

Social Studies Skills Continuum

Incorporating Skills into the Teaching of Social Studies, K-12

Learning, practicing, applying, extending, and remediating social studies skills is a developmental process. Just as students who lack social studies facts and generalizations have difficulty in applying information to new situations and analyzing new issues and historical problems, students with limited understanding of social studies skills have great difficulty in processing information, reaching higher cognitive levels, and learning independently. The teaching of social studies skills needs to be built into every classroom activity so that students engage in a systematic and developmental approach to learning how to process information.

—Incorporating Skills into Social Studies Programs K-12.
The New York State Education Department.

The *Social Studies Skills Continuum* organizes each social studies skill into its three learning stages: introduction, development, and mastery, using Geography, one of the five strands of social studies. Geography has been chosen because it consists (at least for students) largely of skills. Sample applications provided for each skill address the other social studies strands to which the skills are related. For instance, history is addressed in research skills.

While individual schools, classes, or students develop skills at different rates, this guide provides a framework for when each skill should be introduced, when it should be developed, and when you can begin to look for mastery. It also includes sample applications for each skill. These tried-and-tested sample applications were developed with input from over thirty Region 4 teachers and administrators, as well as instructional specialists from throughout the New York City Department of Education.

The “Introduced” column provides a framework for when the skills can be introduced to students. Many of the skills apply to other content areas and may be introduced in these subjects as well and/or in an interdisciplinary approach. The “Developed” and “Mastered” columns indicate when a skill should be reinforced, and when the teacher can expect that the students have internalized the skill.

The “Sample Applications” column provides concrete examples of the application of each skill. The examples are not targeted to particular grades and may represent applications in the “Developed” or “Mastered” stage. Teachers may use these samples as a guide for developing their own grade-appropriate applications.

Every school in New York City has its own unique culture and community. How this guide is used depends on the individual needs of each school, class and student. Students master skills at varying levels. Teachers and administrators should be aware of their students’ abilities and reinforce the skills that need further development. Teachers should also use this chart in tandem with the mandated Social Studies content understandings and standards in their respective grades. For example, in developing the comprehension skill “Comparing and Contrasting,” students in the following grades might apply their skills as follows:

DRAFT

- Grade 1: Draw pictures of different holiday traditions.
- Grade 3: Compare the roles of children in different communities.
- Grade 6: Compare the climate of two nations in the Eastern Hemisphere.
- Grade 9: Compare the Code of Hammurabi to the Ten Commandments.
- Grade 11: Compare the Iraq War to the Vietnam War.

The *Social Studies Skills Continuum* can be used to frame discussions on skills development at grade and departmental faculty meetings. Teachers can discuss how these skills should be applied in their content teaching. Administrators should ensure that the skills are being taught using a variety of activities (hands-on, teacher-directed, etc.), and across different grades and content, depending on the needs of the students.

Instructional specialists from throughout the New York City Department of Education developed this document. Contributors include:

- Elise Abegg, Director of Social Studies, Division of Teaching and Learning
- John-Paul Bianchi, Regional Instructional Specialist, Region 4
- Arthur Brown, Regional Instructional Specialist, Region 10
- Kyle Haver, Instructional Specialist, Division of Teaching and Learning
- Lainie Leber, Instructional Specialist, Division of Teaching and Learning
- Fran Macko, Instructional Specialist, Division of Teaching and Learning
- Simone McIntosh, Regional Instructional Specialist, Region 7
- Tania Veney, Regional Instructional Specialist, Region 6

Resources and other scholars consulted in the development of this document are:

- Resources previously developed by the New York City Board of Education
- *Incorporating Skills into Social Studies Programs K-12*. The New York State Education Department. Albany, NY. <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/socst/pub/ssovervi.pdf>
- *The National Standards for History*, 1996, National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA.
- *The National Standards for Geography*, 1994, The National Council For Geographic Education, Jacksonville Alabama.
- *Social Education*, April, 1984, National Council of the Social Studies.
- Dr. Philip Gersmehl, Geography Department, Hunter College, CUNY.
- Carol Gersmehl, Center for Geographic Learning, Hunter College, CUNY.

Social Studies Skills Continuum
Incorporating Skills into the Teaching of Social Studies, K-12

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

GEOGRAPHY

A) Basic Geographic Concepts

Students will be able to:

Describe position (front/back; left/right; in/outside; between/beyond).	K	1-3	4-6	Describe the location of desks, rugs, and other items in the classroom relative to each other.
Describe and measure distance (outstretched arms, feet, miles, etc.).	K	1-6	7-12	Measure the distance across a playground, or between New York and Chicago on a map.
Describe the relative location of places on maps and globes.	K	1-10	11-12	Identify the location of Tokyo in relation to New York City.
Describe direction (compass rose; N/E/S/W; intermediate directions).	2	3-8	9-12	Use geographic terms to compare the locations of places.
Describe location with a grid (e.g., letter-number grid, latitude/longitude).	3	4-10	11-12	Determine the latitude and longitude of a particular location.

