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ISBE
Content Specialists

Sixth through
Eighth Grade

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The Teachers' Newsletter

from Illinois Classrooms in Action

Grade band lessons, ideas and information
Focus: Social Studies Integration

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Primary Sources for Assessment Based Learning

Assessment should be a teaching tool as well as a means for assessing learning. Using primary sources for document-based learning is a wonderful way to integrate social studies assessment with learning.

A great source for this learning is the Library of Congress. They have a wide



range of primary source documents to meet the needs of most grade levels.

Primary Source Sets include Abraham Lincoln, the Wright Brothers, the Harlem

Renaissance, the Industrial Revolution, and Women's Suffrage, the Civil War, World War I, Baseball and so much more.

Applying your evaluation rubric to these primary source sets will drive instruction and learning as well provide an assessment.

Here is the link for the resources. <https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/>

SAT and PSAT Information

New this year, ISBE will require public-school students in grade 9 to take the PSAT 8/9 and public-school students in grade 10 to take the PSAT 10, unless the student will

take [DLM-AA](#) instead.

ISBE will continue to require public-school students in grade 11 to take the SAT, unless the student will take [DLM-AA](#)

instead.

Additionally, some public-school students in grade 12 may also be required to take the SAT or DLM-AA, as appropriate.



Please see the [flowchart document](#)  for details about which grade 12 students are required to test

For more information on these tests click on the link below:

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/sat-psat.aspx>

A Match Made in Heaven: Literature & Social Science



“It is essential to help children focus on those aspects of a literary work that contain social significance, have relevance to their own lives, and suggest a course for personal action.” Neil O. Houser

Research has shown that interdisciplinary curricula can benefit students’ learning by promoting students’ comprehension of important content such as social science. Educational standards reflect this research by requiring students to draw topic information from a range of text types in order to build critical thinking and content-area literacy skills.

Different literary works can effectively promote active learning, civic participation, and global citizenship which is at the heart of social science. For example, in Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* (1958) this work of fiction chronicles the life of

Okonkwo, the leader of an Igbo community in Nigeria, from the events leading up to his banishment from the community for accidentally killing a clansman, through the seven years of his exile, to his return.

The novel addresses a particular problem of emergent Africa—the intrusion in the 1890s of white missionaries and colonial government into tribal Igbo society, without actually being factual.

Using a literary text to teach across disciplines can support literacy in more than one content area and build significant connections across

curricula.

“Using fiction may help break down artificial barriers between disciplines, engaging students in reading and thereby truly integrating literacy with social studies. Discussions of form and its impact on shaping the presentation of content are rarely clearer than they are when reading literature, and this can make students more aware of the ways content is represented in text books and primary source documents.”

Diana B. Turk, Emily Klein, and Shari Dickstein, “Mingling ‘Fact’ with ‘Fiction’:

Resource to Access Social Science Text Types

CommonLit provides high-quality, free instructional materials to support literacy development for students in grades 3-12. Many of these texts coordinate with or target social science topics.

Click [here](#) to get to CommonLit. Once on the homepage, click Library. Here teachers can browse to access texts organized with these headings:

- **Genre:** Texts are identified and organized by biographies, autobiographies, historical documents, historical fiction, letters, memoirs, news, political

theory, primary source documentation, etc...

- **Text Set :** Paired texts are listed that connect to a variety of historical events.
- **Theme:** Texts are organized by a particular theme such as Justice, Freedom & Equality or Social Change & Revolution.
- **Grade Level Texts:** Texts provided on the website are also organized at specific grade levels.

New to CommonLit are units. CommonLit units are

groupings of 6-10 texts organized around an essential question. Each unit lasts 1-3 weeks and comes with a graphic organizer, paired texts, multiple choice questions, short constructed response questions, and final assessment essay prompts. While unit materials are mostly printable for now, you can assign each individual text digitally.



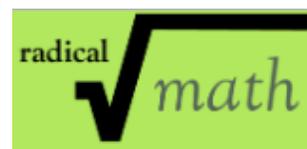
Integrating Math and Social Science

Teaching mathematics within a social science context provides the opportunity for students to explore social justice issues. It is vital that students see math as a tool to be used to explore and explain the world. While mathematical

discourse is key to student understanding of mathematical content, engaging students in social justice discourse will help students develop their civic responsibility.

