

Implementing the C3 Framework: Monitoring the Instructional Shifts

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Implementing new standards or frameworks frequently obliges teachers to update their practices, build content knowledge, acquire new resources, and prepare for new ways to assess student learning. It requires a great deal of work, time, and dedication—a “big lift” for many already overburdened with an ever-increasing list of responsibilities. And as we know, asking people to change practices they have worked hard to perfect is daunting.

The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards calls upon social studies teachers to enhance the rigor of civics, economics, geography, history and the other social studies disciplines while building the critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills of students to help them become actively engaged citizens in the twenty-first century. Like the Common Core State Standards and Next Generation Science Standards, the C3 Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of deep content knowledge through an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. The Four Dimensions of the C3 Framework center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous social studies content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings.

Inquiry-based instruction is nothing new to the educational field, and the guiding principles of the C3 Framework have long been at the heart of high quality social studies instruction. Current practices vary according to teachers’ educational background, preparation, professional development, policy constraints, and the adequacy or lack of resources to support social studies instruction. For many teachers, the guiding principles of inquiry-based education are quite familiar and ever-present in their daily teaching, so that the implementation of C3 will not be difficult. Some teachers may see the C3 Framework as a “stretch” or an enhancement of how they currently deliver instruction. And for others, the Framework may offer entirely new approaches causing them to “shift” their practice in fundamental ways that may feel uncomfortable or risky. In other words, what qualifies as an “instructional shift” for some, may not be a “shift” for others.

This article suggests ways in which teachers can chart a course toward implementation of C3, review the progress that is made, and identify obstacles to accomplishing the objec-

tives. For teachers, the process of implementation can be a journey of examination and reflection on their own teaching practices. The results of success can be dramatic: to enliven the study of civics, economics, geography, and history so that these subjects are exciting, engaging, rigorous, and meaningful to students.

Examine the guiding principles of the C3 Framework below to reflect upon your own practice.

Inquiry is at the center

- A set of interlocking and mutually supportive ideas frames the way students acquire social studies content knowledge
- Inquiry speaks to the intersection of ideas and learners
- A focus on the use of questions sparks curiosity, guides instruction, and deepens investigations for students to acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings

Disciplinary integrity *and* interdisciplinary connections matter

- Civics instruction calls for students to learn how to use deliberative processes, participate in school settings, and follow rules and laws to take informed action in response to real world problems
- Economics instruction calls for students to make sound economic decisions, use economic data, and identify prices in a market
- Geography instruction calls for students to reason spatially, construct maps, and use geographic data

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- History instruction calls for students to classify and analyze historical sources, determine the purpose of a historical source, and analyze causes and effects of events in history
- Connections to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies strengthen students’ literacy skills as they are called upon to cite textual evidence, understand disciplinary vocabulary, distinguish fact from opinion, identify competing or alternating claims, and narrate historical events

Informed action and application of knowledge is clear and present

- Deliberation with others to define and address issues builds problem solving and collaboration skills
- Reasoning, analyzing, and communicating conclusions builds critical thinking and communication skills
- Influencing institutions builds dispositions for engaging in civic life
- Applying knowledge to real world problems prepares students for college, career, and civic life

The Inquiry Arc represents an instructional arc—a frame for teaching and learning that calls for

- Developing questions and planning inquiries:
 - *Compelling questions* focus on real social problems, issues, and curiosities about how the world works.
 - *Supporting questions* scaffold students’ investigations into the ideas and issues behind a compelling question.
- Applying disciplinary concepts and tools
- Evaluating sources and using evidence
- Communicating conclusions and taking informed action

As we study the C3 Framework and think deeply about the guiding principles that frame the Four Dimensions, let us take the time to reflect upon our own instructional practices and challenge ourselves to re-envision our work to maximize the potential of our students.

