods.</p> <p>Teacher models claim development and provides examples for students. Students reproduce methods shared.</p>	<p>Students, with support of teacher, develop and enact evaluative methods.</p> <p>Students, with support of teacher, develop claims using analyses of evidence.</p>	<p>Students develop and enact evaluative methods.</p> <p>Students develop claims using analyses of evidence.</p>
Communicating conclusions and taking informed action	<p>Teacher chooses student action and/or performance task.</p>	<p>Teacher chooses student action and/or performance task.</p>	<p>Students choose common action and/or performance task.</p>	<p>Students choose actions and/or performance tasks (can be unique)</p>

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Essential Questions

All inquiry-based learning experiences, whether prompted by the teacher or students themselves, start with essential questions. Essential questions are, as McTighe and Wiggins (2005) write, “not answerable with finality in a brief sentence... Their aim is to stimulate thought, to provoke inquiry, and to spark more questions — including thoughtful student questions — not just pat answers” (p. 106). Essential questions in social studies are intrinsically interesting questions that students can use to carry about investigations and actions.

Essential Question Checklist

- Does it lead to further questioning?
- Is it overarching and applicable across content areas/social science disciplines; can you come back to the question throughout the year?
- Does it spark student curiosity, questions, and initiate inquiry?
- Does it provide an opportunity to explore systems and structures, identity, and multiple perspectives?
- Does it lead students to develop a deep understanding (Enduring Understanding) about our world, their communities, and/or themselves?
- Does it lead to students communicating authentic conclusions or taking informed actions?

For more guidance on Essential Questions see:

- McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2013). *Essential questions opening doors to student understanding*. Hawker Brownlow.
- [A Baker’s Dozen: 13 Considerations to help you determine if your questions are essential questions](#)

Example Essential Questions:

- What is power?
- How are imbalances of power within a society addressed?
- How does power or lack of power impact a person?
- What’s the relationship between decisions and consequences?
- How are beliefs and values created?
- How do beliefs and values influence a person/community/society?

Whether you are planning for the entire school year, or a lesson, consider what essential questions students might explore (or what essential questions might bound the students’ essential questions).

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Enduring Understandings

Enduring understandings are “the big ideas that [we want] students’ to inside of and retain after they’ve forgotten many of the details” (McTighe & Wiggins, 2005, p. 10). Enduring understandings are not facts about names, places, and dates. They are larger concepts and ideas that you hope students might take away from this lesson. Whether you are planning an entire year, or a lesson for a single class session, consider what enduring understanding might emerge from inquiry investigations in your class.

Supporting Questions

Supporting questions can be answered through descriptions, definitions, and processes on which there is general agreement. These questions help formulate an answer to the essential question.



Figure 6: One student using a laptop with two other students. Additional students in the background

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Preparing for Instruction

The templates and standards in this section are intended to support inquiry-based and inclusive social studies curricular and instructional planning. Start by reviewing the revised [Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science](#) and the [Inclusive American History Mandates](#). There are downloadable templates for lesson, unit, and annual plans. Feel free to manipulate them in ways that work for you, and most importantly your students.

- Review the revised [Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science](#).
- Review the most recent version of the [Inclusive American History Mandates](#).

Planning for the school year

- Download an [editable annual planning template](#).

Planning for a unit of study

- Download an [editable unit planning template](#).

Planning for a lesson

- Download an [editable lesson planning template](#).



Figure 7: Teacher and student working together on an assignment.

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Resources

The resources in this section are intended to support the design, implementation, and assessment of inquiry-based and justice-centered K-12 social science teaching and learning experiences. The resources are arranged by their connection to the Illinois Learning Standards for Social Science core areas. Note: Unless otherwise indicated, all resources are adaptable across grade levels. See legend below for additional details.

Legend

* Indicates K-2, ** Indicates K-5, *** Indicates 9-12

Recognizing Perspectives

- [Confirmation and Other Biases](#)
- [Circle of Viewpoints](#)
- [My Perspective, Others' Perspectives*](#)
- [Same and Different](#)
- [True for Who?](#)
- [Voice and Choice](#)
- [Voice and Choice Learner Workbook](#)

Articulating Identities

- [Creating Neighborhood Maps](#)
- [Identity Charts](#)
- [Who am I?](#)

Developing Questions

- [10 Strategies for Encouraging Students to Ask Questions](#)
- [Asking Big Question](#)
- [Asking Unanswerable Questions**](#)
- [Choosing a Honing Question*](#)
- [QFT](#)

Planning Inquiries

- [Taking Care of Our Environment Inquiry*](#)
- [Inquiry in the Upper Midwest**](#)
- [History Mysteries**](#)
- [Iceberg Analysis/Diagram](#)
- [Mapping Systems Experiences*](#)
- [People, Systems, Power, Participation](#)
- [Power, Possibilities, and Me](#)
- [Root Cause Analysis](#)

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Evaluating Sources

- [Facts or Fiction](#)
- [Library of Congress Teacher’s Guides and Analysis Tools](#)
- [News Literacy Tips, Tools, and Quizzes](#)
- [SHEG Civic Online Reasoning](#)

Using Evidence

- [Evidence Based Terms for Elementary Classrooms**](#)
- [NCSS Guide to Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence](#)
- [SHEG Teaching Sourcing and Contextualization with HATs](#)

Communicating Conclusions

- [20 Drawing Conclusions Activities*](#)
- [28 Sentence Stems for Higher-Level Conversation in the Classroom](#)
- [A Framework for Helping Students Write Effective Claims](#)
- [Artist Statements](#)
- [CER Framework in Elementary Classrooms**](#)
- [Claims and Support](#)
- [Dialogue Toolkit](#)
- [Digging Deeper into Ideas Toolkit](#)
- [Fostering Civil Discourse](#)
- [Let’s Talk](#)
- [Observational Drawing](#)
- [Re-Visioning](#)
- [Scaffolding Arguments with Evidence Using CER](#)
- [Secondary Discourse Sentence Starters***](#)
- [Simulations of Democratic Processes Toolkit](#)
- [The 4 Cs](#)
- [The Big List of Classroom Discussion Strategies](#)

Taking Informed Action

- [Four Types of Service](#)
- [Encouraging Students to Take Action](#)
- [How to Empower Students to Take Action for Social Change](#)
- [How to Teach Students to Take Informed Action in the Classroom](#)
- [Re-Visioning](#)

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The resources in listed below are related to disciplinary content. These resources are categorized by grade level (K-5, 6-8, and 9-12).

