

SOCIAL STUDIES IN MANITOBA—A KINDERGARTEN TO SENIOR 4 OVERVIEW



Definition

Social studies is the study of people in relation to each other and to the world in which they live. In Manitoba, social studies comprises the disciplines of history and geography, draws upon the social sciences, and integrates relevant content from the humanities. As a study of human beings in their physical, social, and cultural environments, social studies examines the past and present and looks toward the future. Social studies helps students acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to become active democratic citizens and contributing members of their communities, locally, nationally, and globally.



Vision

Social studies has at its foundation the concepts of citizenship and identity in the Canadian and global contexts. Intended to reflect the many voices and stories that comprise the Canadian experience, past and present, the social studies curriculum is inclusive of Aboriginal, francophone, and diverse cultural perspectives.

Social studies engages students in the continuing debate concerning citizenship and identity in Canada and the world. Through social studies, students are encouraged to participate actively as citizens and members of communities, and to make informed and ethical choices when faced with the challenges of living in a pluralistic democratic society.

Goals of Social Studies

Social studies enables students to acquire the skills, knowledge, and values necessary to understand the world in which they live, to engage in active democratic citizenship, and to contribute to the betterment of society.

The goals of social studies learning span Kindergarten to Senior 4, and are divided into five categories:

- Canada
- The World
- The Environment
- Democracy
- General Skills and Competencies



With respect to **Canada**, social studies enables students to

- acquire knowledge and understanding of Canadian history and geography
 - appreciate the achievements of previous generations whose efforts contributed to the building of Canada
 - critically understand Canadian political structures and processes and the institutions of Canadian society
 - fulfill their responsibilities and understand their rights as Canadian citizens
- understand and respect the principles of Canadian democracy, including social justice, federalism, bilingualism, and pluralism
 - analyze Canadian public issues and take rationally and morally defensible positions
 - develop a sense of belonging to their communities and to Canadian society
 - respect Aboriginal perspectives, francophone perspectives, and the perspectives of the many cultural groups that have shaped Canada, past and present



With respect to the **world**, social studies enables students to

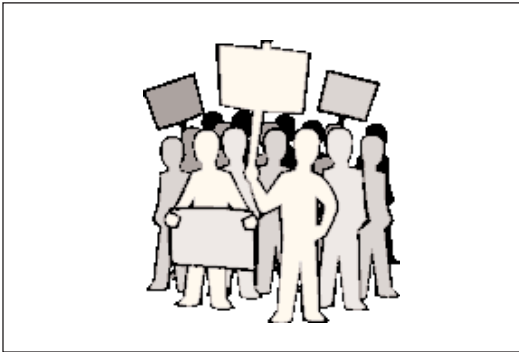
- acquire knowledge and understanding of world history and geography
 - respect the world's peoples and cultures through a commitment to human rights, equity, and the dignity of all persons
 - develop global awareness and a sense of global citizenship
 - understand and appreciate the role of international organizations
 - analyze global issues and take rationally and morally defensible positions
- develop a commitment to social justice and quality of life for all the world's peoples
 - assess questions of national self-interest and the interests of other countries and the world as a whole



With respect to the **environment**, social studies enables students to

- acquire and apply geographic skills, knowledge, and understanding
- recognize that a sustainable natural environment is essential to human life
- assess the impact of human interaction with the environment
- propose possible solutions to environmental problems
- live in ways that respect principles of environmental stewardship and sustainability

Overview



With respect to **democracy**, social studies enables students to

- critically understand the history, nature, and implications of democracy
- assess alternatives to democracy, past and present
- understand the history and foundations of parliamentary democracy in Canada
- demonstrate a commitment to democratic ideals and principles, including respect for human rights, principles of social justice, equity, freedom, dissent and differences, and willingness to take action for the public good