B) Getting Geographic Information

Students will be able to:

Gather data from tables, diagrams, and charts.	2	3-8	9-12	Create a bar graph that shows the population of China.
Get information from maps of different kinds.	2	3-10	11-12	Determine the elevation of particular place on a map.
Record observations in proper locations on a sketch map.	3	4-10	11-12	Record the temperature of the air near the playground swings.
Interview people to get information about a place.	3	4-10	11-12	Find out the address of the bakery where the local deli gets its bagels.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

C) Analyzing Geographic Information

Students will be able to:

Compare and contrast characteristics of places.	K	1-8	9-12	Compare the elevations of two countries.
Locate and analyze different types of regions.	3	4-10	11-12	Locate the Great Plains region of the United States.
Determine position in a spatial hierarchy (e.g., Is this feature inside other features, or are there other features inside it?).	K	1-8	9-12	Identify the largest river system that empties into the Indian Ocean.
Trace movement of people (commuting, historic migration).	1	2-8	9-12	Trace the resettlement of the Iroquois people in New York.
Trace movement of goods (e.g., of spice in the past, or of petroleum today).	1	2-10	11-12	Explain how milk goes from the dairy to the supermarket. Explain the historical importance of the Silk Road.
Identify influences on areas around a place (e.g., smoke from a factory, noise from an airport).	2	3-6	7-12	Explain the effect of truck traffic in Hunts Point on the health of children in the neighborhood.
Recognize and interpret patterns on maps (e.g., weather, population, natural resources, poverty, etc.).	3	4-10	11-12	Identify the area near the United States that has the most hurricanes and explain why hurricanes are common in that area.
Compare map patterns (e.g., slope and land use, mosquitoes and malaria).	3	4-10	11-12	Identify which early civilizations were located in mountains, river valleys, or tundra areas, and explain the reasons for their settlement there.
Describe important environmental transitions (e.g., hot to cold, rainy to dry, crowded to empty).	4	5-10	11-12	Explain how the amount of rainfall changes as you go north from the Equator in Africa.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

D) Communicating Geographic Information

Students will be able to:

Design graphs to show geographic information.	K	1-6	7-12	Make a bar graph comparing rainfall from two regions.
Use geographic data and methods of geographic analysis to explain human-environmental interaction in a place.	K	1-8	9-12	Describe how the landscape of New York City changed from 1500 to 1776, and from 1900 to now.
Design map symbols, legends, and scale.	K	1-6	7-12	Create an appropriate symbol to represent coal, oil, and uranium on a map.
Use an atlas, geospatial information system (GIS), or online mapping software to help compare or explain conditions at different places.	3	4-8	9-12	Explain why most people in China live in the southeastern part of the country. Compare the geographic features of the Erie and Panama Canals.

SEQUENCING AND CHRONOLOGY

Students will be able to:

Relate dates and locations to personal experiences.	K	1-8	9-12	Develop a timeline that compares the major events in your life or your family's history with those in American history.
Make use of calendar/timeline to explain the events (context) leading up to and following a specific event in history.	K	1-8	9-12	Develop a timeline of the major events leading up to the Cuban Missile Crisis.
Place related events in chronological order.	K	1-8	9-12	List the major battles of the Revolutionary War in chronological order.
Recognize important people and events according to the time period and/or impact.	K	1-8	9-12	Explain the reasons why Susan B. Anthony was honored on a coin.
Analyze information in relation to time and sequence.	2	3-10	11-12	Explain the long-term and short-term causes of World War I.
Draw inferences from sequence and/or timelines.	4	5-10	11-12	List and explain Germany's actions that led to World War I.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
Weigh conflicting facts and statements.	4	5-10	11-12	Watch a political debate on television and evaluate a candidate's position on a critical issue.
Analyze information by sequencing and categorizing.	4	5-8	9-12	Create a chart of the political, social, and economic causes of the Civil War.

