



Instructional Shifts

- 1. Craft questions that spark and sustain inquiry.** There are two kinds of questions that students should experience—compelling and supporting. Compelling questions are content-based problems and issues that set the stage for inquiry while supporting questions guide student investigations. Challenge students to come up with their own compelling questions. Many middle school students might not be ready to create compelling questions, so it is appropriate to give students a compelling question to begin the inquiry; however, teach students to generate their own supporting questions as they work through primary and secondary source analysis.
- 2. Cultivate and nurture collaborative civic spaces where students can work together to apply the principles of civic virtue.** Provide opportunities for students to communicate conclusions within the classroom and outside in their communities. This includes providing them with time to identify problems, propose solutions, and devise a plan in order to communicate conclusions.
- 3. Purposefully integrate content and skills into your social studies curriculum.** There are four disciplinary literacies that should be addressed in every inquiry—geography, economics, civics, and history. When providing students with primary sources and other relevant content, ensure that the content addresses the four disciplinary literacies. Teaching students the historical thinking skills of sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading will help them successfully analyze primary sources in order to develop a conclusion to the compelling question.
- 4. Promote literacy practices and outcomes.** In addition to the disciplinary literacies necessary for inquiry, provide students with opportunities to build and strengthen academic discourse skills, as well as the skills of deliberation, consensus-building, and writing arguments.
- 5. Provide opportunities for taking informed action.** Students should use their inquiries as starting

Disciplinary Literacy

Disciplinary literacy is critical to students understanding social studies content. Providing students with primary sources that cover geography, economics, civics, and history will sometimes be challenging. Using the Inquiry Journal will help introduce students to geography, economics, civics, and history. Another way to build disciplinary literacy is to provide students with opportunities for close reading. Give them pages from the text or an article and have them think like geographers, economists, citizens, or historians by asking guiding questions to help them pull information from the text.

It isn't necessary for students to answer all of the questions when reading a text. In some texts, not all of the questions will be addressed. The purpose of the questions is to guide students' thinking as they look for information related to the four disciplines. For a more structured reading, pre-read the text and provide students with specific disciplinary questions that will be addressed in the text.

Communicating Conclusions

When planning inquiries, provide time for students to engage in discourse. Providing time for students to draw conclusions through deliberation, debate, and consensus-building helps them see multiple perspectives and ideas. Provide opportunities for students to argue positions with supporting evidence from the documents and readings. Making time for academic discourse helps students improve their listening and speaking skills. To further strengthen students' listening and speaking skills, provide them with opportunities to present their conclusions to a variety of audiences in different ways, such as public service announcements, annotated timelines, infographics, and essays.

Build critical thinkers in your classroom.

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