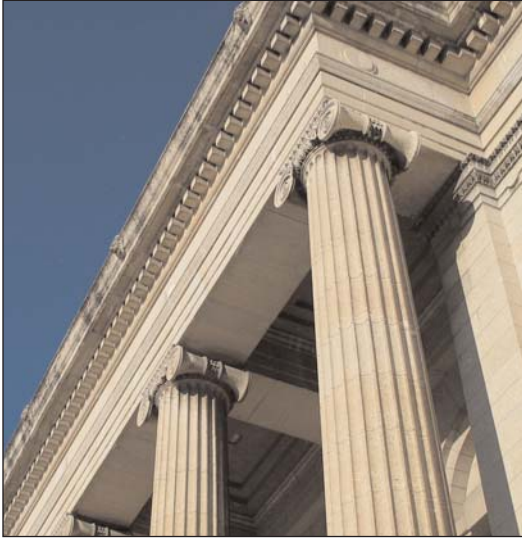
- participate in public affairs in accordance with democratic principles
- critically understand the role of various institutions in civil society
- recognize that democracy involves negotiation and that political and social problems do not always have simple solutions
- identify ways in which Canadian democracy could be improved, and work to improve it
- participate as informed citizens in the ongoing debates that characterize democracy in Canada and the world
- take a stand on matters of fundamental principle or individual conscience



With respect to **general skills and competencies**, social studies enables students to

- engage in disciplined inquiry, applying research skills, critical thinking, and decision making
- think historically and geographically
- critically analyze and research social issues, including controversial issues
- work collaboratively and effectively with others
- solve problems and address conflicts in creative, ethical, and non-violent ways

- develop openness to new ideas and think beyond the limits of conventional wisdom
- apply effective communication skills and enhance media literacy
- use and manage information and communication technologies

CITIZENSHIP AS A CORE CONCEPT IN SOCIAL STUDIES

Citizenship is the core concept that provides the learning focus for social studies at all grades. To identify the knowledge, values, and skills that students will need as active democratic citizens, social studies must take into account the society in which students live and anticipate the challenges they will face in the future. Citizenship is a fluid concept that changes over time: its meaning is often contested, and it is subject to interpretation and continuing debate.

Achievement of learning outcomes related to citizenship will prepare students to participate in the public dialogue that characterizes any democracy and that plays an important role in Canadian society. As students engage in this dialogue, they will enhance their understanding of citizenship in Canada and the world, and will be better prepared to become active participants in their communities, locally, nationally, and globally.

Rationale for Citizenship Education

Citizenship education is fundamental to living in a democratic society. The concept of citizenship takes on meaning in specific contexts and is determined by time and place. Diverse notions of citizenship have been used in the past and are being used in the present, for both good and ill. Throughout much of history, citizenship has been exclusionary, class-based, racist, and sexist. In Canada, for instance, First Nations parents were forced to send their children to residential schools in the interests of citizenship.

The concept of citizenship must be considered within the context of democracy, human rights, and public debate. Social studies provides opportunities for students to explore the complexities of citizenship in four areas:

- Active Democratic Citizenship in Canada
- Canadian Citizenship for the Future
- Citizenship in the Global Context
- Environmental Citizenship

Overview



Active Democratic Citizenship in Canada

Since citizenship issues are rooted in the past, Canadian history occupies an important place in the social studies curriculum. Canada is regionally diverse and geographically expansive. It is organized as a federal parliamentary monarchy, with a mixed, albeit largely capitalist, economy. It is a bilingual and multicultural country committed to pluralism, human rights, and democracy. Globally, Canada is regarded as a prosperous, peaceful, and democratic country, although it still has its share of economic and social injustices and inequities.

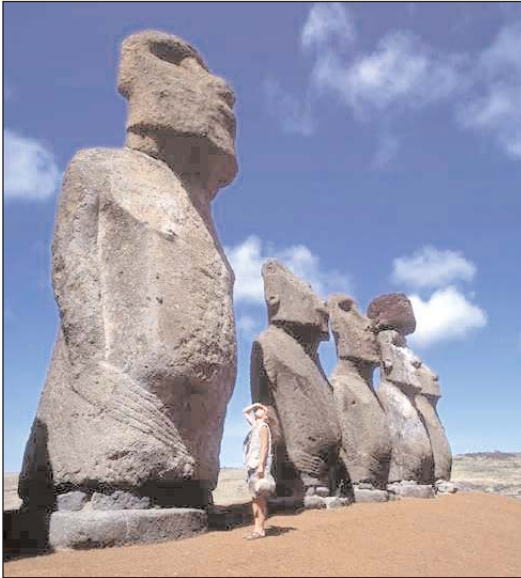
Canada is a complex country that requires special qualities in its citizens. These citizenship qualities include

