

# Who, What, Where, How, and Now?

## The C3 Framework and the C3 Literacy Collaborative Project

Susan Griffin

In January 2010, the Common Core State Standards were about to be released and the Next Generation Science Standards were moving forward. Meanwhile, instruction time for social studies was eroding across the country. Alarmed by the possibility of social studies being overlooked in this context of new national disciplinary standards, National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools convened a meeting of 15 national organizations representing civics, economics, geography, and history, to begin a conversation about a set of Common State Standards for Social Studies.

The meeting culminated in a collaborative commitment to move forward toward a framework for state standards based on the shared concept that:

Social studies is an interdisciplinary exploration of the social sciences and humanities, including civics, history, economics, and geography, in order to develop responsible, informed, and engaged citizens and to foster civic, global, historical, geographic, and economic literacy.

It was agreed that the initiative would focus on the subjects identified by the No Child Left Behind Framework as the “core” social studies subjects: civics, economics, geography, and history.

At the same time, a group of states organized as the Social Studies Assessment Curriculum and Instruction (SSACI) collaborative of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) had initiated a parallel conversation about creating social studies standards that could be used across states. Introduced by colleagues aware of both efforts, the

organizations and states joined forces to create what was to become the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.

The C3 Framework offers a vision of social studies that is founded on inquiry, and emphasizes the skills and knowledge that prepare young people for college, career, and civic life. It is based on an Inquiry Arc with four dimensions: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries; Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools; Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence; and Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action. The Framework focuses on enhancing state standards in the “core” social studies subjects, but also has appendices dealing with psychology, sociology, and anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

A key question facing the development of the C3 Framework was: were there disciplinary concepts and tools that content experts could identify and agree upon that would provide a frame within which social studies content could be placed? Yes. Advantageously, those skills were well aligned with key literacies identified by the Common Core State Standards for

English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, to which the C3 Framework makes explicit connections.

States and school districts have implemented the Framework in a variety of ways. A survey by the NCSS newsletter, *The Social Studies Professional*, earlier this year reported the following examples:<sup>2</sup>

- In 2015, Arkansas aligned its revised state social studies curriculum frameworks with the C3 and other sources.
- The Los Angeles County Office of Education, which serves 80 school districts and millions of students, developed a number of C3 Framework resources posted at [www.lacoe.edu/curriculuminstruction/historysocialscience.aspx](http://www.lacoe.edu/curriculuminstruction/historysocialscience.aspx).
- Connecticut’s Board of Education empowered a team of social studies educators to create and write new social studies frameworks. This new framework was based on C3 and was officially adopted by the state in February 2015.
- The District of Columbia revised its Scope and Sequence for K-12 social studies to incorporate indicators from the C3 Framework, provided professional development aligned with the C3, and adjusted its Building Literacy in Social Studies (BLISS) program to incorporate elements of C3, and is currently developing assessments that incorporate C3 outcomes.
- Hawaii’s Department of Education

adopted the C3 Framework in 2015. In March 2016, Hawaii began secondary standards based on the C3 Framework. See, for example, [www.c3teachers.org/hawaii-pdf](http://www.c3teachers.org/hawaii-pdf).

- The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) voted on June 17, 2015, to adopt revised social science standards. The C3 Framework was “a resource and foundation” for the Board’s report ([www.isbe.net/board/meetings/2015/june/packet.pdf](http://www.isbe.net/board/meetings/2015/june/packet.pdf)). Illinois is now rolling out statewide professional development for the new civics requirement that is guided by the revised standards and addresses both the content of the civics course and how to teach the curriculum.

- In Kentucky, a writing team has been drafting Social Studies Standards for the Next Generation. They are drawing on the C3 Framework, the Global Competence Matrix, and 21st Century Skills for Teaching and Learning, among other documents.
- Maryland is writing a new Maryland Social Studies Framework for preK-12 based on the C3 Framework. Maryland is also using the C3 Framework in professional development.
- New York State’s Board of Regents has adopted a new K-12 Social Studies Framework that draws explicitly on the C3 Framework. New York also provides free C3-based New

York State Social Studies Toolkits that are helpful for educators teaching and writing at any level, from their classroom to a state curriculum. Educators in many states are drawing from these resources at [www.c3teachers.org/newyork](http://www.c3teachers.org/newyork).

