

# American Government Social Studies

## Key Instructional Activities

The government course provides students with a background in the philosophy, functions, and structure of the United States government. Students will examine the philosophical foundations of the United States government and will understand how that philosophy developed. Students will also examine the structure and function of the United States government and its relationship to states and citizens. Map and Globe and Informational Processing Skills Matrices are utilized as a foundation for students to locate, analyze, and synthesize information related to social studies topics.



The C3 Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. The Four Dimensions center on the use of questions to spark curiosity, guide instruction, deepen investigations, acquire rigorous content, and apply knowledge and ideas in real world settings to enable students to become active and engaged citizens in the 21st century.



**HOUSTON COUNTY  
BOARD OF EDUCATION**  
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

*Along with content knowledge, students will be introduced to the following skills through a broad range of topics:*

- identify issues and/or problems and alternative solutions
- identify and use primary and secondary sources
- construct charts and tables
- analyze artifacts
- draw conclusions and make generalizations
- formulate appropriate research questions
- check for consistency of information
- interpret political cartoons
- compare and contrast the categories of natural, cultural, and political features found on maps
- use a map to explain impact of geography on historical and current events
- compare maps of the same place at different points in time and from different perspectives to determine

changes, identify trends, and  
generalize about human activities  
*(More information on the skills matrices can be  
found as an appendix to the GSE at  
[Georgiastandards.org](http://Georgiastandards.org))*

## **The C3 Social Studies Classroom**

*Inquiry-based approaches...provide students with opportunities to authentically engage in social studies with intellectual, student-centered learning activities. Through inquiry, students can be motivated to explore their curiosities and build their knowledge using approaches beyond simple recitation and memorization of facts (Dague, 2020).*

## Inquiry Based Practices

### 1. Teachers and students balance their thoughts, beliefs, and practices.

- Teachers strike a balance between their expertise by allowing students to learn and do on their own with support from the teacher.
- Students actively construct knowledge rather than passively receive it.
- Students engage with featured sources to construct their arguments with support from the teacher.
- Students construct content knowledge and make arguments independently and collaboratively.

### 2. Teachers and students balance assessment needs.

- Teachers develop assessments through formative and summative performance tasks that give students opportunities to learn by doing.
- Teachers create a variety of performance tasks (e.g., T-charts, debates, structured discussions, claim-making, arguments).
- Teachers focus on process and product when supporting students' arguments.
- Students are independent in their work with supporting scaffolding.
- Students develop ideas freely and provide support for all of their ideas.

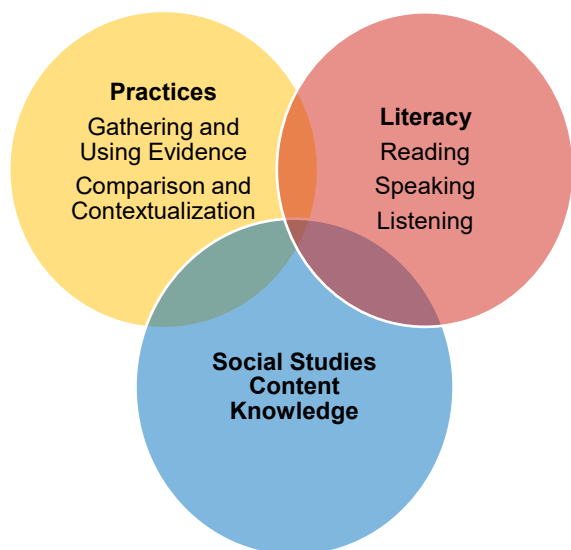
### 3. Teachers provide students with scaffolding to complete the complex academic work of inquiry.

- Teachers provide constant feedback and support students' learning as they navigate questions, tasks, and sources.
- Students consider multiple perspectives to deepen their knowledge.

### 4. Teachers develop practices that are considerate of students' interest and skills.

- Teachers to stage the compelling question to promote students' interest.
- Teachers to encourage students to take their ideas beyond the classroom.
- Students to work with sources that spark their curiosity and interest in the topic.

## Content and Skills Integration



FROM A Social Studies Classroom Where...	TO A Social Studies Classroom Where...
Students experience an additional nonfiction reading class or textbook-focused instruction.	Students learn to read, discuss, and write like social scientists.
Students develop literacy skills and social studies practices separately.	Students develop disciplinary literacy skills and social science practices in tandem.
Students learn content knowledge.	Students integrate and apply concepts, skills, and content knowledge.

