



Comprehensive Curriculum

Revised 2008

Social Studies



Louisiana Department of
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**Social Studies
Comprehensive Curriculum
Table of Contents**

Acknowledgements	i
Preface.....	iii
Principles of Social Studies Teaching and Learning	vi
Organization of the Comprehensive Curriculum	ix
Elements of the Comprehensive Curriculum Units.....	x
References.....	xi

The following course documents and blackline masters are provided as separate files in *Word*[®] and pdf formats.

- Kindergarten
- Grade 1
- Grade 2
- Grade 3
- Grade 4
- Grade 5
- Grade 6
- Grade 7
- Grade 8
- World Geography
- Civics
- Free Enterprise
- U.S. History
- World History

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Preface

Purpose of the Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum

“How well a school system works depends, in large part, on how well it aligns curriculum and assessment with standards throughout the district. In practical terms, this means that for students to succeed, they should be taught what they are expected to learn and assessed on what they are taught.”—Rebecca Burns, Curriculum Mapping

The Louisiana Department of Education is providing this revised version of the *Louisiana Comprehensive Curriculum* to every district in the state. The curriculum is aligned with state content standards, as defined by grade-level expectations (GLEs), and organized into coherent, time-bound units with sample activities and classroom assessments to guide teaching and learning.

Focus on What Is Important to Teach

A written, aligned curriculum brings academic expectations into sharp focus by describing what instruction will be presented, to whom, when, and how. Without a written curriculum, textbooks often become the de facto curriculum of a school or district. Unfortunately, so much is included in textbooks that they have little ability to focus instruction or to provide the depth needed for good teaching and learning. While the Comprehensive Curriculum may be used in conjunction with textbooks, it will help teachers limit the topics they address to those the Louisiana standards define as important. This alignment with standards can focus classroom activities and ensure a depth of coverage that will help students achieve mastery (Schmidt et al., 2001; Alexander, 1960; FitzGerald, 1979; Palmer, 1967; White, 1988; Beck & McKeown, 1994; Kulm et al, 1999; Loewen, 1995; www.project2061.org; Crismore, 1985; Rowe, 1985; Harste, 1989).

Align Content, Instruction, and Assessment to State Standards

Research indicates that alignment is a powerful indicator of academic achievement (Cohen, 1987; English & Steffy, 2001; Moss-Mitchell, 1998; Neidermeyer & Yelon, 1981; Porter et al., 1994; Porter & Smithson, 2001; Price-Braugh, 1997; Wishnick, 1989). Curriculum alignment is more than establishing a scope and sequence of instruction. Aligning the curriculum is the process of ensuring a good match between the state standards—specifically the GLEs—and the lessons taught in classrooms every day (Corallo & McDonald, 2002). This process ensures that instructional activities are aligned to standards, that an appropriate amount of time is devoted to the activities, that unnecessary repetitions in the instructional program are removed, that gaps in content are identified, and that classroom assessments are appropriate.

Ensure Access for All Students

The Comprehensive Curriculum aligns with Louisiana standards, benchmarks, and the Grade-Level Expectations. Research indicates that an aligned curriculum can increase student achievement and helps to overcome the usual predictors of socioeconomic status, gender, race, and teacher quality variables (Laboratory Network Program, 1998; Moss-Mitchell, 1998; Wishnick, 1989). A pre-condition of a successful educational program is a clear and agreed understanding that instructional content and classroom assessments should reflect the instructional standards. In a district with a well-aligned curriculum, *all* students have the opportunity and responsibility to master the instructional content.

Organize Content into Coherent, Time-Bound Units

Structure and content sequence of curriculum has an effect on its outcomes (Schmidt et al., 2001). Simply teaching the GLEs fragments knowledge and skills into bits and pieces, much like a collection of puzzle pieces that don't mean anything taken alone. Units of instruction create coherent curriculum contexts that organize and connect learning experiences. The Comprehensive Curriculum is organized into units that bring together groups of GLEs that make sense as a whole, thus helping students get the “big picture,” like putting all the puzzle pieces together.

Each unit of this curriculum also includes time frames for mastering grade-level expectations included in the unit. The time frames help to govern time distribution among competing subject matter and topics (Zimmerman, 2001). When curriculum appropriately governs time *and* content, academic learning time—time students are on task while learning challenging content not learned previously—increases, and so will student achievement (Squires, Huitt, & Segars, 1983).

Create Feedback Systems

The Comprehensive Curriculum units include assessment components that strengthen curriculum by providing feedback that students have learned what was taught. Many activities in the curriculum were designed to have products, and these products should be assessed using a rubric to determine whether the products indicate student mastery (Ceperley & Squires, 2000).