- knowledge of Canadian history and geography
- understanding of the distinctive nature of Canadian society, the Canadian state, and its institutions
- the ability to approach public issues critically, rationally, and democratically
- informed involvement in public affairs
- respect for human rights and democratic ideals and principles
- a commitment to freedom, equality, and social justice
- the ability to work through conflicts and contradictions that can arise among citizens
- a willingness to live with ambiguity and uncertainty
- civility and tolerance for dissension and disagreement
- a willingness to balance the pursuit of private interests with concern for the public good
- the ability to balance personal claims of conscience and principle against the similar claims of others
- a sense of shared identity as Canadians, combined with a realization that Canadian identity is multi-faceted, open to debate, and not exclusive of other identities

Canadian Citizenship for the Future

For the foreseeable future, Canadian citizens will likely continue to face issues such as

- balancing the jurisdictional claims of the provinces, territories, and the federal government
- redressing past and present injustices inflicted on Aboriginal peoples and other groups in Canada
- coming to terms with the complexities of Quebec's place in Canada
- balancing regional and cultural diversity with national unity
- protecting Canadian identity and sovereignty
- assuring access to social services and quality of life for all
- eliminating inequalities related to race, gender, sexual orientation, age, class, and ethnicity
- protecting the environment
- ensuring the successful functioning of the economy



Citizenship in the Global Context

Canada is part of a global community that is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Many of the most serious problems facing our world must be dealt with on a global basis. The nation-state—including Canada—is under increasing challenge, externally from the forces of globalization, and internally from demands for more local or regional autonomy. The world also continues to be characterized by severe disparities between rich and poor countries. This disparity violates the basic principles of social justice and human dignity, and, at the same time, gives rise to dangerous tensions and rivalries. War, terrorism, and violence continue to be a means of addressing internal and international disputes, and, because of developments in weapons technology, are becoming ever more destructive. In these circumstances, Canadian citizens need to think and act globally as well as nationally.

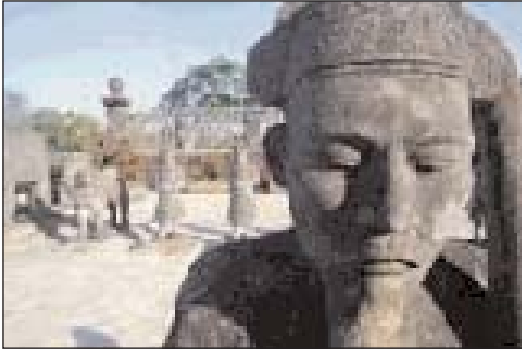
Environmental Citizenship

Underlying both national and global realities, and the responsibilities they impose on citizens, is the increasing fragility of our natural environment. Quality of life depends upon the sustainability of our environment. This places a particularly important responsibility on citizens, who must ultimately balance the demands of economic growth and high living standards against respect for the environment and the needs of future generations.

Overview

General Learning Outcomes

The following six general learning outcomes provide the conceptual structure for social studies from Kindergarten through Senior 4. They are the basis for the specific learning outcomes for each grade.



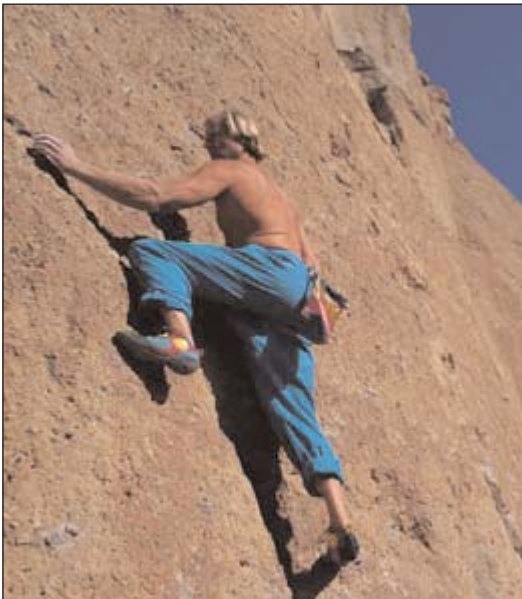
Identity, Culture, and Community

Students will explore concepts of identity, culture, and community in relation to individuals, societies, and nations.

