

Introduction

The Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR) 13A.04.08.01, Requirements for Social Studies Instructional Programs for Grades Prekindergarten – 12 states that, “each local education agency shall provide in public schools an instructional program in social studies each year for all students in grades prekindergarten – 8; and offer in public schools a social studies program in grades 9 – 12 which enables students to meet graduation requirements and to select social studies electives.”

State Frameworks are developed by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to support local education agencies in providing high-quality instructional programs in social studies. State Frameworks are defined as supporting documents and provide guidance for implementing the State Standards in Social Studies which are reviewed and adopted by the Maryland State Board of Education every eight years. State Frameworks also provide consistency in learning expectations for students in social studies programs across the twenty-four local education agencies as local curriculum is developed and adopted using these documents as a foundation.

MSDE shall update the State Frameworks in Social Studies in the manner and time the State Superintendent of Schools determines is necessary to ensure alignment with best-in-class, research-based practices. Tenure and stability of State Frameworks affords local education agencies the necessary time to procure supporting instructional materials, provide professional development, and to measure student growth within the program. State Frameworks in Elementary social studies grades Prekindergarten – 5 were developed, reviewed, and revised by teams of Maryland educators and practitioners, including local education agency content curriculum specialists, classroom teachers, and academic researchers and experts in close collaboration with MSDE. The most recent updates to the Social Studies Frameworks were reviewed, refined, and validated through a comprehensive process led by the Standards and Frameworks Validation Committee (SFVC)—a statewide group representing diverse perspectives—in close partnership with MSDE.

The Grade 3 Social Studies Framework was revised in June 2025.

Course Overview

The Elementary Framework provides the foundational knowledge and skills necessary for young students to become empowered, informed, and socially responsible citizens. Through the study of history, geography, economics, and civics, students learn to interact with, and contribute to the world in which they live. Learning how to evaluate sources of information, craft arguments based on evidence, and take informed action helps students develop their civic identity and voice. Additionally, elementary social studies prepares students to meet the challenge of secondary social studies content and supports literacy development across subject areas. The elementary framework is designed to highlight opportunities in which the English language arts reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards can be integrated into the social studies class. In grades PreK – 3, content is organized within units of study that introduce and reinforce knowledge of the six Maryland State Social Studies Standards. In grades 4 – 5, the state social studies standards are integrated into an overview of the history of the United States, using Maryland's key figures and events as a lens into the national story. The framework broadens the historical narrative by including marginalized groups and encourages students to learn more about all members of their communities through the inquiry process.

To help students in acquiring these understandings, the content of the framework is structured by the following six state social studies standards:

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD
Standard 1.0: Civics	Students shall inquire about the historical development of the fundamental concepts and processes of authority, power, and influence with particular emphasis on civic reasoning in order to become informed, responsible citizens, engage in the political process, and contribute to society.
Standard 2.0: Peoples of the Nations and World	Students shall inquire about the people of the United States and the world using a historically grounded, multidisciplinary approach in order to recognize multiple narratives and acknowledge the diversity and commonality of the human experience.
Standard 3.0: Geography	Students shall inquire about the role of culture, technology, and the environment in the location, distribution, and impact of human activities using geographic tools and spatial thinking in order to demonstrate a significance of place.

STANDARD	DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD
Standard 4.0: Economics	Students will inquire about decisions made by individuals and groups using economic reasoning in order to understand the historical development and current status of economic principles, institutions, and processes needed to be effective citizens, consumers, and workers participating in local communities, the nation, and the world.
Standard 5.0: History	Students will inquire about significant events, ideas, beliefs, and themes to identify patterns, trends, and to analyze how individuals and societies have changed over time to make connections to the present in their communities, Maryland, the United States, and the world.
Standard 6.0: Skills and Processes	Students will inquire about civics, geography, economics, history, and people and nations of the world using disciplinary literacy skills and processes to critically evaluate content through a variety of source materials across disciplines and use reading, writing, and other forms of communication to develop, defend, and critique arguments in order to take informed action.

