

A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate through Social Studies

Both Vermont law Title 16 and the [Education Quality Standards](#) (EQS 2120.5) require annual K-12 social studies education for Vermont students. The disciplines within social studies are focused on helping “young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.” (National Council for the Social Studies)

In 2017, the Vermont State Board of Education adopted the [College, Career and Civic Life C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#) (C3) to guide the teaching of civics, economics, geography, and history within Vermont. The Agency of Education has provided [social studies proficiency-based graduation requirements](#), which were based off of the C3 standards and developed by Vermont educators, to serve as a sample. These graduation proficiencies are examples of a rigorous proficiency-based graduation framework that meets [Education Quality Standards](#).

A [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate](#) (PoG) was collaboratively developed to be used as a tool for reviewing and refining local proficiency-based graduation requirements, as well as a guide for making instructional decisions. The PoG specifies the cognitive, personal, and interpersonal skills and abilities that students should be able to demonstrate upon graduation considering six attributes: learner agency, global citizenship, academic proficiency, communication, critical thinking, and well-being. Additionally, each trait includes key descriptors and performance indicators.

Social studies education programs should provide students with valuable learning experiences that support the development of PoG skills and abilities. The following diagram highlights specific terms that link to the content, skills and attributes developed within the social studies and how they fit into the six attributes of the Vermont Portrait of a Graduate.

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Learner Agency

Reflective • Articulate • Problem Solver • Lifelong Learner

Within the context of social studies, students take ownership of their learning through engagement in the inquiry process. As they construct arguments, provide explanations, listen to, and share ideas and perspectives students are learning to be cognizant of bias and value the dissonance of opinion. Social studies practices -- such as critical thinking, problem solving, communication and questioning -- are skills needed in life beyond the classroom as they promote successful civic engagement. Students will reflect on the growth made within these practices as they hone their skills by struggling through unresolved issues and constructing explanations in a changing world.

Global Citizenship

Participation • Collaboration • Taking Action • Practicing Tolerance

Social studies education introduces students to cultures that may differ from their own; this knowledge can build a foundation which enables students to challenge bias, prejudice and stereotypes. When student knowledge is limited to a single culture it is difficult to accept what is outside their norm. In our diverse society, with an ever-changing political climate, it is important that students practice tolerance when faced with differing opinions, points of view, cultures, religions, and understandings of gender; having a strong civic disposition leads to the respect for human dignity and individual worth. It is important within a democratic society that students engage within their communities and partake in civic practices such as voting, volunteering and jury service. Productive civic engagement is also evidenced when students contribute to public discussions, challenge injustices, collaborate for change, practice social responsibility, and respect the rights afforded to others.

Academic Proficiency

Geographic Reasoning • Historical Inquiry • Economic Decision-Making • Civic Engagement

Through social studies content disciplines, students will ask questions in their efforts to clarify how the world works, and their roles within it. Students will learn to engage in lifelong civic practices to bring about positive change through a commitment to democratic values. They will also be able to make sound civic and economic decisions by understanding change and continuity over time, as well as by considering how the world's diversity of environment and culture play a role within that decision-making process.

Communication

Multimodal • Active Listening • Intentional • Advocate

Social studies students understand that their words can leave an impact, therefore they think first of their intentions before they communicate in print, in person, or digitally. Students also learn that effective communication is a process that involves active participation. The consumers of information are equally as important as the presenters; active listening is instrumental to successful communication. Careful listening and intentional word choice build trust and respect for others, strengthen student dispositions - such as patience and concentration - and build on the democratic process. The social studies disciplines have provided students with a strong foundation to act responsibly and advocate for positive change when they encounter injustice.

Critical Thinking & Problem Solving

Evaluating Information • Bias Assessment • Deliberation • Argumentation

Through the analysis of resources and application of learned material, social studies students develop the ability to make evidence-based claims, or counter claims, to support or dispute their thinking. Students learn to exercise citizenship skills and utilize democratic principles, such as the recognition of equality and individual rights, when interacting with others in the classroom, the digital environment, and within their communities. Analysis of evidence allows students to assess the credibility of resources representing multiple points of view with the understanding that sources may collide, and differing viewpoints may alter how the data is perceived. Careful analysis can also demonstrate that words can communicate bias and students should be skilled at recognizing such partiality.

Well-Being

Financial Literacy • Civic Virtue • Identity • Self-Management

Social studies education provides students with the intellectual context for studying how humans have interacted with each other and the environment over time. This knowledge enables students to develop and hone a sense of self as lessons from both the past and present serve as a guide to future goals. By becoming civically engaged, students honor the virtues and democratic principles of mutual respect, honesty, cooperation, equality and respect for individual rights when interacting with others, as well as when acting on one's own behalf. Students understand how they view themselves within social, cultural and political spheres and how their actions and behaviors are interpreted by others. Finally, students will understand their role as independent adult consumers, fully prepared to make wise financial decisions with regard to earning, spending, and saving, as well as managing credit, debt, risk and investment for a lifetime of economic security.