Many factors influence identity and life in communities, including culture, language, history, and shared beliefs and values. Identity is subject to time and place, and is shaped by a multiplicity of personal, social, and economic factors. A critical consideration of identity, culture, and community provides students with

opportunities to explore the symbols and expressions of their own and others' cultural and social groups. Through a study of the ways in which people live together and express themselves in communities, societies, and nations, students enhance their understanding of diverse perspectives and develop their competencies as social beings. This process enables them to reflect upon their roles as individuals and citizens so as to become contributing members of their groups and communities.

The specific learning outcomes within Identity, Culture, and Community include concepts such as human interaction and interdependence, cultural diversity, national identities, and pluralism.



The Land: Places and People

Students will explore the dynamic relationships of people with the land, places, and environments.

People exist in dynamic relationships with the land. The exploration of people's relationships with places and environments creates an understanding of human dependence and impact upon the natural environment. Students explore how spatial and physical characteristics of the environment affect human life, cultures, and societies. They consider how connections to the land influence their identities and define their roles and responsibilities as citizens, locally, nationally, and globally.

The specific learning outcomes within The Land: Places and People focus on geographic understanding and skills, and concepts such as sustainability, stewardship, and the relationship between people and the land.



Historical Connections

Students will explore how people, events, and ideas of the past shape the present and influence the future.

The past shapes who we are. An exploration of Canadian and world history enables students to acquire knowledge and appreciation of the past, to understand the present, and to live with regard for the future. An important aspect of this process is the disciplined investigation and interpretation of history. Students learn to think historically as they explore people, events, ideas, and evidence of the past. As they reflect upon diverse perspectives, personal narratives, parallel accounts, and oral and

social histories, students develop the historical understanding that provides a foundation for active democratic citizenship.

The specific learning outcomes within Historical Connections enable students to develop an interest in the past, and focus on chronological thinking, historical understanding, and concepts such as progress, decline, continuity, and change.



Global Interdependence

Students will explore the global interdependence of people, communities, societies, nations, and environments.

People, communities, societies, nations, and environments are interdependent. An exploration of this interdependence enhances students' global consciousness and helps them develop empathy with respect to the human condition. Students critically consider diverse perspectives as they examine the connections that link local, national, and global communities. Consideration of global connections enables students to expand their knowledge of the world in which they live and to engage in active democratic citizenship.

The specific learning outcomes within Global Interdependence focus on human rights and responsibilities, diversity and commonality, quality of life and equity, globalization, international cooperation and conflict, and global environmental concerns.

Overview



Power and Authority

Students will explore the processes and structures of power and authority, and their implications for individuals, relationships, communities, and nations.

Power and authority influence all human relationships. Students critically examine the distribution, exercise, and implications of power and authority in everyday life and in formal settings. They consider diverse forms of governance and leadership, and inquire into issues of fairness and equity. This exploration helps students develop a sense of personal empowerment as active democratic citizens.

The specific learning outcomes within Power and Authority include concepts such as political structures and decision making, governance, justice, rules and laws, conflict and conflict resolution, and war and peace.



Economics and Resources

Students will explore the distribution of resources and wealth in relation to individuals, communities, and nations.

The management and distribution of resources and wealth have a direct impact on human societies and quality of life. Students explore the effects of economic interdependence on individuals, communities, and nations in the global context. They examine economic factors that affect decision making, the use of resources, and the development of technologies. As students explore diverse

perspectives regarding human needs, wants, and quality of life, they critically consider the social and environmental implications of the distribution of resources and technologies, locally, nationally, and globally.

The specific learning outcomes within Economics and Resources include concepts such as trade, commerce, and industry, access to resources, economic disparities, economic systems, and globalization.