Standard 6.0

The four dimensions of The Inquiry Arc are reflected in Maryland's Standard 6.0:

1. **Developing Questions & Planning Inquiries** – constructing compelling and supporting questions, planning inquiries, and determining helpful sources.
2. **Applying Disciplinary Concepts & Tools** – applying the disciplinary concepts and tools of civics, geography, economics, and history.
3. **Evaluating Sources & Using Evidence** – evaluating sources, identifying credible, relevant information contained in sources, using evidence to support and develop claims.
4. **Communicating and Critiquing Conclusions & Taking Informed Action** – communicating and presenting claims, critiquing claims, and identifying ways to address problems in their communities.

Throughout the course, students should be employing the social studies skills and processes delineated in the 6.0 Skills and Processes standard. Organizing these skills is the Inquiry Arc which provides a structure to facilitate effective instruction in social studies.

The Inquiry Arc**ELA Integration**

Effective integration of English language arts standards into social studies curriculum affords students the opportunity to enrich their understanding of essential social studies content, develop civic reasoning, geographic and economic analysis, and historical thinking skills while simultaneously improving literacy development. When designing social studies units of study, teachers are encouraged to address ELA standards as they design instruction and assessment for the social studies standards. Additional detail regarding the indicators and objectives associated with Standard 6.0 can be found at [MSDE Social Studies homepage](#). Connections between Standard 6.0, media literacy, and English language arts standards in reading, writing, and speaking and listening can be found at the [MSDE English Language Arts homepage](#).

Using this document:

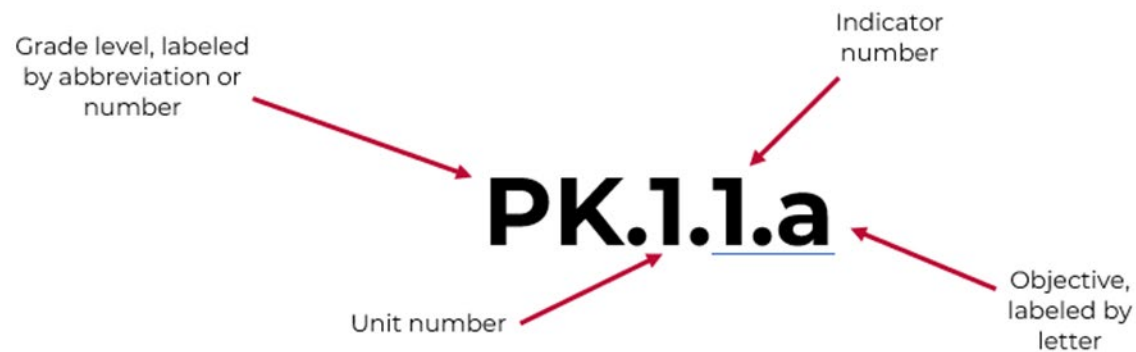
The organization of the framework is uniform throughout the entire document. On this page the key terms that are used are defined to support the use of the document.

Sample Unit Template

Unit Enduring Understanding: An **enduring understanding** is the overarching, conceptual guideline for the unit. Enduring understandings explain why this unit is important and connect important concepts and processes to history and the world today.

Unit Question: A **unit question** connects the big ideas in the enduring understandings and essential questions to the period of study. Everything in the unit contributes to answering this question.

Layout of Social Studies Content: The coding of the framework serves to assist educators' instructional organization and structure. The coding begins with grade level, followed by unit, indicator and objective. Grade levels use either a short abbreviation (e.g., PK for Prekindergarten) or a number (1). Units and indicators use numbers (e.g., PK Unit 1's first indicator is coded as PK.1.1.). Finally, objectives are coded as lowercase letters following the grade, unit, and indicator (e.g., first objective of PK Unit 1's first indicator is coded as PK.1.1.a).



CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
The content topic indicates the umbrella under which several common topics are organized for study.	Essential questions help students unpack the big ideas in the enduring understandings and social studies thinking skills. These are questions that can be asked and answered in different times and places.	Indicator statements assist teachers in determining how to link specific content to be studied to the essential question. • Objectives provide teachers with detailed information regarding what specific learning should occur.

Layout of English Language Arts (ELA) Content

READING	WRITING	SPEAKING AND LISTENING
English language arts reading standards identify opportunities for teachers to integrate the ELA standards in their social studies units. These could be used to access social studies content contained in the unit question.	English language arts writing standards identify opportunities for teachers to integrate the ELA standards in their social studies units. These could be used to express social studies content contained in the unit question.	English language arts speaking and listening standards identify opportunities for teachers to integrate the ELA standards in their social studies units. These could be used to access and express social studies content contained in the unit question.

Unit 1: Civics

Unit Enduring Understanding: Individuals and groups have the ability to positively impact their communities.

Unit Question: How can we make a difference in our community?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Civic Virtues	What virtues are important for living together in a democracy?	3.1.1 Students will analyze civic virtue by: - explaining how democracy relies on engagement including voting and volunteering in civic organizations. (3.1.1.a) - interacting with local civic and/or community leaders. (3.1.1.b) - explaining how groups of people make rules to create responsibilities and protect freedoms for all people. (3.1.1.c) - identifying how having multiple perspectives both benefits and challenges people living in a democratic society. (3.1.1.d) - examining the principles expressed in the Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution. (3.1.1.e) - evaluating how these foundational documents (The Declaration of Independence, US Constitution, and The Bill of Rights) have been used to address the rights and responsibilities of all people. (3.1.1.f)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Democratic Government	What does democracy look like in the United States?	3.1.2 Students will analyze the local, state, and national levels of government by: - defining the legislative, executive, and judicial branches of government. (3.1.2.a) - comparing the responsibilities of local, state, and national government. (3.1.2.b) - identifying the leaders of local, state, and national government in various branches of government. (3.1.2.c) - determining the importance of communication through various means with elected officials. (3.1.2.d) - determining the importance of voting in democratic government. (3.1.2.e)
Informed Action	How can I contribute to my community?	3.1.3 Students will address local community issues by: - explaining the importance of civic participation in their community. (3.1.3.a) - examining a current issue on the local, state, and national level and its impact on their community. (3.1.3.b) - analyzing ways of influencing local, state, and/or national governments to address a current issue. (3.1.3.c) - identifying individuals and groups who share a common concern for addressing a current issue on the state, local, and/or national level. (3.1.3.d) - developing a plan for effectively organizing and communicating a plan for addressing a current issue. (3.1.3.e) - implementing an informed civic action plan on a current issue. (3.1.3.f) - exploring ways that people can express their ideas and promote equitable solutions in their community. (3.1.3.g)

ELA Integration

READING	WRITING	SPEAKING AND LISTENING
RI.3.1 Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers RI.3.2 Determine the main idea of a text; recount the key details and explain how they support the main idea. RI.3.3 Describe the relationship between a series of historical events, scientific ideas or concepts, or steps in technical procedures in a text, using language that pertains to time, sequence, and cause/effect. RI.3.4 Determine the meaning of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases in a text relevant to a grade 3 topic or subject area. RI.3.5 Use text features and search tools (e.g., key words, sidebars, hyperlinks) to locate information relevant to a given topic efficiently.	W.3.1 Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons. W.3.2 Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas and information clearly. W.3.3 Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences. W.3.4 With guidance and support from adults, produce writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task and purpose. W.3.5 With guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, and editing.	SL.3.1 Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher led) with diverse partners on grade 3 topics and texts, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly SL.3.2 Determine the main ideas and supporting details of a text read aloud or information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively, and orally SL.3.3 Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker, offering appropriate elaboration and detail. SL.3.4 Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace. SL.3.5 Create engaging audio recordings of stories or poems that demonstrate fluid reading at an understandable pace; add visual displays when appropriate to emphasize or enhance certain facts or details.

