

Iowa Core – Davenport Schools
Priority Essential Concepts and Skills for 4th Grade Social Studies
with Details and Examples

Introduction

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.

Definition of Social Studies
National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

The founders of our country emphasized that the vitality and security of a democracy depends upon the education and willingness of its citizens to participate actively in society. This level of participation requires civic competence. In other words, it is imperative that our future generations gain an understanding of the core concepts of social studies. Life in the United States within our democratic system is constantly changing which creates varying social circumstances. As a result, citizens need to adapt to such changes in order to sustain vital democratic traditions. Meeting this need is the mission of the social studies.

In social studies, students develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions, including but not limited to:

- Possessing basic knowledge and ways of thinking drawn from many academic disciplines
- Expressing ideas in written form
- Reading reflectively and critically
- Analyzing their own and others' opinions on social issues
- Becoming motivated to participate in civic and community life as active and informed citizens

As we work to carry on the ideals of the founders, we are compelled to revisit our fundamental beliefs and institutions and to construct new social contexts and relationships. The Iowa Core for Social Studies reflects the belief that the informed social studies student comprehends and applies to personal and public experiences the core content perspectives of the many academic fields of the social studies. Our entire social experiences, as well as our republic, are established upon the principles of individual citizenship. Therefore, it is necessary to pay attention to the education of those future citizens.

For that reason, the Iowa Core for Social Studies has been structured around five core social studies content areas. They are:

- Behavioral Sciences
- Economics
- Geography
- History
- Political Science/Civic Literacy

For each area, knowledge and skills have been identified and defined in terms of detailed understandings that students should be able to apply. It is of key importance that students possess the knowledge and skills associated with the economic, political, and social forces that make up the human systems in which they live. In addition, they must possess the historical knowledge which created the spatial, temporal, and cultural perspectives present in our world.

The Iowa Core for Social Studies is premised upon a rigorous and relevant K – 12 social studies program. Engaging students in the pursuit of active informed citizenship will require a broad range of understandings and skills. It will also require an articulated curriculum which connects students to the social world through informed instructional experiences led by teachers who are committed to active civic participation. This represents a bold step toward a vision of social and civic literacy for all of Iowa’s students.

Behavioral Sciences

Behavioral sciences include, but are not limited to, the areas of sociology, anthropology and psychology. In addressing these disciplines the actions and reactions of humans are studied through observational and experimental methods.

Grade 4 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how personality and socialization impact the individual.*

Examples:

- Understand that various factors contribute to the shaping of a person's identity.
- Understand that human beings have different interests, motivations, skills, and talents.
- Understand the rights and responsibilities of the individual in relation to his/her social group.
- Understand various meanings of social group, general implications of group membership, and different ways that groups function.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the process of how humans develop, learn, adapt to their environment, and internalize their culture.*

Examples:

- Understand the fundamental concepts of growth and development.
- Understand learning and physical development affect behavior.
- Understand personal changes over time, such as those related to physical development and personal issues.
- Understand that language, stories, folktales, music, and artistic creations are expressions of culture.
- Understand that interactions among learning, inheritance, and physical development affect human behavior.
- Understand that group and cultural influences contribute to human development, identity, and behavior.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how to evaluate social research and information.*

Examples:

- Understand the use of research procedures and skills to investigate an issue.

Economics

Economics addresses the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. The concept of scarcity is understood to mean that available resources are insufficient to satisfy the wants and needs of everyone. Economics is therefore founded upon the alternative use of available resources and the study of choices.

Grade 4 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand that advancing technologies impact the global economy.*

Examples:

- Understand that technologies have costs and benefits associated with them.
- Understand that new inventions reflect people's needs and wants; and when these change, technology changes to reflect the new needs and wants.
- Understand that the design process is a series of methodical steps for turning ideas into useful products and systems.
- Understand that the manufacturing process includes designing product, gathering the resources, and producing a finished product.

Geography

Geography is the study of the interaction between people and their environments. Geography therefore looks at the world through the concepts of location, place, human-environmental interaction, movement, and region.

Grade 4 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the use of geographic tools to locate and analyze information about people, places, and environments.*

Examples:

- Understand political, topographical and historical maps, aerial photos and maps.
- Understand the use of mental maps to organize information about people, places, and environments in a spatial context.
- Understand the concepts of title, legend, cardinal directions, distance, grids.
- Understand the use of data sources, atlases, data bases, grid systems, charts, graphs, and maps to generate, manipulate, and interpret information.
- Understand the spatial elements of point, line, area and volume.
- Understand the representations of major physical and human features on maps and globes.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how geographic and human characteristics create culture and define regions.*

Examples:

- Understand the characteristics of regions--physical and cultural.
- Understand regions change over time and the causes and consequences of these changes.
- Understand ways regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives.
- Understand how people from different cultures think about and deal with their physical environment and social conditions.
- Understand language, stories, folktales, music and artistic creations serve as expressions of culture and influence behavior of people.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand how physical processes and human actions modify the environment and how the environment affects humans.*

Examples:

- Understand the characteristics of places are shaped by physical and human processes.
- Understand humans interact and adapt to the physical environment.
- Understand ways to monitor science and technology in order to protect the physical environment, individual rights and the common good.
- Understand laws and policies that govern the environment.

History

History is the study and analysis of the past. Built upon a foundation of historical knowledge, history seeks to analyze the past in order to describe the relationship between historical facts, concepts, and generalizations. History draws upon cause and effect relationships within multiple social narratives to help explain complex human interactions. Understanding the past provides context for the present and implications for the future.

Grade 4 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the role of culture and cultural diffusion on the development and maintenance of societies.*

Examples:

- Understand ways culture has influenced interactions of various groups.
- Understand ways culture affects decisions of a society, group or individual.
- Understand major historical events and developments that involved interaction among various groups.

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the effects of geographic factors on historical events.*

Examples:

- Understand varying landforms and geographic features and their importance in the development of communities.
- Understand seasons, climate, and weather, environmental change and crises affect social and economic development.
- Understand major land and water routes of explorers.

Political Science/Civic Literacy

NOTE: The Essential Concepts and Skills listed in Social Studies – Political Science/Civic Literacy are the same as the Essential Concepts and Skills listed in 21st Century Skills – Civic Literacy.

Political science is the study of power and authority through the examination of political processes, governmental institutions, and human behavior in a civil society. In this context the study of civics is understood to include the form and function of government. Civic literacy encompasses civics but also addresses the individual's social and political participation.

Grade 4 Priorities - Details and Example

Essential Concept and/or Skill: *Understand the purpose and function of each of the three branches of government established by the Constitution.*

Examples:

- Understand that the legislative branch passes laws to protect individual rights.
- Understand that the executive branch carries out and enforces laws to protect individual rights.
- Understand that the judicial branch, headed by the Supreme Court, makes decisions concerning the law that aim to protect individual rights.

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