

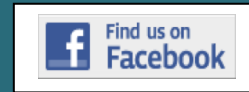


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The College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework: An Inquiry Approach to Social Studies

by

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Energy! That is what education is all about: the excitement of learning and the contagion of this excitement. Education that is meaningful to students involves relevance and motivation. When learning is purposeful, engaging, and connected to their lives, students choose to participate and thus, learn (Kane, 2011). That is the intent of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework. In response to previous education reform efforts that led to particularizing social studies curriculum into a sequenced series of skills and facts that reduced students' abilities to apply knowledge to new situations or to develop reasoned argument, the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for social studies state standards calls "for students to become more prepared for the challenges of college and career ... united with a third critical element: preparation for civic life. Advocates of citizenship education cross the political spectrum, but they are bound by a common belief that our democratic republic will not sustain unless students

are aware of their changing cultural and physical environments; know the past; read, write, and think deeply; and act in ways that promote the common good. There will always be differing perspectives on these objectives. The goal of knowledgeable, thinking, and active citizens, however, is universal." (C3 Framework, p. 1).

The C3 Framework is designed to provide guidance to states in order to enhance the rigor of K-12 students and prepare them for college, career and civic life while promoting students to be active participants in their own education. Its role is to serve as a guide for educators when teaching state and local History/Social Science standards in response to the lack of public consensus on what specifically should be taught. Students engage with texts, be they primary sources or other sources, and grapple with new knowledge in order to apply it to new situations. They do their own thinking on political and social issues resulting in a wide variety of answers to judgment questions.

The C3 Framework facilitates student learning through practice and critical analysis using the “Inquiry Arc” whereby students engage in issues and arrive at their own conclusions, with the ultimate goal being one of civic action. With an inquiry-based model of instruction, each day brings a new question to answer, a new problem to solve, and a new world to discover. When students have a voice in the classroom and its governance, they see firsthand the value of a democratic society. They learn to listen to others and to respect the backgrounds and values of their friends and neighbors. The teacher is no longer merely a dispenser of knowledge, but is a facilitator who guides students through the inquiry process beginning with a compelling question that motivates students to want to know more while analyzing issues to reach conclusive judgments based on sound evidence. From this approach to history and social studies, students more readily see the value in the topics they are discussing, reading and learning. Civics and geography no longer are perceived as merely topics in school that are to be tested, but become relevant to their everyday lives and futures. By applying what they learn to current real-life situations, students are prepared for a future of informed and active citizenry. This integrated approach and focus on civic participation make the C3 Framework an indispensable tool in 21st century classrooms.

Validating Best Practices

The C3 Framework’s objectives are to: a) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines; b) build critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills to become engaged citizens; and c) align academic programs to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies (C3 Framework, p. 12). Who can argue with objectives that exemplify what educators know to be research-based best practices? When we look at best practices in teaching, we find validation in the C3 Framework. In their book, Best Practice: Bringing Standards to Life in America’s Classrooms, Zemelman and Daniels provide a consensus definition of what are best practices. They state that virtually all of the authoritative voices and documents in every teaching field are “calling for schools that are more student centered, active, experiential, authentic, democratic, collaborative, rigorous and challenging” (2012, p. 5). These best practices are mirrored in the C3 Framework, and are also apparent in the Common Core State Standards.

There is a definitive need to increase rigor in schools beginning at the earliest grades. Statistics show that nearly fifty percent of high school students indicate that they are not challenged in most of their classes (Yazzie-Mintz, 2010). This could be remedied by a curriculum that creates a stronger connection to school, making classes a place where students live up to expectations centered on academia and scholarly pursuits. However, educators must know that rigor does not mean that the class or assignment is merely harder. In a rigorous class, teachers *support* students so they can learn at advanced levels, and students then *demonstrate* learning at these levels. Rigor is not just about what is taught or the particular classes that students take. Instead, it is found in how the teacher fosters student’s interaction with the text and material at hand (Beers & Probst, 2013). Rigor is the deep way we approach content to promote critical thinking through and across the curriculum. This is the underlying premise of the C3 Framework.

The Dimensions of the Framework

Sustainability of our democratic society is dependent on an informed citizenry, able to make decisions based on critical thinking. The C3 Framework is organized with an “Inquiry Arc” that is grounded in active, student-centered, inquiry-based best practices that promote and hone such skills. Elements of the inquiry

process lead to attainment of civic learning goals, as well as learning goals of all high-quality social studies disciplines. The four dimensions within the “Inquiry Arc” rely on students’ abilities to ask questions and look at topics through interdisciplinary lenses, as well as solve problems collaboratively. See Figure A for an overview of the dimensions (C3 Framework, p. 1). Each is elaborated upon in the following section.

Figure A - C3 Framework Organization/Inquiry Arc

<i>Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries</i>	<i>Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts</i>	<i>Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence</i>	<i>Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action</i>
<i>Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries</i>	<i>Civics Economics Geography History</i>	<i>Gathering and Evaluating Sources Developing Claims and Using Evidence</i>	<i>Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions Taking Informed Action</i>

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries

Compelling questions focus on enduring issues and concerns. They deal with curiosities about how things work, interpretations and applications of disciplinary concepts, and unresolved issues that require students to construct arguments in response (Herczog, 2013). With carefully written compelling questions driving units of study, students are able to delve deeper into curriculum. The Common Core State Standards are infused as children experience the skills needed for historical inquiry, conducting research, and writing informative, narrative, and opinion essays while continuously making connections to their own lives.

Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts

Integrating the major social studies disciplines of history, civics, economics, and geography allow students to study a topic through multiple lenses. For example, a unit of study surrounding the compelling question “Does voting matter?” may utilize integrated social studies disciplines to provide more meaningful learning. From a historical lens, students study a voting rights timeline and analyze the cause-and-effect relationship between major events in history and voting from a full multidisciplinary approach as outlined in the C3’s Inquiry Arc. With information from primary sources, they write a cause-and-effect essay citing historical documents to demonstrate the causes of voting related to Constitutional amendments. While reading the primary sources, students analyze and evaluate the sources to decide if they are credible. From this perspective, students determine the reliability and credibility of the source. To understand the connection of economy to early voting rights, students analyze a photo of re-enactors at Colonial Williamsburg and discuss question such as: What was the cultural significance of “white men with property” being the only people who voted in early America? Who controlled the resources? Why were voting rights tied to wealth? Why did this change over time? And finally, with regard to geography, students study and analyze maps depicting voting statistics and voter turnout rates in different parts of the country or in the local area, discussing the impacts of space, location, and the features of location and all the variables thereof on human behavior, political and otherwise. Through such analysis, students offer possible explanations while finding evidence to support their claims.

Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence

Students need to learn how to analyze a source document so as to understand how to make claims based on evidence. Thus, by paying close attention to the processes for gathering, analyzing, and evaluating a wide range of sources, students hone their critical thinking skills. Through strategies such as close reading, teachers guide students to analyze complex informational text, discuss various points of view, make a claim, and provide evidence to justify a conclusion. When fifth graders read a primary source such as Christopher Columbus' journal and aim to understand his perspective on the Native Americans and his rationale for claiming land, they consider the historical context of the document, the author's bias, the recipient's perspective, and the document's purpose, while simultaneously analyzing the content of the document itself. Using the skill sets that adult historians use, students understand how to make claims about Columbus' perspective based on evidence.

Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

Communicating conclusions and taking informed action are the components that make the C3 Framework most meaningful to students. Students understand how and why to take action as a result of their learning. This application of knowledge to the real world helps teachers guide students to civic engagement. Some student products exemplifying cross-curricular analysis and activities that are supported by this dimension of the C3 Framework are listed below:

- Creating public service announcements for the student body on playground citizenship and behavior
- Writing a Student Bill of Rights and persuasive essays for or against ratification purposes
- Launching a voter registration campaign after analyzing results of local voting statistics
- Letter writing to city officials about skate park hours
- Creating geography lessons for kindergarteners

Conclusion

As teachers plan a curriculum that promotes critical thinking, the C3 Framework is an invaluable tool that puts civic education at the forefront. It justifies and supports a more robust set of civic education learning goals by making stronger connections between the inquiry model, critical thinking skills, participatory skills, the Common Core and civic learning. The core skills related to the "Inquiry Arc" encourage students to be involved and engaged while making intelligent, informed decisions about society and its political system. With The C3 Framework, civics is taught in every grade, and modeled by teachers who understand the importance of membership in the society-at-large. The C3 Framework allows teachers to impart to students the knowledge and methods needed to take informed action, and the belief that this engagement is worthwhile now and in the future. Because it is highly unlikely that California History/Social Science Standards will be updated in the near future, teachers might think about how they would use the C3 with existing California social studies standards. For example, one approach might be to use existing CA H/SS Standards to guide the content but "reframe" *HOW* the content is delivered, using the Inquiry Arc of the C3 Framework to guide instructional practices. Another example might be for fifth grade teachers, who are required to teach about the Revolutionary War, to use the C3 Four Dimensions to "teach it." Begin with a Compelling Question: Was the Revolutionary War *revolutionary*? Identify the content (geography, history, economics, civics) as found in Dimension 2, evaluate sources as in Dimension 3, and communicate their conclusions as in Dimension 4. Stretch the lesson to "Take Informed Action" by talking about revolutions today – when is it "good" to revolt? When is it not? If students have a grievance against school, family or community, what is an appropriate way to "revolt" or communicate opposition that will result in a productive

outcome? (See a five-minute snapshot video of the author engaged in a lesson preparing students for active and engaged citizenship - “C3 Framework – Why Vote? Fifth graders take informed action.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tbWapv3m6y8>.) These are just two examples on ways to use the C3 Framework and the inquiry process that can lead to increased civic education. To learn more about the C3 Framework and resources to support its implementation, go to <http://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/c3/C3-Framework-for-Social-Studies.pdf>.

Note to CCSS members and affiliates: Senate Bill 897 - introduced by Senator Darrell Steinberg and signed by Governor Brown - requires that the California Department of Education “consider” using the C3 Framework when the CA H/SS standards and frameworks are updated. You are encouraged to contact the State Board of Education at sbe@cde.ca.gov to request they include references to the C3 Framework in the current CA History/Social Science Framework update.

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