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RI.3.6 Distinguish their own point of view from that of the author of a text. RI.3.7 Use information gained from illustrations (e.g., maps, photographs) and the words in a text to demonstrate understanding of the text (e.g., where, when, why, and how key events occur). RI.3.8 Describe the logical connection between particular sentences and paragraphs in a text (e.g., comparison, cause/effect, first/second/third in a sequence). RI.3.9 Compare and contrast the most important points and key details presented in two texts on the same topic. RI.3.10 By the end of year, read and comprehend informational texts, including history/social studies, science, and technical texts, in the grades 2–3 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.	W.3.6 With guidance and support from adults, use technology to produce and publish writing (using keyboarding skills) as well as to interact and collaborate with others. W.3.7 Conduct short research projects that build knowledge about a topic. W.3.8 Recall information from experiences or gather information from print and digital sources; take brief notes on sources and sort evidence into provided categories. W.3.10 Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.	SL.3.6 Speak in complete sentences when appropriate to task and situation in order to provide requested detail or clarification.

Unit 2: Economics and Geography

Unit Enduring Understanding: Economic systems are shaped by geography. People create economic systems that offer opportunities for both individual benefit and the common good.

Unit Question: How does where you live shape how you live?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Development	Why do industries differ across the state of Maryland?	3.2.1 Students will be able to explain the locations of goods and services in the state of Maryland by: - identifying goods and services bought and sold in Maryland. (3.2.1.a) - identifying ways that people use the physical environment for buying and selling goods and services. (3.2.1.b) - locating key economic centers in Maryland including agriculture, service and manufacturing industries (tourism, seafood, poultry, mining, commercial) using maps. (3.2.1.c) - identifying examples of entrepreneurship in the local and state economy and how location, history and culture influence those businesses. (3.2.1.d) - identifying the risk and rewards of entrepreneurship. (3.2.1.e) - evaluating local and state laws that impact business owners in Maryland. (3.2.1.f)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Impact on People	How are people impacted by economic development in Maryland?	3.2.2 Students will analyze how economic development in Maryland impacts people by: - explaining how jobs and careers are influenced by key economic centers. (3.2.2.a) - analyzing government services that are impacted by economic development. (3.2.2.b) - analyzing economic and population data to determine how economic development impacts where people live, work, and play. (3.2.2.c)
Impact on the Environment	What impact does economic development have on Maryland's natural environment?	3.2.3 Students will analyze the impact of economic development on the natural environment by: - describing the relationships between human settlement and physical geography, and economic centers. (3.2.3.a) - explaining how transportation is influenced by industry, agriculture, and geographic features. (3.2.3.b) - explaining how humans have modified their environment in the development of economic centers. (3.2.3.c) - comparing perspectives of various communities toward the natural environment. (3.2.3.d) - drawing inferences about the positive and negative impacts of human-caused change to the physical environment. (3.2.3.e)

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Unit 3: History

Unit Enduring Understanding: Cultures of the past have influenced the way we live today.

Unit Question: How have cultures from the past influenced the present?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Cultural Change Over Time	How did people live in the past?	3.3.1 Students will analyze early regional cultural groups by: - comparing how societies in the Americas, Western Europe, and Western Africa have shaped and been shaped by their culture, traditions, and environment. (3.3.1.a) - developing timelines showing settlement of various cultural groups in Maryland. (3.3.1.b) - evaluating why and how people and institutions supported and restricted freedom by making rules in order to promote freedom, equality, and equity for some, but not all. (3.3.1.c) - contrasting the lives of early European explorers, colonists, indentured servants, and enslaved Africans. (3.3.1.d)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
	How did early groups influence how we live today?	3.3.2 Students will analyze influences of early cultural groups by: - analyzing photographs, images, and text from the past to learn about key historical figures. (3.3.2.a) - interpreting evidence of the past to make claims about how individuals and groups shaped their region. (3.3.2.b) - comparing maps of settlement patterns from the past and today. (3.3.2.c) - developing and implementing informed action plans for communicating and expressing claims about the region's historical influences. (3.3.2.d)

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