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# Social Studies Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy

## Introduction

The exemplar Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement (PBGR) Hierarchies support equity by providing a cohesive and coordinated vision of student-centered learning across Vermont schools. The hierarchies serve as a foundation for the implementation of standards adopted by the Vermont State Board of Education, Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems, flexible pathways, and personalized learning plans. The Agency of Education recognizes the considerable time and effort that educators and other stakeholders across the state have already put forth into developing proficiency-based learning systems and this work is intended to serve as a resource for supervisory unions/districts (SUs/SDs) to consider as they reflect on the key concepts and skills that students should develop within each content area. It is important to note that while there is a separate hierarchy for each disciplinary content area, the hierarchies work together to support student proficiency in those attributes described in a [Vermont Portrait of a Graduate \(PoG\)](#).

## The Hierarchy Development Process

The first step in the process of developing PBGR Hierarchies involved the creation of content area PoGs. The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) did this by reading the Vermont PoG through a content lens, comparing the PoG indicators with national content standards, and identifying those indicators that could best be addressed within that content area (e.g., A Vermont Portrait of a Graduate through the lens of [Social Studies](#)). The AOE integrated these content area PoGs, State board-approved national standards, and other research to define what it means to be literate within each disciplinary content area. Each literacy statement was pared down to its essential elements, resulting in one PBGR for each content area. Once the PBGR was developed, the AOE identified the Critical Proficiencies (CPs) that would support the teaching and learning related to that PBGR. The AOE developed Priority Performance Indicators (PPIs) for each CP, based on national standards, research, and input from the field. While the PPIs will be formally assessed to develop evidence of student proficiency, all standards have a place in the curriculum and in student learning. Throughout this process, attention was also given to how [transferable skills](#) could be interwoven throughout each PBGR Hierarchy. The construction of these hierarchies was an iterative process, taking on many different stages with educator feedback and internal review being essential components of that process.



# Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy Development Process for 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 Framework is structured around an Inquiry Arc which allows students to develop the skills necessary to analyze, explain, argue, and take action within these disciplinary content areas.

The development of the Social Studies Hierarchy has been an iterative process commencing with the work of Vermont K-12 educators in 2017. The inquiry and content PBGRs and Proficiencies developed by this group of educators were shared with the field for vetting; after editing, this work was then shared on the AOE website as a sample set of PBGRs for use across the state.

The Social Studies Hierarchy has streamlined the work of the previous educators to create a more narrow set of Priority Performance Indicators (PPIs) that still recognize the importance of all four disciplinary areas as well as the skills inherent to the inquiry process. Overlap within the C3 standards skills and content areas has been addressed for ease of use. For example, historical thinking requires the use of evidence to answer questions and develop arguments about the past. We recognize the importance of the integration of historical evidence and have eliminated duplicity and included the history indicators within the Inquiry Proficiency.

Feedback from the field has identified some similar PPIs within the ELA and Social Studies Hierarchies. These similarities indicate the interdisciplinary nature of the content areas. The standards themselves acknowledge the relationship between Social Studies and ELA:

- [“The College, Career and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework for Social Studies State Standards](#) begins with two narrative explanations: the Inquiry Arc, which provides the organizing structure for the document; and the Overview of English Language Arts/Literacy Common Core Connections, which highlights the important relationship between the C3 Framework and the Common Core State Standards for ELA/Literacy. Next, the C3 Framework presents the following four Dimensions: 1 Developing questions and planning inquiries; 2 Applying disciplinary concepts and tools; 3 Evaluating sources and using evidence; and 4 Communicating conclusions and taking informed action,” (C3, p. 12). Clear overlap between ELA and Social Studies PPIs would be evident within C3 Dimensions 1, 3, and 4.
- [The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy](#) have also made grade-banded History/Social Studies connections for both [reading](#) and [writing](#). “The Standards insist that instruction in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language be a shared responsibility within the school. The K-5 standards include expectations for reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language applicable to a range of subjects, including but not limited to ELA. The

grades 6-12 standards are divided into two sections, one for ELA and the other for history/social studies, science, and technical subjects. This division reflects the unique, time-honored place of ELA teachers in developing students' literacy skills while at the same time recognizing that teachers in other areas must have a role in this development as well" ([CCSS, Key Design Consideration](#)).

Rather than remove duplicative PPIs, providing multiple opportunities to demonstrate proficiency is a benefit to students. Where and when assessment and reporting are determined should be at the SU/SD level.

# Social Studies PBGR

The social studies literate individual has developed a critical lens through which they recognize challenges, contemplate possible solutions, and consider the consequences of both action and inaction. They have become socio-politically conscious and socio-culturally responsive as they have strengthened their own identity and recognized the importance of community through stories, conflict, compromises, and resolutions. They recognize the legacy of sovereignty, authority, and power; the pros and cons of human-environment interaction; the value of development, including both the benefits and costs that it incurs; and the respect for all histories (past and present) as seen from multiple perspectives.

