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Kindergarten through  
Second 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.

Earlier grades may find [Children's Lives at the Turn of the Century](#) appropriate for discussion, compare and contrast, and linking to their world. Included in this section are a range of photos giving examples of children's lives over 100years ago.

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/>

### How Social Studies Can Help Young Kids Make Sense of the World

*This is an excerpt from: [Sarah Gonsler, The Hechinger Report](#)*

One of the longtime [goals](#) of public education is to produce young people capable of participating in the democratic process.

[Experts](#) say that requires regular and high-quality

social studies lessons, starting in kindergarten, to teach kids to be critical thinkers and communicators who know how to take meaningful action.

Experts recommend that, starting in preschool, students receive daily social studies lessons in order to fully develop the skills



needed to become engaged citizens who are

ready for college and careers.

“In kindergarten through second grade, teachers are focused on getting kids to read. Sometimes they’re using social studies as a reader-the word is integration, they’re integrating social studies into reading and language arts.

For the complete article: <https://www.kqed.org/mindshift/51662/how-social-studies-can-help-young-kids-make-sense-of-the-world>

## Reading Comprehension and Social Science



As elementary teachers, we have consistently placed emphasis on teaching students to read and comprehend texts. We use informational texts in content areas and that is important but our social science standards promote other skills than just reading content.

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.

Instruction and integration of social science requires regulating a set of skills and strategies toward goals of building new knowledge, making a decision, solving a problem, or applying what one learns in order to empathize with other groups. Instruction in the social studies, needs to include the specific thinking and reasoning strategies required in that discipline. Students should not read to simply answer basic reading

questions, but to solve problems or make decisions as they engage in rich literacy activities.

Social Science texts support comprehension which applies to reading (visual processing of texts) or listening, or comprehending any mixture of media (e.g., animation, film, speeches from the past). While at times it may be appropriate to teach reading comprehension in isolation, most often advanced literacy skills—including listening, language, vocabulary, perspective-taking—should be integrated in social science instruction.

**Students need to be agents of their own learning, but also collaborators in a socially constructed environment .**  
**CCSSO, 2019**



As stated above, It is not enough to read about social studies but to engage in it's practices. Engaging students in comprehending texts, using vocabulary specific to social studies as well as helping them develop proficiency in communicating both orally and inwriting, help to align literacy to social studies standards. Many social studies texts are typically multimodal (text, maps, graphs and charts). A variety of websites provide ideas that support literacy AND social studies for elementary. Here are a few to check out:

1) Use visuals to engage with history. Providing images for the unit of study and allowing

students to discuss the content (i.e., comparing and contrasting schoolyards then and now), allows for comprehension, vocabulary development and social/emotional interaction. Visit <http://www.idaillinois.org/cdm/> for images specific to IL.

2) Use primary sources with students as young as Kindergarten. Primary sources are the raw materials of history — original documents and objects which were created at the time under study. Examining primary sources gives students a powerful sense of history and the

complexity of the past. Helping students analyze primary sources can also guide them toward higher-order thinking and better critical thinking and analysis skills. Visit: <http://www.loc.gov/teachers/usingprimarysources/>

3) Use trade books or mentor texts to foster discussion of historical events and major Supreme Court decisions in the classroom. Elementary students can begin to see themselves as active contributors to the communities and worlds in which they live by having quality discussions.

## 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](http://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](http://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>

## Teaching Resilience at a Young Age through the Connection of Science and Social Studies

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

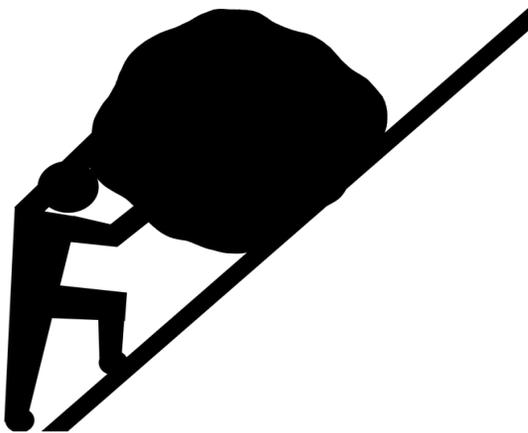
discovery. Through the study of scientists and their pursuit of new ideas, students can appreciate the character traits as well as knowledge necessary for innovation to happen. As they learn that the path to innovation has never been quick or easy, students can begin to apply that knowledge to their 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

### Introducing Students to Scientists

Teachers can introduce students to scientists' stories using videos from [www.watchknowlearn.org](http://www.watchknowlearn.org). This website has videos for all ages searchable by category. As the categories are narrowed, click on the subcategory to view the videos. Then ask your students to look for the struggle within the story. Ask questions such as:

- What obstacles did this scientist face when trying to reach a goal?
- How long did it take to accomplish the end target?
- Did the scientist work with other people to achieve the objective?



