

## Teaching Social Studies, Then & Now

**Introduction\*:** Social Studies is intended to promote civic competence through the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities. The NYS Social Studies Standards and Framework provide the context for curriculum development locally within the West Irondequoit Central School District. The NYS Framework was first established in 2014, and has been implemented in a strategic manner statewide beginning in 2016.

Social Studies provides coordinated, systematic study that draws upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, belief systems, and sociology, as well as upon appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (*adapted from the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] definition of Social Studies*).

The mission of the WICSD Social Studies Department is to challenge students to question the world around them and appreciate diversity as they become engaged citizens in a global community. The following table articulates the major shifts in SS Instructional Practices that have occurred over the last 5 years.

*\*Adapted from the NYS Social Studies Framework Introduction, 2014*

Grade Band	Then: “The Lecture”	Now: “The Inquiry”
K-4	<p>Teacher would provide students with the historical narrative of a period, a person, and/or an event. Students would then engage in an arts and crafts project that topically relates to the social studies topic.</p> <p>For example, 4<sup>th</sup> grade students, when learning about Native Americans in New York, would often construct a model Long House.</p>	<p>Teacher presents class with a question to ponder. Students provide their initial thoughts, or additional questions, as they begin their study of a topic. The teacher will then provide sources, artifacts, and evidence for students to consider as they answer the question.</p> <p>For example, in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students will consider the question “Is it ever ok to break the law?” as they begin their study of the suffrage and abolitionist movements. Students will then draw connections between these movements and modern day, ending with their crafting of a letter to either Susan B. Anthony or Frederick Douglass. In the letter, students will explain their conclusion as to whether or not Frederick Douglass or Susan B. Anthony would be satisfied with today.</p>
5-8	<p>Teacher would provide students with information about the identified time period, as well as “important” people and events (as determined by the</p>	<p>Teacher and students consider (and sometimes co-create) an essential question to begin a topic of study. Students will analyze sources, consider multiple perspectives, and engage in peer discourse as they draw historical conclusions.</p>

	<p>teacher/curriculum). Students would engage in independent reading of a textbook and occasionally of a primary source, and answer comprehension style questions. Assessments would target students' memorized knowledge of the identified period.</p> <p>For example, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students would learn about Westward expansion through events such as the invention of barbed wire, the significance of the cowboy and gold rush, and the increased ability for immigrants to become landowners.</p>	<p>For example, in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, students consider the essential question, "What is power and how is it used?" as they dive into the events surrounding America's expansion west. Students will study documents that evidence the causes and benefits to American expansion for white Americans. Students will also face the harsh reality of the violence against Indigenous people, enslaved people, and immigrants, as well as the spread of slavery west. Through this analysis, students will put "Manifest Destiny" on trial, with the charge against the United States that Manifest Destiny was an abuse of power by the government. Students will weigh the evidence and come up with an evidence-based verdict.</p>
<p>9-12</p>	<p>Teacher would use the Regents exam, which was largely content drive, to identify essential content for instruction in grades 9-11. Students would take notes during lecture, engage in reading and comprehension questions, and practice Regents style questions.</p> <p>For example, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students would study the causes of mass emigration from Europe in the period of the Industrial Revolution, focusing on events such as the Irish Potato Famine and poverty.</p>	<p>Students will consider essential questions as they analyze the past and identify enduring issues in history. Through this analysis, students will draw conclusions about continuity and change across time,</p> <p>For example, in 10<sup>th</sup> grade, students will study the period of the Industrial Revolution through the essential question, "Is the cost of innovation worth the benefits?" As they analyze this time period, students will consider the impact of the Agricultural Revolution in Europe on the world—the conditions of the labor force in Europe, the reliance on enslaved people and the expansion of the trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, and shifts in social structures in Europe and Asia.</p>