For the curriculum to have an effect, it must be implemented. To know whether a curriculum is implemented, someone must monitor. The district needs to decide who will monitor and when and how the appropriate information will be collected. Unit time frames may be the most convenient points to collect data on student progress, but other strategies also may be employed. These include peer observations, forums with stakeholders, surveys, and the like (Ceperley & Squires, 2000).

Continuous improvement of the curriculum is another important aspect of monitoring. If districts gather data on how students did on the unit assessments, they can then compare those results with how the students did on the state assessments. This information can inform further curriculum development, assessment revision, policies about course-taking sequences for students, and remedial or enrichment opportunities for students. Updating of curriculum should occur on a continuous basis (Ceperley & Squires, 2000; Schmoker, 1999).

Serve as the Core of Professional Development

Introducing a new curriculum often means introducing new content, teaching strategies, and administrative responsibilities. The district has the responsibility to ensure that all faculty and staff participate in appropriate professional development activities that will result in the successful implementation of the written curriculum (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

Summary

The Comprehensive Curriculum indicates one way to align instruction with Louisiana standards, benchmarks, and grade-level expectations with the goal of improving student achievement across the state. The curriculum has been developed to help districts build a bridge between classroom activities and state standards, so what happens in the classroom will indeed reflect Louisiana's vision for student learning.

Principles of Social Studies Teaching and Learning

The National Council for the Social Studies, in recognition of the fact that “the United States and its democracy are constantly evolving and in continuous need of citizens who can adapt its enduring traditions and values to meet changing circumstance,” adopted the following formal definition:

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. (NCSS, 1992)

The challenge for educators is to deliver a curriculum at the local level that will prepare students to be informed, humane, rational, and participating citizens in a world that is interdependent, diverse, economically integrated, and increasingly technological. Effective social studies instruction reinforces democratic principles and ideals of citizenship. **A solid base of social studies knowledge and skills develops civic competence by focusing on rights, responsibilities, and respect.**

As citizens of a democracy, we support one of our republic’s most important ideals: the common good, i.e., the general welfare of all individuals and groups within the community. Social studies instruction ideally supports respect and the dignity of the individual, the health of the community, and the common good of all.

Skills and Content

The Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards were designed with a foundation of four core disciplines, or strands, from the social sciences: geography, civics, economics and history. The core strands incorporate sociology, anthropology, and psychology where appropriate. An additional component to the Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards is the foundation skills associated with all disciplines: communication, problem solving, resource access and utilization, linking and generating knowledge, and citizenship. These strands and foundation skills, along with the state’s Grade-Level Expectations, **help to define scope and sequence** and assist in the development of appropriate tools for assessing student learning.

Each discipline in social studies demands certain skills for students to engage in meaningful learning of content, for example, historical thinking skills. Meaningful historical understanding requires students to engage in five categories of historical thinking. These include (1) developing a sense of historical time and historical perspective, (2) explaining and analyzing historical events and ideas, (3) interpreting and evaluating historical evidence

in primary and secondary sources, (4) using historical inquiry to analyze historical and contemporary issues and conduct historical research, and (5) analyzing cause-effect relationships.

These skills are not mutually exclusive in an instructional setting, nor do they prescribe a particular teaching sequence. While historical thinking skills can be described absent of historical content, they cannot be developed or practiced in a vacuum.

Instructional Practice

Some learning can be packaged easily, and as educators we struggle every day to find the right formula. For social studies in particular, there is a built-in dilemma. It is one discipline in the school where no human knowledge is off limits and where the ability to bring any and all relevant information to a human problem makes the discipline unique and dynamic. Because of these complex factors, the discipline cannot be neatly and easily defined, packaged, and presented by a logical, sequential formula; therefore, it demands an aligned curriculum.

Strategies

Achieving a meaningful level of depth in social studies instruction requires focus. Social studies content provides numerous opportunities for teachers to expand student understanding of their country and the world. **The Grade-Level Expectations provide necessary parameters for content focus**, but should not limit the types of strategies and activities that make social studies meaningful to students. Within the parameters of the expectations, allowing students to choose the topics they explore actually helps them practice their rights and responsibilities as school citizens.

To make their studies relevant, and to support their growth as community citizens, students can be encouraged to practice problem solving and inquiry through participating in local organizations—social, political, and economic. Such activities can be planned to integrate several content areas—e.g., the clean-up of a park might involve organizing other students and community members, investigating plant and animal life, calculating the relative costs of landfills and recycling for trash found on the site, and so on. In addition, exploring the cultural diversity of their community can help students understand their place in their world.