- The North Carolina State Board of Education adopted new standards in December 2010 which began implementation during the 2012–2013 school year. The revision cycle has typically been a five-year cycle; however, the NC Department of Public Instruction (NCDPI) is working on staggering the cycle for each area. The social studies revision process has not yet been determined. Given this,

## The C3LC Professional Learning Modules

All the professional learning modules produced by the C3 Literacy Collaborative project have been archived and are accessible free of charge at [www.socialstudies.org/c3/c3lc](http://www.socialstudies.org/c3/c3lc)

Each module consists of a webinar that is accompanied by an investigation that includes materials to support the professional study of the topic. The modules are self-contained and can be used in many different contexts. Individual teachers or teams of teachers in a school can use them selectively to develop strategies that meet the particular needs of their students. The modules are suitable for traditional forms of professional development organized by schools, school districts, or states. While a professional development program could use all the modules as a syllabus, they have also been designed to enable the selective use of only those modules that fit the needs of a particular social studies program. In addition, the modules are suitable for use in education courses at the college level.

### Introduction to the C3 Framework

**Introductory Overview of the C3 Framework for Educators (length: 47:58 minutes)** Presented by Michelle M. Herzog

**What Are the Instructional Shifts of the C3 Framework for Educators? (48:42)** Presented by Michelle M. Herzog

**Building Literacy in Elementary Social Studies (1:02:49)**  
Presented by Kim Heckart

**Webinar: Coaching the Coaches: C3 Framework Rubric (1:02:23)**  
Presented by Kim Heckart and Stefanie Wager

### Dimensions 1-4 of the C3 Framework

**Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries (56:27)**  
Presented by S.G. Grant

**Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools (1:04:03)**  
Presented by Wayne Journell, with Peter Levine (civics), Philip VanFossen (economics), James Hauf (geography) and Elaine Carey (history).

**Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence (1:03:49)**  
Presented by Scott M. Waring

**Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action (55:38)** Presented by Damon Hess and Keith Mataya

### Meeting the Common Core with the C3 Framework

**Meeting the Common Core State Standards for ELA Part 1: How Does the C3 Framework Align to the Common Core? (1:00:49)**  
Presented by Tina L. Heafner

**Meeting the Common Core State Standards for ELA Part 2: Reading Informational Text (1:08:20)**  
Presented by Tina L. Heafner and Dixie Massey

**Meeting the Common Core State Standards for ELA Part 3: Teaching Argument Writing in the Social Studies Classroom (1:08:45)**  
Presented by Chauncey Monte-Sano

**Meeting the Common Core State Standards for ELA Part 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action (55:38)**  
Presented by Damon Huss and Keith Mataya (this is the same webinar as that listed above for Dimension 4 of the C3 Framework)

### Next Steps

**Webinar: Develop Your Own C3 lessons (46:12)**  
Presented by Michelle M. Herzog

**Lead the Way! Tips and Tools to Introduce, Plan and Implement the C3 Framework at Your School Site/District (42:30)**  
Presented by Michelle M. Herzog and Michael Lovorn

**What Every School Administrator Should Know about the C3 Framework (54:41)**  
Presented by Michael Lovorn and Michelle M. Herzog

**Using the C3 Framework to Inform State Policies and Practices (57:01)**  
Presented by Stephen Armstrong and Rosanna Fukuda

**What Every Methods Teacher Should Know About the C3 Framework (1:07:10)** Presented by Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S.G. Grant

North Carolina is using the C3 as a curriculum and instructional framework centered on inquiry and disciplinary literacy.