Disciplinary/Content-Related Resources: K-2

- [15 Resources for Teaching Native American History and Culture](#)
- [Advocacy for Asian American Studies/Histories in K-12](#)
- [Africa’s Great Civilizations](#)
- [Angel Island Immigrant Station](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice Resources](#)
- [Asian American K-12 Education Curriculum](#)
- [Black History 365](#)
- [Black History in Two Minutes or So](#)
- [Boston Early Civics Curriculum](#)
- [Celebrate Latinx Heritage Resources](#)
- [Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education](#)
- [Children Are Citizens Project Planner](#)
- [Crash Course Black American History Review](#)
- [Cultivating Kids Who Can Navigate Our Complex World](#)
- [Digital Civics Toolkit](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month Resources](#)

Disciplinary/Content-Related Resources: 6-8

- [15 Resources for Teaching Native American History and Culture](#)
- [Advocacy for Asian American Studies/Histories in K-12](#)
- [Africa’s Great Civilizations](#)
- [Angel Island Immigrant Station](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice Resources](#)
- [Asian American K-12 Education Curriculum](#)
- [Black History 365](#)
- [Black History in Two Minutes or So](#)
- [Celebrate Latinx Heritage Resources](#)
- [Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education](#)
- [Crash Course Black American History Review](#)
- [Digital Civics Toolkit](#)
- [Executive order 9066: Resulting in Japanese American Incarceration \(1942\)](#)
- [Folded Map Project](#)
- [Gentleman’s Agreement 1907-1908](#)
- [Hispanic Heritage Month Resources](#)
- [How Red Lines Built White Wealth: A Lesson on Housing Segregation in the 20th Century](#)
- [Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America](#)

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- [Measuring Race and Ethnicity Across the Decades: 1790–2010](#)
- [Middle Grade Historical Novels](#)
- [Teaching Equitable Asian American Community History](#)
- [Unvarnished: Housing Discrimination in the Northern and Western United States](#)

Disciplinary/Content-Related Resources: 9-12

- [15 Resources for Teaching Native American History and Culture](#)
- [Advocacy for Asian American Studies/Histories in K-12](#)
- [Angel Island Immigrant Station](#)
- [Asian Americans Advancing Justice Resources](#)
- [Asian American K-12 Education Curriculum](#)
- [Black History 365](#)
- [Brazil: A History of Change](#)
- [Black History in Two Minutes or So](#)
- [Celebrate Latinx Heritage Resources](#)
- [Center for K-12 Black History and Racial Literacy Education](#)
- [Crash Course Black American History Review](#)

The resources listed below are miscellaneous topics that include suggested readings, listenings, and viewings related to inquiry-based and justice-centered social studies.

Suggested Readings

- [A Different Mirror](#)
- [Asian American Histories of the United States](#)
- [Black Appetite. White Food: Issues of Race, Voice, and Justice Within and Beyond the Classroom](#)
- [Black History is Not American History: Toward a Framework of Black Historical Consciousness](#)
- [Born Out of Struggle](#)
- [Legends, Lies & Cherished Myths of American History](#)
- [Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong](#)
- [My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies](#)
- [Perspectives of Black Histories in Schools \(Research in Social Education\)](#)
- [Social Studies for a Better World: An Anti-Oppressive Approach for Elementary Educators \(Equity and Social Justice in Education\)](#)
- [Teaching Asian America in Elementary Classrooms](#)
- [The Hindus by Wendy Doniger](#)
- [The Making of Asian America](#)
- [The Re-Imagining Migration Guide to Creating Curriculum](#)

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Suggested Listeners

- [1619 Podcast](#)
- [Latinx History is Black History Webinar](#)
- [Promoting “We The People” Consciousness](#)
- [Teaching Inclusive History with the Chicago History Museum – Challenging the Status Quo: Activist Women in Chicago Webinar](#)
- [What’s Going On? A Social Studies Network Podcast](#)

Suggested Viewings

- [Latinx History is Black History Webinar](#)
- [Overview of Inquiry-Based Learning in Social Studies](#)
- [Promoting “We The People” Consciousness](#)
- [Start with Story: Inclusive History from Those Who Lived It Webinar](#)
- [Teaching Inclusive History with the Chicago History Museum – Challenging the Status Quo: Activist Women in Chicago Webinar](#)
- [What’s an Inclusive and Inquiry-Based Social Studies Curriculum?](#)
- [What’s an Inclusive and Inquiry-Based Social Studies Pedagogy?](#)

Miscellaneous

- [Coalition for Liberated Ethnic Studies](#)
- [Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist](#)
- [Inquiry-Driven Teaching and Learning: A General Rubric](#)
- [Free Inquiry Resources from Trevor MacKenzie](#)
- [The Four “I”s of Oppression](#)

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Author's Note

This guide was created by Asif Wilson, Samantha Stearns, Alayna Washington, and Seth Brady. All questions and comments should be directed to Dr. Asif Wilson at ajwilso1@illinois.edu.

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