Materials

Meaningful social studies instruction requires an array of materials to provide adequate instructional support. While a textbook may be a reasonable bottom-line resource, class sets of original documents, journal articles, appropriate maps, newspapers, news magazines, and other historical and current materials help students to explore and discuss past and present issues. In addition, teachers need ready access to the world of information—and they must understand how to integrate the information into daily activities. Internet connections, as well as other visual and audio technologies, need to be readily available to the social studies

classroom. Lack of access to an array of non-text materials restricts teachers' abilities to deliver the kind of active instruction envisioned in this curriculum.

Instructional Technology

A quality social studies program ensures that each student has access to necessary technological tools, and it uses these tools to implement the curriculum. The opportunities afforded by computer networking and the Internet are exciting for teachers and students, because these technologies enable them to access information, as well as providing teaching and learning tools that may not be available in an alternate format.

The Internet can provide teachers and students with access to information on a wide array of topics and issues. Online educational partners can benefit learners by supplying primary sources; interactive maps, trips, and tours; and other classroom resources. In addition, the Internet provides opportunities for students to learn from their peers across the United States and the world via digital technologies, cooperative Web sites, and programs that link schools on topics of interest.

Used in conjunction with instructional software that provides engaging simulations and databases that enable students to manipulate information, the tools of the Information Age can help students relive history and conduct authentic social studies research.

Cross-Curricular Connections

Social studies is an interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary field of study. While social studies standards and grade-level expectations define the core learning, social studies instruction makes use of understandings from all content areas. This interdisciplinary curriculum connects to the real world by providing students with an expanded understanding of the interconnected nature of the world **through an integrated approach that provides focus and depth.**

Organization of the Comprehensive Curriculum

Components of the Comprehensive Curriculum

The components of the Comprehensive Curriculum are intended to be reflective of the components that should be included in any good curriculum. The components are described below.

Curriculum Component	Explanation
Cover page	Displays content area and courses included in the document, name of the agency that developed the document, and the date the document was developed
Title page	Displays content area and courses included in the document, name of the agency that developed the document, and the date the document was developed
Board of Education	Lists the names of board members who approved the use of the curriculum document and the name of the superintendent
Acknowledgments (optional)	Lists individuals or groups who contributed to the development of the local curriculum
Table of Contents	Lists the courses and other curriculum components and where they can be found in the document
Preface	Provides background information including underlying law and policies that led to the development of the document
Purpose	Provides a statement of the intended purpose of the written, aligned curriculum, expectations for its use in the classroom, and the expected results in terms of student performance.
Principles of teaching and learning for specific content area	States beliefs about the content area and research-based principles of successful teaching and learning
Professional Development	Provides a summary statement of how appropriate professional development ensures that teachers possess knowledge and skills needed to teach the new curriculum
PreK–12 Courses	Includes a copy of each course in the relevant content area

Elements of the Comprehensive Curriculum Units

The unit organizer format allows teachers to see the interrelationships among the GLEs and indicates best practice activities that should be used when teaching a particular concept or skill.

Unit Element	Explanation
Time Frame	An approximate time frame is specified for each unit of instruction (e.g., approximately two to three weeks). The time frame helps teachers pace instruction and learning. The time frame also helps administrators monitor the implementation of the curriculum.
Course Name	The course name specifies the grade level and the content area for courses Prekindergarten through Grade 8 (e.g., Grade 3 English Language Arts). For high school courses (Grades 9–12), the name specifies the content (e.g., Algebra I).
Unit Title	Each unit has a title designed to bring further focus to the collection of ideas and concepts to be learned in that unit (e.g., Poetry, Measuring and Comparing, and so on).
Unit Number	Units are numbered sequentially (e.g., Unit 1, Unit 2, and so on).
Unit Description	The unit description states broadly, in one or two sentences, the intent of the unit (e.g., The focus of this unit is how the availability of resources influences economic decisions).
Student Understandings	Student understandings are a brief description of the overarching concepts to be learned by the student.
Guiding Questions	This element contains a list of questions that teachers can use to determine if students understand the concepts being taught (e.g., Can students use the structure of the article to find information they need?)
Grade-Level Expectations (GLEs)	For each unit, there is a table that lists the number and the text of each GLE to be addressed by the unit. Benchmark codes are included at the end of each GLE.
Sample Activities	Each activity is numbered, named, and lists the GLE(s) that are addressed by the activity. It provides guidance to teachers as they plan their lessons throughout the school year.
Sample Assessments	At the end of each unit are suggested assessments that are linked to the processes of teaching and learning (e.g., graded homework, class projects, performance tasks, discussions with teachers, parents, classmates, diagnostic tests, teacher-made tests and quizzes, observation systems, performance assessment based on performance levels as defined by rubrics, portfolios, and so on).
Blackline Masters	Blackline masters are provided in a separate document for each course and are designed to assist in the implementation of an activity. Most blackline masters are for student use; however, some provide rubrics for evaluating student work or provide solution keys for student worksheets.

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