# American Government Social Studies System Pacing Overview



**1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: Early August**

**2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: Early January**

## Unit 1: Connecting Themes and Enduring Understandings

This unit provides students with the building blocks and vocabulary to be successful in American Government/Civics. Students will examine the concepts of Beliefs and Ideals, Conflict and Change/Conflict Resolution, Distribution of Power, Governance, Individuals, Groups, and Institutions, and Rule of Law.

**1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: August**

**2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: January**

## Unit 2: Foundation of Government

This unit examines the various systems of government and develops student knowledge of the political philosophies that shaped the development of the United States constitutional government. Students will examine the concepts of geographic distribution of power; autocracy, oligarchy, and democracy; presidential governments versus parliamentary governments; direct democracy, representative democracy, and republic; the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, and Petition of Rights; and the philosophies of Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu and their influence on the creation of the Declaration of Independence.

**1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: September**

**2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: February**

## Unit 3: The United States Constitution

This unit develops understanding and knowledge of the framing and structure of the United States Constitution. Students will analyze various compromises during the drafting of the Constitution, and they will examine how the Constitution addressed weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation. They will analyze the key ideas in the debate over ratification made by the Federalists and Anti-Federalists. Finally, students will examine the meaning and importance of each of the rights guaranteed under the Bill of Rights.

**1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: September**

**2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: February**

## Unit 4: The Federal System of Government

This unit examines the organization and powers of the federal system of government as described in the United States Constitution. The structure, powers, and limitations of the three branches of government along with the system of checks and balances and separation of powers are emphasized. Students will analyze the relationship between state and national governments and the Supremacy Clause. Finally, students will learn about the process of creating constitutional amendments.

**1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: October**

**2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: March**

## Unit 5: Civil Liberties and Civil Rights

In this unit, students will examine American civil liberties and civil rights and their significance in a democracy. Students will analyze due process of law, specifically as it is expressed in the 5th and 14th amendments, and they will explore how amendments have extended the right to vote in the United States.

cont.

<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: October</b>	<b>2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: March</b>
<b>Unit 6: The Legislative Branch</b>	
This unit examines how rules and laws are created in the American Government. Through it, students will investigate the legislative process, the House of Representatives and the Senate, the function of committees and leadership, the role of lobbyists in the legislative process, and impeachment. The concept of distribution of power will be used to help students better understand differences between the House of Representatives and the Senate.	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: November</b>	<b>2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: April</b>
<b>Unit 7: The Executive Branch, Federal Bureaucracy, and Foreign Policy</b>	
This unit examines the executive branch of government, including the formal and informal qualifications to run for President, the term of office and line of succession, the roles of the President, and how the Electoral College works in electing the President. Students will also investigate how the federal bureaucracy operates by exploring government corporations, independent regulatory agencies, and the Presidential cabinet. Finally, students will explore the tools used to carry out American foreign policy, such as treaties, sanctions, humanitarian aid, and military intervention.	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: November</b>	<b>2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: April</b>
<b>Unit 8: The Election Process &amp; Civic Responsibility</b>	
This unit examines local, state, and national elections. Topics include the nomination and election process, campaign finance, and the effects of the media, campaign advertising, and public opinion polls on the outcomes of elections. In addition, students will investigate the importance of participation in civic life.	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: December</b>	<b>2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: May</b>
<b>Unit 9: The Judicial Branch and the Criminal Justice Process</b>	
In this unit, students will examine the United States Judicial Branch and criminal justice system. Students will focus on the operation of the Judicial Branch including the selection and approval process for federal judges, original and appellate jurisdiction, the concept of judicial review and judicial activism, and the responsibilities of the Supreme Court. Students will investigate key Supreme Court cases throughout United States history. Furthermore, students will also examine due process of rights, the different categories of crime, criminal versus civil cases, and the processes and procedures involved with criminal proceedings.	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: December</b>	<b>2<sup>st</sup> Semester Expected Dates: May</b>
<b>Unit 10: Georgia Government and the State Government</b>	
In this unit, students will examine the organization and powers of state and local government described in the Georgia Constitution. They will examine the structure of local governments with an emphasis on cities and counties. They will analyze the relationship between the state and local governments by investigating topics including sources of revenue received by the local governments, services provided by state and local governments, and limitations on state and local governments.	

# HOW CAN YOU SUPPORT YOUR CHILD'S SUCCESS?

The adoption of more rigorous standards in Social Studies has led to a change in how social studies is taught in the classroom. You can encourage critical thinking, problem solving, and participatory skills necessary for students to become engaged citizens by asking questions. In each unit, students should have the opportunity to develop their own questions about content, apply disciplinary tools to expand their thinking, evaluate credible sources to gather information, communicate conclusions after inquiries, and determine whether to take action based on new understandings about the world in which we live.

