

III. Essential Disciplinary Practices

The social sciences expand our perspectives and change how we understand the human experience. Examining the intricate relationships between individuals, communities, and societies provides vital knowledge for navigating our increasingly interconnected world. Effective social science instruction transcends rote memorization and cultivates practices that promote inquiry, critical thinking, cultural understanding, and helps young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.¹

The ten Essential Disciplinary Practices outlined below provide a framework for teaching the social sciences. By emphasizing skills like chronological reasoning, seeking diverse viewpoints, combating digital misinformation, and empathizing with a range of identities and lived experiences, the practices help students become informed and empowered agents of change.

These practices, integrated with the grade-level standards, equip students with content knowledge and skills to address systemic injustices, advocate for a more equitable world, and uphold the aspirational ideals of our democratic society.

Essential Disciplinary Practices	Explanation
Develop questions for social science inquiry.	Instruction that empowers students to generate questions can spark curiosity, identify knowledge gaps, and help students examine their assumptions. When students pose questions and consider other perspectives, they are engaged in higher-order thinking skills like analysis, evaluation, and synthesis. Considering open-ended questions about past and present societies reinforces the vital social science skills of problem identification, issue framing, and proposing solutions.
Use chronological thinking skills, connecting the past with the present to recognize continuity and change in human history.	Understanding chronology and placing events in sequence is fundamental for students to create meaning in the social sciences and allows them to appreciate the development of and changes in traditions and institutions, as well as the identification of significant turning points and transformations. By analyzing continuities and changes over time, students identify examples of consistency, gradual evolution, and dynamic transformations.
Collect, interpret, evaluate, and apply information from primary and secondary sources to better understand and create historical narratives distinguishing between fact and opinion.	When educators introduce primary and secondary sources, students uncover vital evidence for constructing historical narratives and understanding social phenomena. By analyzing these sources, students cultivate higher-order skills like contextualizing evidence, evaluating credibility by accounting for inherent biases and distortions, corroborating across sources, and distinguishing factual claims from opinions.

¹ National Council for the Social Studies: [National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#).

Essential Disciplinary Practices	Explanation
Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events.	Instruction that includes multiple diverse perspectives can provide nuance and complexity to investigating and understanding past and present societal issues. Students cultivate critical thinking by evaluating varied reasoning and worldviews. Student ability to understand and engage respectfully with differing experiences and perspectives is crucial for sustaining a pluralistic democracy.
Evaluate and assess how discrimination, racism, and inequality shape historical narratives, individual perspectives, intersecting identities, and diverse understandings of the past and present.	Educators provide instruction that helps students recognize how systemic bias, discrimination, and racism often shape traditional narratives. This allows students to evaluate and critique dominant histories, as well as explore the effects of intersecting identities. As students analyze marginalization, they cultivate empathy for diverse lived experiences.
Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues.	An important objective of social science education is for students to synthesize credible information and evidence from diverse sources and perspectives to form well-reasoned and coherent arguments and propose solutions to complex societal issues. By anticipating counterarguments, considering implications, and including valid evidence and reasoning in their writing and discussions, students reinforce critical thinking skills and promote continued inquiry.
Cultivate global awareness and cultural understanding to effectively engage with the interconnected world, diverse cultures, and perspectives.	Events, issues, and decisions in one part of the world have far-reaching ripple effects across nations and cultures. Developing global awareness helps students contextualize their local community and cultural experiences as part of an interconnected human story. Bridging cultural divides enhances social cohesion, civic engagement, and inclusive decision-making - cornerstones of a thriving pluralistic democracy.
Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities.	Effective social science instruction cultivates respect for diverse aspects of identity such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic class, and disability. The standards support students in developing an understanding of the immense strengths demonstrated by communities striving for equity despite systemic barriers. Evaluating the motivations and contexts of resistance movements, protests, and everyday resilience requires students to appreciate the inequities and challenges faced by traditionally underrepresented individuals and groups.
Develop the necessary skills to critically analyze and evaluate digital and social media content, identify reliable sources, and become more informed and responsible digital citizens.	Social science instruction in digital citizenship equips students with foundational skills for our highly connected, technologically driven world. To participate responsibly in the digital realm, students apply critical thinking tools to recognize and advocate against digital misinformation, hate speech, harassment, and other unhealthy online behaviors undermining democracy. Digital citizenship skills promote creating positive, safe, legal, and ethical digital content.