The questions below can guide our reflection:

1. What is the current prevailing practice we are seeking to improve upon? Do the C3 principles represent “shifts” in our instruction?
2. What resonates about the principles that qualifies them as good practice?
3. What research rationale, evidence, or professional experience convinces us (or doesn’t convince us) to embrace these principles in our work?
4. Are there other shifts or instructional practices we should consider?
5. If these principles are present in our teaching, what evidence could we collect to determine if all students are achieving the desired outcomes?
6. What do we need to support our ability to implement the guiding principles of the C3 Framework?
7. What is needed for principals, district administrators, and other school-based instructional personnel to support our work to deliver high quality social studies instruction as described in the C3 Framework? What experiences would they need to have? What resources do they need access to?

The accompanying reproducible handouts focus on initiatives that schools can take to implement the C3 Framework by identifying instructional shifts that will need to be made, and developing a plan of action. The first handout is based on the principles just outlined. It enables us to chart the proper implementation of C3, and to identify the challenges we face, the opportunities we have, and the first steps that need to be taken. The second handout helps to measure progress toward the implementation of C3, and identifies goals and targets to be achieved. It focuses on what we can realistically expect to observe in our schools and districts both five years and one year from now, as well as the signs and evidence that allow us to determine our progress, and the supports and structures that

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Reflecting on Actions to Implement the C3 Framework

In developing action plans and metrics for implementing the C3 Framework, this organizer can help guide the work of determining powerful first steps.

	<i>What it looks like/ sounds like when it is happening</i>	<i>Challenges to getting our school there</i>	<i>Opportunities we have that lay a good foundation</i>	<i>Early action— steps we can take right away</i>
1. Inquiry is at the center				
2. Disciplinary integrity and interdisciplinary connections matter				
3. Informed action and application of knowledge is clear and present				
4. The Inquiry Arc represents an instructional arc—a frame for teaching and learning				

Adapted from achievethecore.org

Measuring Progress in Implementing the C3 Framework

Answers to these questions will give us a clear picture of what will be observable in our schools and districts when the Framework is well implemented.

1. Realistically, what will we be able to observe in our school/district five years from now?
2. Realistically, what will we be able to observe in our school/district a year from now?
3. What are the observable signs along the way to achieving our goals? What evidence can we collect? How and when can we collect it?
4. In the current state of affairs, what interferes with or prevents the desired shifts from taking place? What supports and structures need to be put in place in order for the C3 Framework to be a reality?

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need to be put into place to overcome the obstacles to instructional shifts. School-based and administrative teams can ask and answer the questions in the handout.

In the era after No Child Left Behind, it is time to welcome and value teachers' expertise when exploring new approaches to teaching and learning. Establishing a culture of continuous improvement is vital to this work. Building trust, collaboration, and collegiality establishes an environment for the stages of implementation to occur. It is also imperative to provide the support needed to be successful—high quality, job-embedded professional learning, resources, and *time* to acquire new learning, develop new practices, test

them out in classrooms, share findings with colleagues, reflect on feedback and revise lessons as needed.

The implementation of the C3 Framework will be an exciting and unique journey. Its effect will be to increase the rigor and relevance of the social studies so that we can truly prepare all students for college, career, and civic life in the twenty-first century. 🌐

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Social Studies for the Next Generation: The C3 Framework for Social Studies

Social Studies for the Next Generation: Purposes, Practices, and Implications of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards. National Council for the Social Studies.

NCSS Bulletin 113, 144 pp. (including introductory chapters), 2013.

This important book breaks new ground with its inquiry-based framework for enhancing social studies state standards and linking social studies education to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies. The book includes the entire C3 document, "College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History," which was produced by social studies curriculum experts working in collaboration with a Task Force of 15 professional organizations in the field of social studies. It also presents valuable introductory chapters that interpret the Framework, and discuss its context, the central concept of the Inquiry Arc, the connections between C3 and the Common Core standards, the links between C3 and the national social studies standards, and appropriate assessments for C3.

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