Dimension of Learning	Questions You Might Ask
Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are you learning in social studies?</li> <li>• What do you wonder about that?</li> <li>• What is your point of view about that topic?</li> <li>• What might someone else's point of view be about the topic?</li> </ul>
Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How would a historian ask questions about this topic?</li> <li>• How would a political scientist ask questions about this topic?</li> <li>• How would a geographer ask questions about this topic?</li> <li>• How would an economist ask questions about this topic?</li> <li>• Why would professionals of different disciplines ask different questions?</li> </ul>
Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What online sources would you use to find out more information about that topic? What print sources might you use?</li> <li>• How do you know if a source is reliable?</li> <li>• How do you determine if a source is relevant to your topic?</li> </ul>
Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Has your thinking changed after learning about this topic?</li> <li>• Have you thought about what you can do to address issues in today's society related to this topic?</li> </ul>

## Resources that may help your student in American Government.

Online Pearson Textbook: [www.pearsonrealize.com](http://www.pearsonrealize.com) (Students logon through SSO tab on [www.hcbe.net](http://www.hcbe.net))

ICivics: <https://www.icivics.org>

Library of Congress: <https://www.loc.gov>

Center for Civic Education: <https://www.civiced.org/>

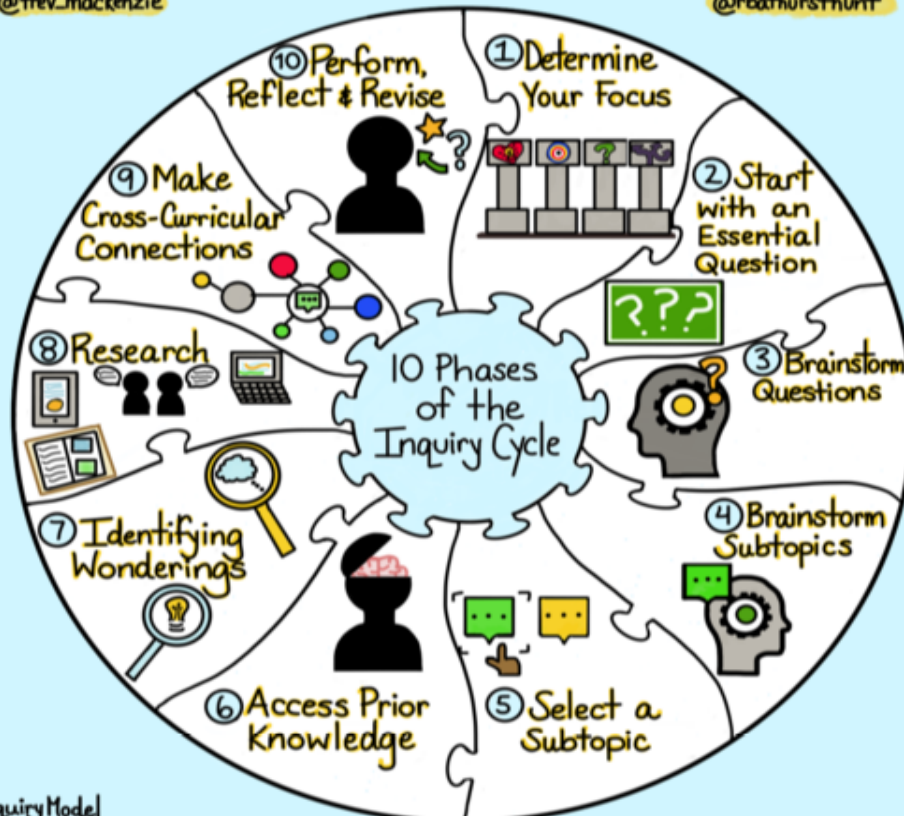
Georgia Center for Civic Engagement: <https://ymcaga.org/gacivics-home>



# The Inquiry Cycle

@trev\_mackenzie

@rbathursthurl



Inspired by: Alberta Inquiry Model

#InquiryMindset

## 10 Characteristics of the Inquiry Classroom

@Trev\_Mackenzie

@sylviaaduckworth

- 1 Nurture student passions & talents
  - 2 Empower student voice & honour student choice
  - 3 Increase motivation and engagement
  - 4 Foster curiosity and a love for learning
  - 5 Teach grit, perseverance, growth mindset & self-regulation
  - 6 Make research meaningful & develop strong research skills
  - 7 Deepen understanding to go beyond memorizing facts and content
  - 8 Fortify the importance of asking good questions
  - 9 Enable students to take ownership over their own learning and to reach their goals
  - 10 Solve the problems of tomorrow in the classrooms of today
- Genius Hour**  
**20% Time**  
**Passion Projects**