## Moving From *Learning About* to *How to Think*

Social science instruction that is solely text-based tends to emphasize learning *about* history, while rich, inquiry-based instruction emphasizes learning *how to think* like a historian.

To think like a historian, our K-5 students need to be able to evaluate, corroborate, and synthesize multiple, often-conflicting, sources. These sources may include newspaper articles, paintings, political cartoons, songs, diary entries, images, and speeches.

Research into effective practices for inquiry-based history instruction has supported the use of:

- Engaging questions to facilitate active learning

- Multiple sources to increase learning
- Scaffolding to develop analytical skills

Many resources are available for our elementary students. Click [here](#) and scroll to find the following:

- ⇒ K-2 & 3-5 Analyzing Sources Packets
- ⇒ Grade-specific Inquiry-Based Graphic Guides

The Text Feature Walk Strategy listed below is one option for teachers to use when facilitating inquiry-based instruction with texts that contain text features.

### Text Feature Walk Strategy

The text feature walk guides students in the reading of text features in order to access prior knowledge, make connections, and set a purpose for reading a social science (or other content) text.

Expository nonfiction also contains numerous text features that supplement and present important content that the student must read in order to fully comprehend. Interestingly though, students often ignore these essential text features (Kelley & Clausen-Grace, 2008; Spencer, 2003), even though they have been taught their importance.

Ask students why authors and designers include text features. It is helpful to spend a few weeks having students simply identify and read various text features that are found in their social science texts prior to initiating a text feature walk. The following are important steps to take in the text feature walk strategy:

1. Explicitly model how you as an expert reader use a text feature to make a prediction
2. Have students read a text feature and explain how the information in the text feature may contribute to the main idea of the text. (This guided practice under your supervision is important so that you can revert back to modeling and direct instruction if needed.)
3. Have students read the main body of the

text (or complete a shared reading) and debrief with them on what they learned and how the text feature walk assisted with comprehension.

4. Move the text feature walk structure from whole-group to small-group.
5. In small groups, students will take turns identifying and reading text features in the order they appear in the text. After someone reads their feature, all members should discuss the predictions, questions, or connections they have to the feature and how they think it relates to their predicted main idea. This continues on until all of the features have been discussed or time is called by the teacher.

Teachers should decide (based on the skill level of their students) what supports should be provided to groups (e.g., graphic organizer to record information, question starters to facilitate discussion) in order to assist students with this strategy.



*The art of teaching is the art of assisting discovery.*

Mark Van Doren



# Teaching and Learning Supports

## Kindergarten through 2nd 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.6.K-2: Use listening, consensus-building, and voting procedures to decide on and take action in their classrooms.	2A: Recognize the feelings and perspectives of others.	
	1b. Use listening skills to identify the feelings and perspectives of others.	
SS.CV.2.2: Describe how communities work to accomplish common tasks, establish responsibilities, and fulfill roles of authority.	3C. Contribute to the well-being of one's school and community.	
	1a. Identify and perform roles that contribute to one's classroom.	
	1b. Identify and perform roles that contribute to one's family.	
SS.EC.1.1 Explain and give examples of when choices are made that something else is given up.	3B: Apply decision-making skills to deal responsibly with daily academic and social situations.	
	1a. Identify a range of decisions that students make at school	
SS.H.3.1 Compare perspectives of people in the past to those of people in the present.	2B: Recognize individual and group similarities and differences.	
	1a. Describe the ways that people are similar and different	
	2a. Describe positive qualities in others.	

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



**Ben's Guide to the U.S. Government** a service of the Government Publishing Office (GPO), is designed to inform students, parents, and educators about the Federal Government, which issues the publications and information products disseminated by the GPO's Federal Depository Library Program. The platform has activities for all grade levels K-12. <https://bensguide.gpo.gov/>