**SOCIAL STUDIES VISION**

**What is Social Studies and why is it important?**

Social Studies is a multi-disciplinary, integrated approach to the study of peoples, their physical environment, histories, traditions, and cultures. Within social studies the fields of history, geography, economics and political science support each other and together provide the student with a framework for defining and interacting with his or her world. At the heart of Social Studies is a vital interest in humanity in all its variety and dimensions that both fuels curiosity and sparks the imagination.

Our human community is one of growing complexity offering students both challenges and opportunities. Our world is characterized by tremendous diversity and unequal power relationships among peoples and nations that are increasingly interdependent. Environmental, economic, social, political, and technological issues fraught with ethical implications confront us with the need to make well-informed and thoughtful decisions. To navigate these issues in purposeful ways, students will need to understand their own and other’s cultural heritage, appreciate and affirm diversity and empathize with perspectives different from their own.

Through continual exploration of the human experience over time and in all its complexity, Social Studies teaches as much about similarities as differences, fostering a sense of identity with the past, as well as with family, community, nation, and world. Through direct student engagement with key issues that confront us, Social Studies is uniquely capable of providing students with the means both to understand and involve themselves with their community, nation and world. By providing students with the intellectual, critical thinking, writing, research, social and problem solving skills to understand themselves and others and developing a critical consciousness\* that both informs and inspires social action, Social Studies ensures that ultimately, students have the tools to gain control over their own lives. Informed decision-making, the ability to work with others to make an impact, and the vision which takes both failures and triumphs from the past as keys to present and future actions are life-long gifts of Social Studies.

*\*Refer to Appendix 2 to learn more about critical consciousness.*

***Our Vision for Students (Identify Desired Results)***

***What is our vision for students in Social Studies?***

***Active participants in the democratic process (Consider an alternative: Active world citizens)***

*We aim to develop leaders who analyze issues that matter to them, take stands and act on them individually and collaboratively to improve their own lives and the lives of others.*

*Ultimately, learning in Social Studies is not just about gaining knowledge and skills; it’s about empowering students to excel in living out their choices. Learning in Social Studies is not just about gaining understanding of the great progress but real injustices that characterize the human experience; it’s about preparing students to be critical and active participants in the democratic systems and structures that have historically been denied to them. It’s about empowering students to use their knowledge and skills to find their voices, take stands on issues that matter to them and deliberately act as individuals and with others to fight past and current injustices to improve their own lives and the lives of others in their community, our nation and our world. That is what active participation in our democracy entails.*

* *To learn what beliefs about student learning in Social Studies inform this vision, review Appendix 1.*
* *To learn about the foundational theories of teaching and learning that inform this vision, review Appendix 2.*
* *This vision has political implications that impact the curricular and instructional decisions you make. We strongly recommend that you review Appendix 3.*

***What should students know, understand and be able to do to reach this vision?***

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| ***Our students will be able to:*** | | |
| ***Own their own story by deepening understanding of who they are, where they come from and what they believe in relation to the stories, origins and beliefs of others and the larger society in which they live.*** | ***Own their learning by developing and strengthening their inquiry skills in the Social Studies to analyze questions and issues in order to make informed decisions and take strong stands.*** | ***Increase their agency in the world by learning how to lead through active participation in the democratic process.*** |
| ***Sub outcomes:***  *· Make sense of their own experiences and affirm their own and community’s identity through exploration and analysis of their personal, cultural and national history and heritage.*  *· Surface and articulate their own and community’s beliefs, dispositions and values on ethical, political, economic and social issues of our time.*  *· Communicate their beliefs, dispositions and values to others and identify those they share.*  *· Know about other racial and ethnic cultures and have the confidence and skill to interact with people from those backgrounds.*  *· Explore existing political and social structures that shape their lives to develop a critical consciousness that enables them to critique the cultural norms, values, mores and institutions that produce and maintain social inequities.*     |  |  | | --- | --- | | |  | | --- | |  | | | ***Sub outcomes:***  *· Ask essential questions/identify issues*  *· Accumulate knowledge from a variety of sources and perspectives that inform understanding of the question or issue*  *· Weigh and evaluate multiple perspectives and positions*  *· Analyze both knowledge and experiences and apply their critical consciousness to inform and support their position, stand or solution.* | ***Sub outcomes:***  *· Believe that individuals can make a difference*  *· Believe that groups of people standing and acting in solidarity can make a difference.*  *· Recognize, appreciate and value the commonalities and differences among people*  *· Advocate for what they believe in the arena of public discourse by effectively communicating and defending their stand on questions and issues both verbally and in writing*  *· Identify agents who share their stand and those who oppose to inform their action strategy*  *· Build and collaborate with a diverse coalition of people to identify and plan tactics that align with their stand.*  *· Effectively execute the plan*  *· Assess the impact of their actions both intended and unintended.* |