



Illinois Social Science Learning Standards

Instructional Shifts

The task force that wrote the Illinois Social Science Learning Standards utilized the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3 Framework) as a guide to the skills that are critical to student development. As such, both the C3 Framework and the Illinois Social Science Learning Standards share five instructional shifts that offer teachers a foundation for designing standards-aligned curricular materials and instructional activities. The following information was adapted from the *C3 Instructional Shifts* document (Swan, K., Lee, J., & Grant, S.G., 2014) in order to provide a clear explanation of the shifts as they exist in the new Illinois Social Science Learning Standards.

At its heart, the social sciences explore the relationship between individuals and society, from friends and family to global networks. In a school setting, the disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history are central to our students' preparation for college, career, and civic life. Through the social sciences, young people develop skills transferable to success in college and careers, including creativity, critical thinking, working in diverse groups to solve complex problems, global awareness, and financial literacy. Most importantly, they will emerge with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors necessary to be informed and effective citizens. The standards writing task force was constantly challenged with the need for Illinois students to not just acquire and produce knowledge but also to live a life of action—to engage in the workings of our democracy.

The Illinois Social Science Standards are designed to ensure that students across Illinois focus on a common set of standards and have the opportunity to develop the knowledge, dispositions, and skills necessary for success in college, career, and civic life in the 21st century. The vision supporting this design is to produce Illinois graduates who are civically engaged, socially responsible, culturally aware, and financially literate.

The standards writing task force utilized the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework (C3 Framework) as a guide to the skills that are critical to student development. As such, both the C3 Framework and the Illinois Social Science Learning Standards share *five instructional shifts* that offer teachers a foundation for designing standards-aligned curricular materials and instructional activities. Instruction that is mindful of the standards is clear about the kinds of questions employed, the opportunities to work individually and collaboratively, the mix of content and skills taught, the ways in which literacy is woven into lessons and assessments, and the venues offered for students to take informed action. In each of these ways, teachers are taking deliberate steps to help their students become ready for college, career, and civic life.

These shifts articulate ways that teachers can strengthen their instruction, while also impacting the design of curriculum and assessment. They represent the ambitions set forth in the Inquiry Skills, but also reflect exemplary practices that can be found right now in thousands of social science classrooms. The goal of this publication is to communicate a coherent set of instructional practices and elevate these practices and models for enhancing social science teaching and learning in all classrooms.

Shift 1: Craft questions that spark and sustain an inquiry

The first portion of the inquiry skills sets an expectation that *individually and collaboratively* students will construct essential and supporting questions that initiate and sustain an inquiry. Essential questions represent academic content-based problems and issues in and across the social science disciplines. Supporting questions often nestle underneath essential questions, contributing knowledge and insights to the overall inquiry, and the Illinois Social Science Standards expect that students will be able to understand and articulate that relationship as they build their knowledge on these skills (SS.IS.2.9-12). The standards note that students will need considerable guidance from adults to construct questions suitable for inquiry (pgs. 5-6). Ultimately, the standards expect that students understand the relevance and importance of the questions under investigation and that this understanding spirals and builds along the inquiry experience.

Shift 2: Cultivate and nurture collaborative civic spaces

Civic readiness is a key component of both the C3 Framework and the Illinois Social Science Standards. Throughout the standards, the notion exists that students will *individually and collaboratively* accomplish the learning goals set forward. The idea of collaboration is hard-wired into the inquiry skills, but collaboration means more than just pairing up with other students to develop questions or analyze sources. When using an inquiry approach informed by the standards in the classroom, the importance of collaboration as an element of civic life is clear. Collaboration is a natural part of civic life. Students collaborate to develop questions and rely on one another to examine the importance of those questions. When engaging the disciplinary content, students work together to apply civic virtues and principles in the school settings. Students are expected to communicate their conclusions to a range of audiences (Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action), both in and out of the classroom. Students join efforts to critique arguments and explanations in later portions of the inquiry skills and to further refine their understanding. Perhaps most importantly students assess their individual and collective capacities for addressing problems and then apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures in making classroom decisions (Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action). In all places where the standards emphasize civic life, collaboration is fundamental to student success.

Shift 3: Integrate content *and* skills purposefully

The second portion of the Illinois Social Science Standards focuses on disciplinary skills and key conceptual knowledge associated with civics, economics, geography, and history. This portion of the standards guides but does not prescribe the selection of curricular content necessary for a rigorous social science program. Curricular content specifies the particular ideas to be taught and the grade levels at which to teach them; conceptual content is the bigger set of ideas in the standards that will help frame the curricular content. However, the absence of curricular content in the standards should not be misinterpreted. Curricular content is critically important to the disciplines within the social sciences. Teachers will need to be thoughtful in selecting appropriate and relevant content to help students ground their inquiries and build disciplinary skills and conceptual knowledge. The notion of content as separate from skills is an artificial distinction. Skills, particularly those in the disciplines, exist for the

purpose of developing content knowledge. In essence, students will come to know disciplinary content as they apply the skills in the standards to be fully college, career, and civic ready.

Shift 4: Promote literacy practices and outcomes

The literacies described in the C3 Framework and the Illinois Social Science Standards fall into two broad categories: Inquiry and Disciplinary literacies. Inquiry literacies include questioning, developing claims with evidence, and communicating conclusions. While these inquiry literacies represent, in some ways, a new way of thinking about social science instruction (see shifts 1, 2, and 5), the unique emphasis on disciplinary literacies in the standards requires a separate consideration. Social science has long emphasized literacy and social science teachers recognize that they share the responsibility for literacy instruction in the schools. The Illinois Learning Standards for English Language Arts provide a clear accounting for the development of literacies among students. However, the unique disciplinary literacies that emerge in social science from the disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history require special attention. The Illinois Social Science Standards recognize these unique disciplinary literacies in the second portion of the standards. These indicators represent a roadmap for students to develop literacies as they examine the content in civics, economics, geography, and history. Included among these disciplinary literacies are the processes such as deliberation, using economic data, reasoning spatially, and analyzing cause and effect.

Shift 5: Provide tangible opportunities for taking informed action

A key component of the Inquiry Skills portion of the standards closes the inquiry process with opportunities for students to communicate the results of their inquiries and, in cases where it is curricularly appropriate, to take informed action. The standards do not prescribe the actions that are appropriate for a particular classroom context or for a specific inquiry. Instead, what these indicators focus on is being *informed* when taking action. Students in social science use their inquiries as a launching pad for action. The indicators in this portion of the standards guide students in doing three things as they move from academic inquiry to the public square: 1) Understand the pervasiveness of the problem as well as its complexity (SS.IS.5.K-2; SS.IS.6 other grades) 2) Assess options for action given the context of the problem (SS.IS.6.K-2; SS.IS.8 other grades) 3) Engage in deliberative processes to move toward an “action” plan (SS.IS.8 and SS.IS.9). There is an expectation that social science students practice citizenship in the same way they practice historical thinking, economic decision-making or geographic reasoning. As a result, students will need tangible spaces in curricula to consider, debate, and plan for action-oriented experiences that would culminate their academic inquiries.