

How can I help my students explore and reason about social issues?

What's the Opportunity?

Each year, at least one of the Focal Areas for the Oklahoma Public Schools Classroom Support Grant addresses the most recent textbook adoption area. Last year, schools adopted new curriculum to address the newly revised [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies](#). The new standards saw significant shifts in the area of **Social Studies practices, strengthened progressions** across grades and courses, and an increased **emphasis on civics and tribal sovereignty**.

The practices, shown below, reflect the key skills and disciplinary tools to prepare students for college, career, and civic life, and they are meant to be integrated within the instruction of content standards. When implemented throughout the students' K-12 experience, they are able to more fully explore and reason about social issues that often extend beyond a single disciplinary lens.

As educators adjust their teaching to respond to these shifts, many are identifying new ways to ensure the learner is actively participating in experiences that help make abstract concepts concrete. **Thus, it is critical that teachers have access to instructional materials that help students identify, investigate, and address compelling issues.**

Social Studies Practices

Engage in Democratic Processes

Understanding civic virtues and the role of civic institutions.

Analyze and Address Authentic Civic Issues

Understanding the importance of critical questioning to solve real-world problems.

Acquire, Apply, and Evaluate Evidence

Understanding and using strategies to analyze evidence in the social studies.

Read Critically and Interpret Information Sources

Understanding the purpose of engaging with text.

Engage in Evidence-Based Writing

Understanding the multiple purposes of the writing process.

Critical Actions

→ Enact the Social Studies Practices to their Full Extent

- The social studies practices remind us that “skills and knowledge in isolation have little value.”
- Materials that support the application of skills in the pursuit of knowing and understanding may be as simple as sticky notes, index cards, and various art supplies.
- A standards aligned curriculum is important for any social studies classroom. The [Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies \(OAS-SS\) Curriculum Frameworks](#) provide explanations of standards and instructional resources. Each of the five practices is more fully elaborated upon in [Appendix A](#) of the 2019 OAS-SS.
- Examine your curriculum to see what materials you still need to encourage inquiry in the classroom. Examples might include maps and globes that students can write on, giant maps, atlases, primary source collections, trade books, artifacts, and manipulatives.



→ Embrace a Flexible Instructional Model Based in Inquiry

- The inquiry arc allows students “to ask good questions and develop robust investigations into them; separate evidence-based claims from opinions; communicate and act upon what they learn” ([NCSS C3 Framework](#)).
- Essential questions cause genuine and relevant inquiry, provoke deep thought and discussion, and create opportunities for transfer of understandings from school to life experiences. Consider supplies that support the generation of student ideas and the exploration of current issues.
- Primary documents, images, and artifacts left behind by those people who witnessed events firsthand provide opportunities for students to grapple with multiple perspectives. Various forms of representation, including multimedia literacies (videos, podcasts, comics, etc.) provide students an authentic method of civil discourse.

→ Incorporate Civics and Tribal Sovereignty

- While national civics garner a majority of attention, local civics and the work of the government that serves its community deserves attention, appreciation, and engagement. Students should be provided opportunities to become aware, active, and committed to the values and principles of America’s constitutional democracy and the forms of government used in our communities and states. Supplies that support students in learning about and creating solutions to local issues help to realize the democratic process.
- The perspectives of Oklahoma tribes are too often underrepresented in the stories of the founding and *progress* of our country. Supplies that support students as they acquire, apply, and evaluate evidence of the early (even prehistoric) governments and complex governing structures of the first Americans provides students a new perspective on the current realities of the tribal nations. Materials that help bring modern issues of tribal nations, and the hopes and dreams of their citizens, serve to create a more authentic frame from which students can question and investigate their world.

Learn More

1. **The Inquiry Arc** - [From Inquiry Arc to Instructional Practices](#) by S. G. Grant discusses how to introduce inquiry into the classroom.
2. **The Inquiry Design Model** - [C3teachers.org](#) introduces educators to the Inquiry Design Model for lessons using the inquiry arc. Explore many examples from K-12 social studies topics.
3. **Multiple Perspectives** - The National Museum of the American Indian has launched [Native Knowledge 360°](#), a national education initiative to inspire and promote improved teaching and learning about American Indians. These materials feature primary and secondary sources, Native perspectives, images, objects from the museum’s collection, media, and digital interactivity.

Top Tips for Improving Your Application

- Make it real, include information about all of your students and what they need in the classroom.
- Align to Standards and highlight the Practices. Highlight gaps in your current materials and resources.
- Share the potential impact of new materials and resources on instructional strategies and student learning experience.
- Carefully review your budget. Remember, taxes should not be included and shipping costs should be estimated for delivery to the school site.

For more guidance, please review the following briefs addressing this year’s grant:

- [An Introduction to the 2020-21 Oklahoma Public School Classroom Support Grant](#)
- [How can I honor and extend the languages and literacies and practices of my students and communities?](#)