Social Studies Skills

Social studies skills are grouped into four categories:

- Skills for Active Democratic Citizenship
- Skills for Managing Ideas and Information
- Critical and Creative Thinking Skills
- Communication Skills



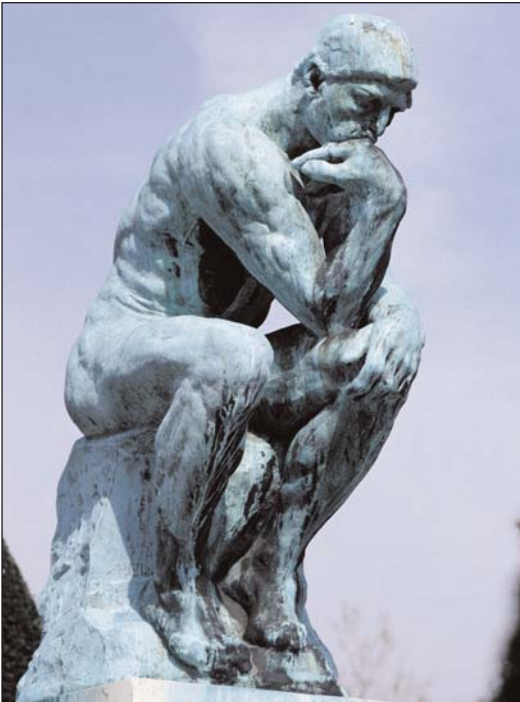
Skills for Active Democratic Citizenship

Citizenship skills enable students to develop good relations with others, to work in cooperative ways toward achieving common goals, and to collaborate with others for the well-being of their communities. These interpersonal skills focus on cooperation, conflict resolution, taking responsibility, accepting differences, building consensus, negotiation, collaborative decision making, and learning to deal with dissent and disagreement.



Skills for Managing Information and Ideas

Information-management skills enable students to access, select, organize, and record information and ideas, using a variety of sources, tools, and technologies. These skills include inquiry and research skills that enhance historical and geographical thinking.

Overview**Critical and Creative Thinking Skills**

Critical and creative thinking skills enable students to make observations and decisions, to solve problems, and to devise forward-thinking strategies. These skills involve making connections among concepts and using a variety of tools. Critical thinking involves the use of criteria and evidence to make reasoned judgments. These judgments include distinguishing fact from opinion and interpretation, evaluating information and ideas, identifying perspectives and bias, and considering the consequences of decisions and actions. Creative thinking emphasizes divergent thinking, the generation of ideas and possibilities, and the exploration of diverse approaches to questions.

**Communication Skills**

Communication skills enable students to interpret and express ideas clearly and purposefully using a variety of media. These skills include the development of oral, visual, print, and media literacy, and the use of information and communication technologies for the exchange of information and ideas.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING, TEACHING, AND ASSESSMENT**Social Studies and the Learning Process**

Learning in social studies is an active process. Active learning involves the construction of meaning through the interaction of prior knowledge, motivation and purpose, and new experiences. The process of learning varies from one individual to another, and is shaped by a multitude of factors, including personal, social, and cultural influences. Social studies learning is more meaningful when students are

- encouraged to broaden their perspectives through informed and focused interaction with others
- provided with opportunities to reflect critically on their own ideas and attitudes
- valued, respected, and acknowledged as individuals, whatever their situation or background

Social studies *knowledge, values, and skills* are interdependent aspects of learning, and need to be integrated in the learning process. Meaningful learning in social studies requires both depth and breadth of understanding. This includes the incorporation of basic general knowledge, as well as opportunities for more intensive study of selected topics.

Strategies to support student inquiry and interaction:

- cooperative and peer learning
- interviews
- project-based learning
- structured controversy or debate
- teacher- and student-initiated inquiry and research
- role-play
- sharing circles

Instructional Strategies for Active Learning

Social studies learning can be enhanced by using a variety of settings both in and outside of school, flexible student groupings, and numerous other strategies. A well-balanced social studies program includes individual, collaborative, and teacher-directed learning experiences, and provides students with a variety of conceptual tools and advance organizers.

Effective social studies instruction includes the use of strategies that promote student inquiry and interaction. These strategies include cooperative and peer learning, interviews, project-based learning, structured controversy or debate, teacher- and student-initiated inquiry and research, role-play, and sharing circles. These types of strategies make learning meaningful by encouraging critical reflection, questioning, and the consideration of diverse points of view.

It is through guided inquiry and interaction—within the school and in the community—that students construct meaning from their individual experiences. Students require opportunities to engage in authentic and relevant community issues and events. It is important that these experiences be integral to social studies learning, and not be contrived.