RESEARCH AND WRITING SKILLS

Students will be able to:

Write from the perspective of a historical period.	K	1-5	6-12	Write journal entries from the perspective of a person living in second-century China, including a typical day in your life and your opinions on the government and society.
Produce a report of information related to social studies.	K	1-8	9-12	Write a report that explains how climate affects the way in which people make a living in the Middle East.
Produce a narrative procedure.	K	1-8	9-12	Write an explanation of how an amendment to the Constitution is enacted.
Produce a narrative account.	K	1-8	9-12	Write an account of a stockholder in the 1920s, describing his concerns about the economic conditions that may lead to a stock market crash.
Respond to literature (nonfiction/fiction).	1	2-8	9-12	Read the Second Amendment and describe your reaction to the government giving citizens the right to bear arms. Read "Night" and describe how the main character's experiences added to your understanding of the Holocaust.
Understand and use content specific words.	K	1-6	7-12	Write an essay on the Age of Enlightenment using content-specific vocabulary.
Identify and use the community as a resource.	K	1-8	9-12	Interview a firefighter about his or her job.
Locate and interpret historically accurate images.	1	2-8	9-12	Find three images of Abraham Lincoln and discuss their differences.
Recognize differences among fiction, fact, and opinion.	1	2-5	6-12	Compare an editorial to a first-person account of the same event.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
Draw conclusions about various media.	1	2-8	9-12	Present an oral argument about bias in news reports on television, on the radio, and in newspapers.
Create various types of representations to support an argument or position.	1	2-8	9-12	Prepare a PowerPoint presentation on the impact of the Seneca Falls Conference.
Create title page, table of contents, bibliography, etc.	2	3-8	9-12	Explain the differences in the process for citing sources in footnotes and in a bibliography.
Use dictionary, index, glossary, encyclopedias, and appendix.	2	3-8	9-12	Explain the resources you would use to find information about China.
Use multiple sources to support a point-of-view/ perspective/argument.	2	3-6	7-12	Research computer and print media to locate evidence supporting and opposing free trade agreements.
Use outlines to collect and/or present research.	2	3-6	7-12	Use an outline to develop a DBQ (Document Based Question) essay on the Great Depression.
Identify and interpret a primary or secondary source.	3	4-8	9-12	Compare the description of an event in a colonial diary and a description of the same event in a textbook.
Monitor for meaning by asking questions about a document.	3	4-6	7-12	Write questions as your teacher reads a document aloud to the class.
Research documents in print.	3	4-10	11-12	Use the library to find documents related to everyday life in New Amsterdam.
Interview (record and make inferences for/from oral accounts).	3	4-8	9-12	Interview a veteran of the Vietnam War.
Use graphic organizers to collect and/or present research.	3	4-8	9-12	Make a graphic organizer of the major events in the Civil Rights Movement.
Complete multi-step research project independently.	4	5-8	9-12	Complete a country study with a written and a visual component.
Produce a persuasive essay.	4	5-8	9-12	Write a speech for a classmate who is running for class president.
Take notes.	4	5-9	10-12	Highlight important facts in a paragraph.
Produce a reflective essay.	6	7-10	11-12	Write a diary entry as if you were a student in India after your village has been hit by a monsoon.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

COMPREHENSION SKILLS

Students will be able to:

Recognize stereotyping.	K	1-8	9-12	Analyze a political cartoon to determine how a political or social group is represented.
Recognize that others may have different points of view.	K	1-8	9-12	Write an essay that presents two opposing points of view on a topic or issue (e.g., Should students wear school uniforms?).
Make informed predictions.	K	1-8	9-12	Predict/justify possible outcomes to a list of events leading up to World War I.
Recognize cause and effect.	K	1-6	7-12	Discuss the effects of not having any class rules.
Identify relationships.	K	1-8	9-12	Explain the relationship between economics and slavery in nineteenth-century America.
Compare and contrast.	K	1-8	9-12	Compare the treatment of Native Americans by the English and French settlers in North America.
Group related ideas.	K	1-8	9-12	Create a graphic organizer that characterizes the contributions of ancient civilizations.
Identify and/or describe whole-to-part and part-to-whole relationships.	1	2-6	7-12	Describe the role of each family member of a colonial American family.
Make generalizations.	1	2-8	9-12	Examine images of Inuits and discuss the impact of climate on how people live.
Interpret history through artifacts/tools/technology.	2	3-8	9-12	Go on a hands-on field trip and discuss what you learned by examining artifacts.
Evaluate information.	2	3-8	9-12	Determine and explain which effect of industrialization has had the greatest impact on society.
Use and understand content-appropriate language.	2	3-8	9-12	Develop a historically accurate skit that uses vocabulary in its correct syntax.
Identify the main idea.	2	2-8	9-12	Restate the main idea of a story/document in your own words.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
Summarize.	2	3-8	9-12	Listen to a read-aloud and explain the major concepts discussed to your partner.
Detect bias in visual material.	3	4-8	9-12	Report on how advertisers use images or words to encourage people to buy a product.
Interpret, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate sources, data, pictures, graphs, etc.	3	4-8	9-12	Answer constructed response questions from past New York State exams.
Support a main idea/argument with relevant facts and documents.	3	5-8	9-12	Make an outline that contains the main idea and lists the supporting ideas below it.
Draw inferences.	3	4-10	11-12	Determine the historical context based on the information presented in five documents.
Use appropriate mathematical skills to read and analyze data.	3	4-10	11-12	Find the difference in the average temperature of three locations in the world of a certain date.
Analyze political cartoons.	4	5-8	9-12	Select a cartoon and discuss how the symbols and images in the cartoon convey a point of view.
Recognize multiple perspectives in images or documents.	4	5-10	11-12	Select and compare political cartoons on the same topic from two different places in the world.
Develop and support a point of view/perspective.	4	5-8	9-12	Take the point of view of a colonist and write an essay explaining the Boston Tea Party.
Identify supporting facts.	4	4-10	11-12	Recognize which facts would support an idea and which are irrelevant.
Listen, interpret, and analyze speeches.	4	4-8	9-12	Play an excerpt from a political speech and identify the strategies used to motivate people to action.
Analyze cause and effect.	4	5-8	9-12	Explain how the Industrial Revolution had both positive and negative outcomes.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