Radical math,
www.radicalmath.org,

provides math lessons with a social justice context. Jonathan Osler has compiled an extensive list of math lesson plans that explore economics and social justice topics, celebrate different cultures, and promote civic engagement.



The Mathematicians Project

It is imperative that our students identify themselves as mathematicians. However, as Annie Perkins points out on her [blog](#), “We as math teachers tend to only talk about white male Mathematicians.” Unfortunately, this portrayal isn’t unique to mathematics as throughout history many events and disciplines have been portrayed as being dominated by only white men. Students need to be given a chance to explore the diverse people who have been involved with math throughout history in order to allow them to see themselves as mathematicians too. Perkins started the Mathematicians Project in response to this disparity. She has compiled a database of mathematicians and tagged them by characteristics students may connect with—race, ethnicity, gender, background, religion, etc. She encourages math educators at every grade level “take 10-15 minutes a week to research a not-old-dead-white-dude mathematician, and then take 5 minutes in class to tell your students about them.” Help students identify as mathematicians by exposing them to mathematicians they can identify with! Find more information [here](#).

***I must study
politics and war
that my sons
may have the
liberty to study
mathematics
and philosophy.
~ John Adams***

January 31, 3:30-4:30 Formative Assessment Part 2

During Part 2 of our series, we will discuss how to use results of formative assessments. After using the tasks we created in Part 1 in your classroom, we can see what misunderstandings the students had and what they tells us about the students' understanding. Then we will discuss next steps of instruction.

Register here: <http://bit.ly/Jan31ILMathCom>

Join us at one of our
upcoming free, virtual
#ILMathCom events!

Check out
www.mathteachersinaction.org/ilmathcom.html to
access the complete listing
of upcoming events, register
for #ILMathCom events, or
to watch the recordings of
past events.

February 6, 3:30-4:30 Fluency without Fear

Student choice is great way to differentiate instruction allowing students to explore mathematical concepts in activities that engage their talents and interests. Choice also encourages student agency, a key factor in educational equity. Cheryl Beasley, a math consultant in northern Illinois, will be sharing some strategies that allow for choice in mathematics. We will also be sharing our Choice Board samples during this call. Join us to explore new resources, share your experiences, and ask questions to better understand how student choice can strengthen math instruction.

Register here: <http://bit.ly/Feb7ILMathCom>

Fostering Resilience through the Connection of Social Studies and Science

Students come to the classroom today with little to no experience in delayed gratification. They are used to immediate results, instant feedback, and quick answers. This experience often causes them to have the same expectation for school.

Well-crafted science instruction naturally challenges students. As students use the practices to try to explain phenomena, they will inevitably meet frustration. This is not a downfall in instruction. Students who struggle with a topic to reach a deep understanding will benefit from a great sense

of accomplishment. They will also begin to develop the skills necessary to succeed not only in science investigations but across the subject areas. However, this is a foreign concept to students. Struggling to find an answer and taking time to get there will feel like failure to many students. Often, you will see them give up quickly, lacking the perseverance to see it through.

Using students' experiences in the science classroom as a springboard, teachers can provide a historical context for scientific discovery. Through the study of scientists and

their pursuit of new ideas, students can appreciate the character traits as well as knowledge necessary for innovation to happen. As they learn that the path to innovation has never been quick or easy, students can begin to apply that knowledge to their own educational experience. Grappling with a concept over time does not show lack of intelligence it shows an abundance of fortitude. Working toward an engineering goal after failed attempts does not show ineptitude, it shows determination to succeed.

Genius is one percent inspiration, ninety-nine percent perspiration.
~Thomas Edison

Learning from the Experience of Others



When asking students to study a scientist, allow them choice to encourage investment in the assignment. Students may choose their person of interest due to their familiarity with the person or their interest in the accomplishments of a person. Once students have identified their person of choice, ask them to research the scientist through the lens of struggle. Students may get their information from numerous sites or texts, including www.biography.com. Ask students to look for the obstacles that may have caused frustration in the scientist's life as well as the character traits that helped the scientist to overcome these obstacles.

