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.

Elementary 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 100 years ago.

Other 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/](https://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/primarysourcesets/)

**Illinois Assessment for Readiness (IAR) Information**

Giving the duration of the protest on the IAR award, the board approved moving forward with joining the Washington DC contract with Pearson at the January 16th ISBE meeting. Pending final contract approval, the spring 2019 test will be on the same TestNav platform as the past PARCC assessments.

Also pending final contract approval, the assessment will be shorter in all grades for both Math and ELA. The test blueprints and length were created in collaboration with Illinois contact specialists and New Meridian, the company who currently licenses the PARCC content.

You can see planned testing times on the ISBE assessment page and watch the full assessment webinar from January 18th at [https://www.isbe.net/Pages/IAR.aspx](https://www.isbe.net/Pages/IAR.aspx)

The procurement office is still working on the longer contract that Illinois will use beginning Spring 2020.
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.

Ideas for Integrating Social Studies and Literacy

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 in writing, 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, 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.

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.

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.

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

Finding the Stories Behind the Science

Students can complete their own study of a scientist at https://www.ducksters.com/biography/scientists/scientists_and_inventors.php. There articles are written in a student friendly format and provide equity with an option to listen to a recorded version. Be intentional when you ask your students to read about a scientist. Ask them to focus on the struggle. Ask questions like:

• 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.

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
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.

### Classroom activities to support inquiry skills

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

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.

### Economics and financial literacy

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** is a service of the Government Publishing Office (GPO), 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/](https://bensguide.gpo.gov/)

- **H.I.P. Pocket Change** is from the U.S. Mint and includes money games, cartoons, coin news, a collectors club and history of the U.S.Mint. Most games are for K-6 grade, but other information is relative to all age groups. Also available is an educators resource page with ideas for the classroom. [https://www.usmint.gov/kids/index.html](https://www.usmint.gov/kids/index.html)