ORGANIZING INFORMATION

Students will be able to:

Interpret and create graphs, charts, diagrams, and surveys.	K	1-10	11-12	Create a chart of the different jobs in a community.
Categorize information.	K	1-6	7-12	Compare the impact of two different dynasties on China.
Look for patterns and/or commonalities.	1	2-8	9-12	Explain the kind of jobs available to people who live near a river.
Collect and interpret data.	1	2-8	9-12	Compile and categorize literacy rates of countries in the Western Hemisphere.
Gain an understanding from interviews and oral histories.	1	2-8	9-12	Interview veterans of World War II and the Vietnam War and compare their experiences of war.
Select and analyze facts and ideas from primary documents.	3	4-10	11-12	Create a DBQ (Document Based Question) essay on Immigration.
Skim and summarize materials.	3	4-10	11-12	Use a read-aloud book to teach students how to find important data and summarize the main idea.
Organize documents and/or images to support a perspective and/or point of view.	4	5-10	11-12	Compare images and documents that represent conflicting opinions of the events at the Boston Massacre.
Analyze and synthesize documents and/or images.	4	5-10	11-12	Organize a series of documents on Vietnam as pro-war, anti-war, or neutral.
Separate relevant from unrelated ideas.	4	5-10	11-12	Use a graphic organizer to identify the main ideas about Reconstruction.
Compile bibliographies.	4	5-10	11-12	Use the MLA procedure in a report.
Critique a public document.	4	5-8	9-12	Read an excerpt from the Dred Scott decision and discuss how attitudes toward slavery have changed.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
--------------	-------------------	------------------	-----------------	----------------------------

TECHNOLOGY

Students will be able to:

Use the tools of current technology to gain and/or communicate information.	2	3-5	6-12	Locate and compare five holidays in three different countries (think.com, skype.com, google.com, earth.com, blogs.com).
Research and select appropriate digital images.	2	3-8	9-12	Using the image section of a search engine (google.com, ask.com) locate images from the Holocaust (yahooligans.com).
Search and evaluate websites for accurate information.	3	4-6	7-12	Discuss the importance and function of symbols and abbreviations in a URL.
Organize web-based information.	3	4-8	9-12	Create an outline of URL's relevant to parts of a project (portaportal.com and trackstar.com).
Develop presentations using computer applications such as PowerPoint or Keynote.	3	4-8	9-12	Teach the steps in developing a power point on topic such as a country study or an historic event.

PRESENTATION SKILLS

Students will be able to:

Create and present a visual representation of student work.	K	1-6	7-12	Create a bulletin board presentation of student writings on a topic.
Create and/or perform a skit (e.g., historical re-creation, historical narrative, original writing).	K	1-8	9-12	Make a presentation that explains the meaning and impact of one amendment to the United States Constitution.
Give an oral presentation.	1	2-8	9-12	Create a persuasive speech on a particular issue for a town hall meeting.
Participate in a student exhibition and respond to new questions by the audience.	3	4-8	9-12	Create a panel discussion on a country in Asia.
Create and/or present a speech.	3	4-10	11-12	Role-play a speechwriter for a politician defending a position on an issue.
Organize, develop, and present a project in a school social studies fair.	3	4-8	9-12	Organize a spring fair to exhibit Exit Projects.

SKILL	INTRODUCED	DEVELOPED	MASTERED	SAMPLE APPLICATIONS
Present a persuasive argument with supporting (and accurate) details.	4	4-8	9-12	Present arguments about the constitutionality of a school issue such as cell phone use.
Participate in a debate, arguing a point-of view with relevant facts.	4	5-10	11-12	Engage in a debate about a controversial topic such as gun control.
Work independently in researching and collecting appropriate images and primary documents to support a position and/or point of view.	4	5-10	11-12	Create a campaign for a candidate including a slogan and print and electronic advertisement.
Provide a point of view with mixed media.	4	5-8	9-12	Use video, still images, and created charts and graphs to defend a position on a topic such as global warming.