



# Q and A about the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards

*The C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards will soon be released. At the request of Social Education, NCSS President-Elect Michelle Herczog, who participated in the development of the C3 Framework, has provided the following Q and A for our readers. Interviews with Susan Griffin, NCSS executive director and chair of the C3 Framework Task Force of Professional Organizations, and Kathy Swan, C3 project director and lead writer, follow this feature.*

## Michelle Herczog

### What is the C3 Framework?

The result of a three-year, state-led collaborative effort, the C3 Framework will soon be published. Its full title is *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: State Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History*.

The C3 Framework was developed to serve two audiences: for states to upgrade their state social studies standards, and for practitioners—local school districts, schools, teachers and curriculum writers—to strengthen their social studies programs. Its objectives are to (1) enhance the rigor of the social studies disciplines; (2) build the critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills necessary for students to become engaged citizens; and (3) align academic programs in social studies to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

### What are the guiding principles?

The C3 Framework is driven by the following shared principles about high

quality social studies education:

- Social studies prepares the nation's young people for college, careers, and civic life.
- Inquiry is at the heart of social studies.
- Social studies involves interdisciplinary applications and welcomes integration of the arts and humanities.
- Social studies is composed of deep and enduring understandings, concepts, and skills from the disciplines.
- Social studies emphasizes skills and practices as preparation for democratic decision-making.
- Social studies education should have direct and explicit connections to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

### What are the instructional shifts for social studies?

The C3 Framework, like the Common

Core State Standards, emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. It intentionally envisions social studies instruction as an inquiry arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners. The Four Dimensions highlighted in the table, center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings to enable students to become active and engaged citizens in the twenty-first century.

### Connections to the Common Core State Standards

The C3 Framework changes the conversation about literacy instruction in social studies by creating a context that is meaningful and purposeful. The Framework emphasizes the building of disciplinary literacy in social studies subjects, and the development of the skills of reading, writing, language, speaking, and listening that are essential for success in social studies and prepare

## C3 Framework Organization

Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Tools and Concepts	Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence	Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action
Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	Civics	Gathering and Evaluating Sources	Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions
	Economics		
	Geography	Developing Claims and Using Evidence	Taking Informed Action
	History		

*The C3 framework includes appendices on psychology, sociology, and anthropology.*

students for college, career, and civic life. Each of the Four Dimensions is strategically aligned to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

### Connections to the National Social Studies Standards

The C3 Framework was purposefully designed to offer guidance for state social studies standards, not to outline specific content to be delivered. For states utilizing the C3 Framework, the ten themes of the 2010 NCSS *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* will be useful for the process of identifying specific content to be delivered and concepts to be acquired. The four dimensions of the inquiry arc in the C3 Framework correspond well with four sets of learning expectations presented in the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*

- Questions for Exploration
- Knowledge: what learners need to understand
- Processes: what learners will be capable of doing
- Products: how learners demonstrate understanding

### Why do we need the C3 Framework?

A number of motivating factors inspired this work:

*Marginalization of the Social Studies.* The loss of instructional time at the

elementary level and the narrowing of instruction in response to multiple-choice high-stakes testing has significantly impacted time, resources, and support for the social studies. The introduction of the Common Core Standards provided an *opportunity* for social studies educators to re-frame instruction to promote disciplinary literacy in social studies in such a way as to allow social studies to regain a more balanced and elevated role in the K-12 curriculum.

*Motivation of Students.* Children and adolescents are naturally curious about the complex and multifaceted world they inhabit. But they quickly become disengaged when instruction is limited to reading textbooks to answer end-of-chapter questions and taking multiple-choice tests that may measure content knowledge but do little to measure how knowledge is meaningful and applicable in the real world. The C3 Framework addresses this issue in fundamental ways.

*The Future of Our Democracy.* Abundant research bears out the sad reality that fewer and fewer young people, particularly students of color and students in poverty, are receiving a high quality social studies education, despite the central role of social studies in preparing students for the responsibilities of citizenship. Active and responsible citizens are able to identify and analyze public problems, deliberate with other people about how to define and address issues, take constructive action together, reflect on their actions, create and sustain groups, and influence institutions both large and small. They vote, serve

on juries when called, follow the news and current events, and participate in voluntary groups and efforts. Implementing the C3 Framework to teach students to be able to act in these ways—as citizens—significantly enhances their preparation for college and career.

### Collaboration is Key

For these reasons and more, thousands of social studies experts, curriculum specialists, teachers, and scholars from across the nation and the following organizations were involved in the development of the C3 Framework. 🌐

#### *C3 Framework Task Force of Professional Organizations*

American Association of Geographers  
 American Bar Association  
 American Historical Association  
 Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools  
 Center for Civic Education  
 Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago  
 Constitutional Rights Foundation USA  
 Council for Economic Education  
 National Council for Geographic Education  
 National Council for History Education  
 National Council for the Social Studies  
 National Geographic Society  
 National History Day  
 Street Law, Inc.  
 World History Association

#### *The following NCSS Affiliate Groups contributed to the C3 Framework*

Council of State Social Studies Specialists  
 National Social Studies Supervisors Association  
 College and University Faculty Assembly  
 International Assembly

**MICHELLE HERCZOG** is president-elect of National Council for the Social Studies. She is the History-Social Science Consultant for the Los Angeles County Office of Education in Downey, California.