Once students have completed their research, ask them to create a graphic representation of their scientist's character traits. They should also make sure to provide evidence for each chosen trait. The class will then be able to create a list of common attributes that successful scientists share. This list can be posted in the science classroom for reference when students encounter obstacles in their own learning.

Teaching and Learning Supports

6th Grade Through 8th Grade



Check us out on the web:
[Illinois Classrooms in Action](#)

I believe that everyone has a story, and it is important that we encourage all students to tell theirs.

-Erin Gruwell
Writer



Connecting SEL Standards to Social Science

The Illinois Social Science Standards are divided into 5 areas—Inquiry Skills, Civics, Economics and Financial Literacy, Geography, and History. Each area shows a set of skills based upon grade level that students develop progressively through school. Many of these skills can be connected to Social Emotional Learning standards. Creating a collaborative classroom environment can assist in making the connections more integrated.

SS Standards	SEL Standards	SEL Benchmarks
SS.IS.8.6-8.LC: Analyze how a problem can manifest itself and the challenges and opportunities faced by those trying to address it.	1C. Demonstrate skills related to achieving personal and academic goals	3a. Set a short-term goal and make a plan for achieving it 3b. Analyze why one achieved or did not achieve a goal.
SS.IS.8.6-8.MC: Apply a range of deliberative and democratic procedures to make decisions and take action in schools and community contexts.	3A. Consider ethical, safety, and societal factors in making decisions.	3b. Analyze the reasons for school and societal rules.
SS.CV.1.6-8.MdC: Describe the roles of political, civil and economic organizations in shaping people's lives.	3C. Contribute to the wellbeing of one's school and community.	3a Evaluate one's participation in efforts to address an identified school need. 3b. Evaluate one's participation in efforts to address an identified need in one's local community.
SS.CV.5.6-8.LC; MdC; MC : Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in school and community settings.	3A. Consider Ethical, Safety, And Societal Factors In Making Decisions.	3a. Evaluate how honesty, respect, fairness, and compassion enable one to take the needs of others into account when making decisions. 3b. Analyze the reasons for school and societal rules.
SS.G2.6-8.MC: Evaluate how cultural and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people in both nearby and distant places.	2B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.	3a. Explain how individual, social, and cultural differences may increase vulnerability to bullying and identify ways to address it

Classroom activities to support inquiry skills can include collaborative discussions on many topics. Having a conversation on a classroom rule, current event, a character's choice in a story or even within a morning circle talk involve listening to other's perspective prior to making a decision. Taking a poll or vote after the discussion allow students to make decisions based on the discussions.

Civics activities within the classroom and school build on the students understanding of community. Classroom roles for tasks such as collecting work, handing out papers, setting up technology, or helping a substitute mirror the community roles that contribute to the good of all.

Good decision making is a key component to economics and financial literacy. Teaching students to gather information, understand how their decisions effect others and themselves prior to making the decision is a key skill all student needs to practice. A great way to do this is connect decision making to how our students spend their money. Whether it is from an allowance in lower grades or a job in the upper grades students can build confidence in their spending choices by learning to research the purchase.

Learning to listen, understand and accept another person's perspective is an extremely difficult skill to master. Looking at history and geography gives students a great perspective on how opinions have affected the world today. Discussion on wars, conflicts and political issues can allow students to see two or

more sides to a topic, the decisions made and the outcomes. Looking at world cultures and connecting with communities outside of school allows students to ask/answer questions about other societies.

Resource Connection



Admongo is developed by the Federal Trade Commission to assist student in understanding that advertising is a multi-million dollar business. Truthful advertising provides benefits to consumers and competition. It gives consumers the information they need to make better-informed purchasing and product use decisions. It also gives companies an incentive to modify their products to provide features that customers want. By contrast, false advertising interferes with decision-making and hinders competition. Tweens have their own money to spend, and parents report that children play an important role in family buying decisions. Educator resources and even a "text" version of the activities are available. <https://www.consumer.ftc.gov/admongo/>