Overview

Active learning includes

- resource-based and experiential learning
- on-the-land experiences
- field studies
- guided tours
- participation in diverse cultural activities
- integrating literature and the arts
- using information and communication technologies

Active learning is encouraged through resource-based and experiential learning. These include on-the-land experiences, field studies, guided tours, and participation in diverse cultural activities. Social studies teaching offers the ideal opportunity to integrate literature and the arts, and to use information and communication technologies.

Effective practices in social studies actively engage students in democratic processes such as consensus building, collective decision making, student government, class meetings, student-generated topics of study, and school event planning. As well, social studies provides authentic opportunities for home and community involvement.

Activities that engage students in democratic processes:

- consensus building
- collective decision making
- student government
- class meetings
- student-generated topics of study
- classroom/school event planning

Resource-Based Learning

Social studies addresses a wide range of issues and topics at every grade. It is a subject that is particularly well suited to resource-based learning, which moves beyond the single textbook approach and provides students with a variety of information sources. (See Appendix F for a list of recommended learning resources.)

There is a rich abundance of social studies resources available to teachers and students. These include primary information sources, print media, electronic media, art and artifacts, simulations and games, maps, and field trips, as well as knowledgeable individuals from the local community.

Resource-based learning is a student-centred approach that adapts to student needs, interests, abilities, learning styles, and prior knowledge. An environment that is rich in resources allows students to explore and discover as they learn, and to make personal learning choices that are relevant and meaningful.

As our society continues to evolve, so do the roles of teachers and learners. The “sage on the stage” model is giving way to a more flexible model—one in which teachers facilitate the learning process, and students make decisions and assume responsibility for their learning. A resource-based learning approach ultimately helps students manage the information overload that typifies today’s society, and teaches them how to continue their learning outside of the school setting. While the development of fundamental knowledge is still essential in social studies, the student of the 21st century needs the skills to locate, access, and evaluate pertinent information.

Resource-based learning

- primary sources
- magazines and journals
- books
- television, radio
- DVDs and CDs
- audio/video tapes
- the Internet
- computer software and databases
- art and artifacts
- simulations and games
- maps
- neighbourhood walks
- museums
- art galleries
- cultural centres
- community sites
- guest speakers
- Elders
- live performances

Role of the Social Studies Teacher

Social studies accommodates a variety of teaching styles. Given the political nature of social studies issues and topics, a teacher’s personal beliefs and convictions may influence the presentation of content, as well as the selection of teaching strategies and learning resources. Complete neutrality is not always possible, nor necessarily desirable; however, teachers need to be aware of the implications of presenting their own beliefs and perspectives as fact rather than opinion.



Social studies is rich in opportunities to detect and analyze bias through the critical exploration of diverse points of view. When a classroom climate is open and fair, teachers and students together will establish a learning culture that integrates democratic principles and encourages active citizenship. It is important to note that student-centred classrooms are not necessarily democratic classrooms. Even activities that are democratic in nature, such as cooperative learning, can be undemocratic in practice, depending upon how they are used.

Finally, it is critical that teachers be well informed about social studies content and issues, and that they be prepared to provide students with guidance in selecting reliable information sources.

Dealing with Controversial Issues

A fundamental aspect of social studies learning and teaching—at all grade levels—is the consideration of controversial issues—issues that involve ethics, principles, beliefs, and values. Teachers should not avoid controversial issues. Diversity of perspectives, beliefs and values, disagreement, and dissension are all part of living in a democratic society. Furthermore, discussion and debate concerning ethical or existential questions serve to motivate students and make learning more personally meaningful.



The following guidelines will assist teachers in dealing with controversial issues in the classroom:

- approach all issues with sensitivity
- clearly define the issues
- establish a clear purpose for discussions
- establish parameters for discussions
- ensure that the issues do not become personalized or directed at individual students
- protect the interests of individual students by finding out in advance whether any student would be personally affected by the discussion
- exercise flexibility by permitting students to choose alternative assignments
- accept that there may not be a single “right answer” to a question or issue
- respect everyone’s right to voice opinions or perspectives
- help students clarify the distinction between informed opinion and bias
- help students seek sufficient and reliable information to support the various perspectives
- allow time to present all relevant perspectives fairly and to reflect upon their validity