



Introduction to The C3 Framework

Michelle M. Herczog

This special section of *Social Education* offers a unique introduction to the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards: Guidance for Enhancing the Rigor of K-12 Civics, Economics, Geography, and History. The Framework, which was published online in September 2013, and will soon be available in print, is the result of a remarkable cooperation between state specialists, professional organizations, and other experts and practitioners in the social studies disciplines. It was developed to enable states to upgrade their social studies standards and to assist practitioners—local school districts, schools, teachers, and curriculum writers—in strengthening their social studies programs.

The C3 Framework promotes the following goals:

1. It enhances the rigor of social studies disciplines;
2. It builds critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills that enable students to become informed citizens;
3. It aligns social studies programs with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies. It is the first nationally published framework for standards in social studies that is aligned with the Common Core State Standards.

The C3 Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. It envisions social studies instruction as an Inquiry Arc of interlocking and mutually reinforcing elements that speak to the intersection of ideas and learners. The four dimensions of the Inquiry Arc center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, and deepen investigations, enabling students to acquire rigorous content, and to develop their knowledge and ideas in real-world settings in order to become active and engaged citizens in the twenty-first century.

The articles in the pages that follow offer special insights on the C3 Framework and its implications for social studies education. Kathy Swan, C3 project director and lead writer, and Susan Griffin, chair of the C3 Framework Task Force of Professional Organizations, describe the unprecedented collaborative effort by a cross-section of the entire social studies community, representing civics, economics, geography, history, and the humanities, to develop a new model framework for enhancing social studies state standards. S. G. Grant, a senior advisor and contributing writer to the C3 Framework, introduces the Inquiry Arc that is at the heart of the framework, and discusses the challenge of designing lessons and units around compelling and supporting questions. John Lee, also a senior advisor and contributing writer to the C3 Framework,

and Kathy Swan describe how the C3 Framework takes up the challenge of providing a framework for literacy in social studies that aligns social studies with the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies.

NCSS has already published national standards for the social studies, and my article in the special section shows how the C3 Framework can be used to implement these standards and build upon them. Bruce VanSledright, a member of the C3 Framework writing team, tackles the challenge of developing assessments for the C3 Framework, pointing out the need for a significant shift in methods of assessment of learning in social studies. Meira Levinson and Peter Levine, also members of the C3 writing team, offer suggestions for implementing the component of the C3 Framework dealing with civic action. Michael Long, principal of Lake Marie Elementary in Whittier, California, whose school is committed to inquiry-based learning, offers his perspective on the C3 Framework. Michael M. Yell, an award-winning teacher and former NCSS president, presents a lesson plan on the Black Death, and demonstrates the ways in which his lesson supports the goals of the C3 Framework.

The publication of the C3 document is a watershed moment that offers social studies a framework for preparing students for the challenges of the twenty-first century. For all of us, it is a call to action to reassert social studies as a core subject area that is part of a well-rounded education for all students across the nation 🌐

MICHELLE M. HERCZOG is the History-Social Science Consultant for the Los Angeles County Office of Education. She is President-Elect of National Council for the Social Studies. Excerpts from this article have been included in an information flyer on the C3 Framework that has been prepared by the author and can be downloaded from the NCSS website. NCSS members are encouraged to use and disseminate the flyer, which is a "one-pager" (i.e., two sides of a page that can be printed back-to-back), and is accessible at www.socialstudies.org/system/files/C3InformationFlyer.pdf