## Critical Proficiency

### Inquiry Process

**Inquiry Process** – Students act as social scientists as they ask questions, think critically, solve problems, and share conclusions.

## Critical Proficiency

### Civics

**Civics** – Students act as productive citizens by understanding the history, foundations, and principles of our American democracy through multiple lenses, and by acquiring the ability to become engaged in civic and democratic processes.

## Critical Proficiency

### Economics

**Economics** – Students make sound economic decisions through understanding the interactions between humans, governments, economic systems and both the national and global marketplaces.

## Critical Proficiency

### Geography

**Geography** – Students use geographic inquiry and reasoning to propose solutions to local, national, and global issues.

## Critical Proficiency

### History

**History** – Students understand and evaluate change and continuity over time, recognize the multiplicity of points of view and make use of historical evidence in answering questions and developing arguments about the past.

## Priority Performance Indicators

### Constructing Compelling and Supporting Questions

Generate, revise, and use a variety of questions about a topic of study to further inquiry and reflect on an enduring issue(s) in the field. (D1. 1; D2. His.3)

### Gathering and Evaluating Sources

Determine and gather the varied type of credible sources that will be helpful in answering compelling and supporting questions, taking into account the need for multiple points of view, secondary interpretations, and the types and limitations of sources available. (D2. His. 9, 10, 13, 17; D3. 1)

### Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions

Construct arguments using precise and knowledgeable claims, with evidence from multiple sources, while acknowledging counter claims and evidentiary weakness. (D2. His. 16; D4. 1)

## Priority Performance Indicators

### Civic and Political Institutions

Analyze the powers and responsibilities of local, tribal, state, national, and international civic and political institutions, including the impact of established laws, constitutions, and/or agreements, and the role and responsibility of citizens in regard to these political institutions, systems, and structures. (D2. Civ. 1-6)

### Participation & Deliberation

Apply civic virtues and democratic principles in multiple settings analyze the impact and appropriate roles of personal interests and perspectives on the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights and human rights. (D2. Civ. 7, 8, 9, 10)

### Processes, Rules, and Laws

Evaluate the processes and rules by which people make decisions, govern themselves, address public concerns, change societies, promote the common good, and protect rights. (D2. Civ. 11-14)

## Priority Performance Indicators

### Economic Decision Making

Analyze how scarcity influences individual and societal decisions regarding established goals, and the advantages and disadvantages pertaining to the resources available to achieve those goals. (D2. Econ. 1, 2, 3)

### Exchange and Markets

Evaluate the extent to which competition among buyers and sellers exists, and the consequences of competition, or lack thereof, within specific markets. (D2 Econ. 4, 5)

### The National Economy

Use economic indicators and current data to evaluate, identify trends, and explain the influences on changes in spending, production, money supply, policies and the current and future state of the national economy. (D2. Econ. 10, 11, 12)

### The Global Economy

Explain how current globalization trends and policies affect economic growth, labor markets, rights of citizens, the environment, and resource and income distribution. (D2. Econ 15)

## Priority Performance Indicators

### Human Population: Spatial Patterns and Movements

Analyze how historic events, long-term climate variability and the diffusion of ideas, technologies, and cultural practices have influenced human migration patterns and population distribution. (D2. Geo. 7, 9)

### Global Interconnections: Changing Spatial Patterns

Evaluate how changes in the physical systems of the earth contribute to conflict and cooperation. (D2. Geo. 10, 11, 12)

### Human Environment Interaction: Place, region, Culture

Analyze relations between physical systems and humans, including political and economic decisions, to determine how they influence each other. (D2. Geo. 4, 5, 6)

### Geographic Representations: Spatial Views of the World

Create and/or use maps to analyze spatial patterns of cultural and environmental characteristics, evaluate and to help explain relationships between places/regions and their cultural, political and economic systems. (D2. Geo. 1, 2)

## Priority Performance Indicators

### Change, Continuity, Context

Evaluate how historical events and developments were shaped by unique circumstances, individuals and groups, and how their significance both changes over time and is shaped by historical context. (D2. His. 1,3)

### Perspectives

Analyze and explain how historical context shapes peoples' perspectives, how perspective-influencing factors change over time, and how peoples' present perspectives shape interpretations of the past, including that which is written and acknowledged as history. (D2. His. 4-7)

### Causation and Argumentation

Analyze multiple and complex causes (long-term and triggering) and effects of events in the past to develop a reasoned historical argument. (D2. His. 14, 15)