The C3 Framework aims to be a framework for *enhancing* state standards, so that its implementation does not necessarily depend on its formal adoption by states. Teachers throughout the country have shown enthusiasm for the Framework, and it has become a widespread grass roots endeavor. Kathy Swan, John Lee, and S.G. Grant, who were the principal writers of the C3 Framework and also the project directors of the C3-based New York State Social Studies Toolkit, have established a grass-roots network of educators, C3 Teachers ([www.c3teachers.org](http://www.c3teachers.org)). The number of teachers in the network has increased dramatically in the last year from just over 800 in October 2015 to more than 4,000 at the end of October 2016.

### C3 Literacy Collaborative

NCSS has aimed to promote the C3 Framework to states and teachers by increasing its visibility and offering examples of successful C3 instruction. One opportunity to do so was realized through a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The grant supported a major professional development initiative, the C3 Literacy Collaborative (C3LC), that worked in partnership with the National Center for Literacy Education (NCLE). The initiative produced online professional learning modules designed to explicate the C3 Inquiry Arc and four dimensions of the Framework. These modules have been archived and are accessible free of charge to all teachers (see the sidebar on page 331). The goal of this initiative has been to enable social studies teachers to use the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards in ways that implement state literacy standards (the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects, or other

literacy standards specific to a state or district). One objective has been to assist social studies educators in using informational text, expository writing, and language to meet the goals of the Common Core State Standards.

The introduction to the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts/Literacy emphasizes the need for students to “demonstrate the cogent reasoning and use of evidence that is essential to both private deliberation and responsible citizenship in a democratic republic.”<sup>3</sup> The C3 Framework embraces this objective. In addition to preparing students for active citizenship, it envisions the social studies disciplines as a vehicle for building essential skills needed by students to be successful in college and career. As students achieve disciplinary literacy in civics, economics, geography, history, and the social and behavioral sciences, they develop the skills of reading, analyzing, thinking critically, working collaboratively, and communicating that are prerequisites of success in college, career, and civic life.

The C3LC project brought together more than 50 teacher teams from across the country who identified challenges for their department, school, district, state, or region; met virtually and/or in-person; and selected materials from the webinars to custom fit the issue they had chosen to address. They created their professional learning, delivered it to each other, and moved toward their objective iteratively. The project was an example of high quality professional development based on the establishment of teacher networks that allow for a continuous cycle of inquiry among teachers to share, receive feedback, and adjust instruction. It has produced resources and tools that can be embraced by social studies teachers in rural, suburban, and urban settings across the nation,

In this issue of *Social Education*, participants in the C3LC project offer valuable ideas and resources for the social studies classroom that can help social studies educators advance both social studies disciplinary goals and literacy objectives.

Our next step must be to develop a deliberate dissemination, training, and research agenda for the C3 Framework that uses the knowledge gained from the C3LC project to strengthen social studies teaching and learning. This requires working with key stakeholders in state departments of education and district level supervisors to use these resources. The NCSS network of state councils can play an important role in this process. We must also conduct research examining if and how inquiry-based and student-centered instruction is changing student outcomes. This means that college and university faculty must have access to elementary, middle school, and high school classrooms in order to conduct the necessary research.

The C3 Framework was written with a vision for reinvigorating social studies instruction by placing both inquiry and students at the center of learning in order to strengthen student understanding and efficacy. The vision has not yet been realized and the road has not been well-traveled, but progress has been made and these aspirations are attainable. Achieving them will confirm the essential role of social studies in our nation’s educational system. ●

#### Notes

1. See National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), *Social Studies for the Next Generation: Purposes, Practices, and Implications of the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* (Silver Spring, Md.: NCSS, 2013). An electronic copy of the C3 Framework is accessible at [www.socialstudies.org/c3](http://www.socialstudies.org/c3).
2. *The Social Studies Professional* 262 (March 2016), pp. 5-6.
3. National Governors Association Center for Best Practices (NGA) and Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO), *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (Washington, D.C.: NGA and CCSSO, 2010), p. 3.

**SUSAN GRIFFIN** recently retired after a career in which she worked for the National Council for the Social Studies for 36 years. She served as the NCSS Executive Director from 2000 until 2016.