Essential Disciplinary Practices	Explanation
Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action.	The social science instruction aims to support citizens to actively engage in addressing society's greatest challenges. It encourages taking informed action for tangible civic application. Students utilize vital skills such as evidence-based decision-making, analysis of local and global issues, strategic planning for change, and democratic collaboration. When students apply social science knowledge and skills, they cultivate dispositions and actions demonstrating civic responsibility, ethical leadership, stewardship, and communal improvement. Through rigorous inquiry leading to real-world application and outcomes students can advocate for a more just and sustainable democratic society.

IV. Transformative SEL and Social Science Instruction

Oregon's [Transformative Social Emotional Learning Framework and Standards](#) offer essential guidance in helping districts and classroom educators establish caring, nurturing, and active social science learning environments. Transformative Social Emotional Learning can be readily integrated with the ten Essential Disciplinary Practices for Social Science and help support a classroom climate to allow the exploration and discussion of complex histories. For social and emotional learning to be transformative, the practices and approaches require setting the conditions for nurturing and attending to personal and collective well-being during social science learning. It includes:

- Culturally responsive practices that affirm and honor students' ways of being, skill development in understanding cultural differences, and honoring students' unique strengths, perspectives, and contributions.
- Systemic approaches that consider the role and impact of the broader society and the learning environment on students' behavior and how this impacts the ways students view themselves.
- Providing students with opportunities to reflect upon and understand the root causes of emotions related to our biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination.
- Nurturing student agency and voice (including non-verbal ways to communicate) as necessary parts of the educational process, supporting students to take actions that challenge and change systems.

V. Inclusive Social Science: Expanding the Narrative

Throughout the K-12 standards, students investigate how gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, class, and disability often shape laws, policies, and other social interactions.

Teachers should include culturally relevant examples of the histories, contributions, and perspectives of traditionally underrepresented individuals and groups, including individuals who are American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian, Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicano, Latino, Middle Eastern or Jewish descent, immigrants, or refugees, of various religious identities, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other traditionally underrepresented groups.

Throughout the standards, the phrase "traditionally underrepresented groups/individuals" includes the above groups and reflects the legislative requirement of [ORS 329.045](#) and [OAR 581-022-2000](#). The term underrepresented refers to the absence of the history, contributions, and perspectives of individuals and groups in the traditional approach to social science standards and or within previous social science textbooks.

Oregon Social Science Grade Level Standards

Kindergarten Standards (Focus: Me and My World)

In kindergarten, students embark on the collective experience of public education, acclimating to the classroom community. Social science domains, concepts, disciplinary practices, and content are natural connections to lessons developing literacy, social and emotional skills. The standards support foundational understanding for respectful relationships. Students develop an understanding of identity, democratic values, cultural traditions, and influential historical figures while constructing chronological narratives and examining cause and effect within their community.

Creating representations of their surroundings, using directional terms, and identifying local migration stories while exploring human interactions with the environment are foundational kindergarten geography skills and knowledge. Financial literacy basics, such as identifying US currency, understanding its purpose, recognizing different jobs/volunteer roles, and the earning, saving and spending of money.

Essential Disciplinary Practices

I. Develop questions for social science inquiry.	II. Use chronological thinking skills , connecting the past with the present to recognize continuity and change in human history.	III. Collect, interpret, evaluate, and apply information from primary and secondary sources to better understand and create historical narrative distinguishing between fact and opinion.	IV. Seek and analyze diverse perspectives to develop a more complete understanding of past and current events.	V. Evaluate and assess how discrimination, racism, and inequality create historical narratives, individual perspectives , intersecting identities, and diverse understandings of the past and present.
VI. Construct well-reasoned and logically coherent explanations, arguments, and solutions related to complex societal issues.	VII. Cultivate global awareness and cultural understanding to effectively engage with diverse cultures and perspectives in an interconnected world.	VIII. Demonstrate empathy to understand how identities shape actions of resistance and resilience among individuals and communities.	IX. Develop the necessary skills to critically analyze and evaluate digital and social media content, identify reliable sources, and become more informed and responsible digital citizens.	X. Apply the practices and knowledge of social science to determine the most effective ways to take informed civic action .