

Overview of Our Social Studies Curriculum

Guiding students to be civically, socially, and ethically responsible members of the global community.

Overview

The social studies curriculum at PS/IS 276 provides rigorous instruction to students in kindergarten through 8th grade. Aligned with the mission of our school, the social studies program focuses on inquiry-based learning activities that connect the students to their community and to the world, which also engages them with the responsibilities of active civic engagement. The social studies program immerses students in experiences using diverse social sciences (e.g., history, archaeology, politics, economics, anthropology) in order to develop the curiosity, questioning, researching, and expression of professionals in the field. Ultimately, the social studies curriculum prepares students to be critically thinking and socially aware citizens who actively strive to make their world a better place.

Our program utilizes the [Social Studies Scope and Sequence of the New York City Department of Education](#) as a guide for instructional themes. This scope and sequence spirals up through the grades to build increasingly sophisticated thinking skills, vocabulary, and conceptual understandings and to provide a thorough introduction to important content in the social studies. At 276, we make sure to learn about the stories, cultures, histories and contributions of diverse groups in our community, nation, and world. We interrogate dominant narratives and contrast these stories to those of less known groups.

A variety of content and skills goals are addressed throughout the school year, which align the Social Studies Scope and Sequence with the [ELA Common Core Reading and Writing Standards](#). Students use multiple resources, including primary and secondary sources, to analyze historical events and to construct reasoned arguments about the significance of these events.

Thinking and process skills in the social studies include: analysis, critical thinking, interpretation, constructing an argument, research and writing, and interpersonal skills. These skills are embedded in each of the social studies practices including

- Gathering, Interpreting and Using Evidence
- Chronological Reasoning
- Comparison and Contextualization
- Geographic Reasoning
- Economic and Economic Systems
- Civic Participation

Social studies is often taught thematically which allows teachers to build connections between disciplines. We also want to make sure that our curriculum is developmentally appropriate. The themes in social studies include Individual development and cultural identity; time, continuity and change; Development, Movement, and Interaction of Cultures; Geography, Humans and the Environment; Development and Transformation of Social Structures such as class, gender, ethnicity, religion and race; power, authority and governance, civic ideals and practice; economic systems; science, technology and innovation; and global connections and exchange.

Key Goals

- **Develop** critical thinking skills, the ability to respectfully communicate an idea that is supported with valid evidence
- **Understand** how the social studies -- history, geography, economics, anthropology, archaeology -- impact our world and my life
- **Explore** diverse identities inform
- **Teach** students to construct historical arguments with primary and secondary sources
- **Help** develop globally minded students who are well-informed on diverse histories of our community, nation and world

FAQs

How can I get regular updates about what my child is learning in social studies? In lower grades, teachers send out emails explaining the curriculum. In middle school, teachers use Google Classroom as a learning platform. Parents can sign up for announcements through Google Classroom.

Do the students use a textbook for social studies? We opt to use carefully curated sets of resources that provide all children access to ideas that challenge their growing intellect and provide the opportunity to learn how to have conversations across texts. These sets of resources include primary and secondary sources, video, images, field trips, maps and allow us to teach complex topics about equity, social issues, and justice. When instructionally appropriate, portions of a textbook may be used to highlight a particular area of study.

Is geography included in the social studies curriculum? Each grade has a specific geographic focus that is developmentally appropriate and provides a context for the history they will learn. This aspect of the curriculum is based on the [National Geography Standards](#) and includes cartography, the movement of people and material on earth, characteristics of ecosystems, physical processes that shape the earth, cooperation and conflict on earth, and how culture and experience influence perception of the earth and its inhabitants.

Are the other subjects (such as English, Spanish etc) connected to what my child is studying in social studies? As often as possible, we seek to create links between content areas. Links are created between nonfiction reading and writing skills, the use of fiction to build empathy and understanding about unit content, using math to graph economic and social data.

I hear in the news that American students don't learn civics anymore. Why don't we teach our students civics? At 276 we DO teach civics. This is a key goal of our social studies curriculum. We prepare students to be informed, empathic, and active members of our society through building a strong, respectful community; teaching about various forms of government as well as US history, laws, and rights; discussions of current events and engaging in social action. We also work to provide students with opportunities to develop and express their voice in school. Students engage in community circles to address problems that arise in our community. In the older grades, students have the opportunity to participate in civics programs such as Student Council and the GSA. Another important component of our social studies program is the opportunity to participate in community service programs. In addition to programs such as St. Jude's Mathathon through which our students raise money for cancer research, in Middle School, we have a chapter of the National Junior Honor Society. Students in this organization organize community service programs at the local and national levels. And each spring we have 276 Cares Squares for Peace during which all students create sidewalk chalk art that explores themes of equity, care, and justice.

What extra activities (ex: field trips, book clubs etc) do teachers organize to supplement the social studies curriculum? Field trips are an important component of our school curriculum. Students in all grades have field experiences that are linked to the curriculum. In 7th and 8th grade our students take overnights to Philadelphia and Washington DC to enhance social studies learning. We also are fortunate to offer a number of enrichment programs that enhance the curriculum. Key enrichment programs that enhance social studies are theater residencies with arts organizations in New York City.