

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 Prekindergarten 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:

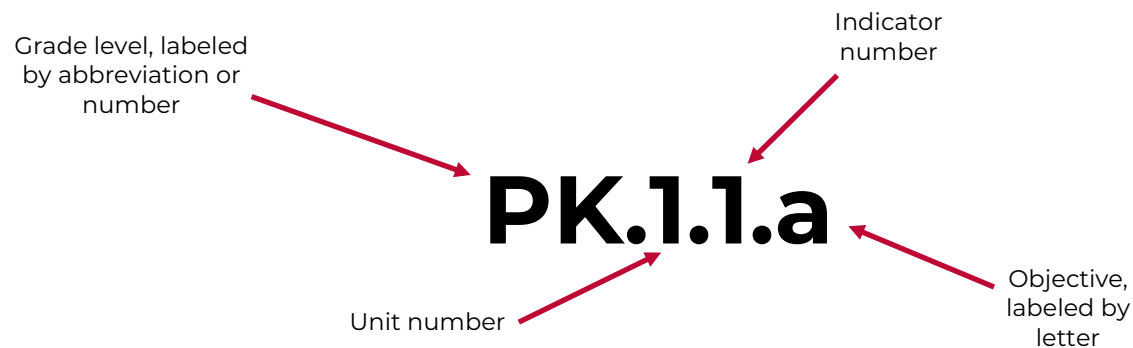
The organization of the framework is uniform throughout the entire document. On this page the key terms that are used are defined to support the use of the document.

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.	PK.1.1 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. (PK.1.1.a)

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: Being a responsible citizen includes knowing your role, rights, and responsibilities within a community and being able to identify individuals in a position of authority within a family, school, or community and their responsibilities. Responsible citizenship relies on our ability to view ourselves as a part of the larger civic community, where all individuals are treated with fairness and respect.

Unit Question: What are the rights and responsibilities of people in a group, and those in authority?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Freedom	What does it mean to be free?	PK.1.1 Students will examine the concept of freedom by: - defining freedom as being able to choose what your life looks like without interference from others. (PK.1.1.a) - defining equality as the same freedoms that are held by all people. (PK.1.1.b)
Conflict and compromise	Why do Americans use compromise to resolve conflicts?	PK.1.2 Students will examine the role of conflict and compromise by: - identifying school or community conflicts that require working with groups to resolve. (PK.1.2.a) - identifying how multiple perspectives and the freedom to express varied opinions in a democratic society can complicate but also enrich conflict resolution. (PK.1.2.b) - explaining the role of authority in promoting compromise and how it can resolve conflict. (PK.1.2.c) - exploring how compromise is used in civic life at home, school, and community. (PK.1.2.d)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Rules	Why do we have rules at home, at school and in our community?	PK.1.3 Students will analyze the how groups and people in authority use rules to promote the common good by: - explaining that rules are intended to support order and protect individual rights and fairness for all members of the community. (PK.1.3.a) - comparing rules at home, school, and community. (PK.1.3.b) - explaining why rules are different based on location. (PK.1.3.c) - evaluating classroom rules for their ability to promote freedom and equality, and a sense of belonging for all. (PK.1.3.d)

ELA Integration

READING	WRITING	SPEAKING AND LISTENING
RI.PreK.1 With modeling and support, answer questions about details in an informational text. RI.PreK.2 With modeling and support, recall one or more detail(s) related to the main topic from an informational text.	W.PreK.1 With modeling and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating, and developmentally appropriate writing to share opinion about an experience or book. W.PreK.2 Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and developmentally appropriate writing to state information on a topic.	SL.PreK.1 Participate in collaborative conversations with diverse partners about pre-kindergarten topics and texts with peers and adults in small and larger groups. SL.PreK.2 Confirm understanding of text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media by asking and answering questions about key details with modeling and support.

READING	WRITING	SPEAKING AND LISTENING
RI.PreK.3 With modeling and support, connect individuals, events, and pieces of information in text to life experiences. RI.PreK.4 With modeling and support, answer questions about unknown words in a text. RI.PreK.5 With modeling and support, identify the front cover, and back cover of a book. RI.PreK.6 With modeling and support, define the role of the author and illustrator/photographer in presenting the ideas or information in a text. RI.PreK.7 With modeling and support, tell how the illustrations/photographs support the text. RI.PreK.8 With modeling and support, identify the reasons an author gives to support points in a text.	W.PreK.3 With modeling and support, use a combination of drawing, dictating, and developmentally appropriate writing to communicate a personal story about a single event and tell about the event in a meaningful sequence. W.PreK.5 With modeling, guidance, and support from adults, review drawing, dictation or developmentally appropriate writing. W.PreK.6 With prompting and support from adults, explore a variety of digital tools to express ideas. W.PreK.7 Participate in shared research and shared writing projects. W.PreK.8 With modeling and support from adult, recall information from experiences or information from provided sources to answer a question.	SL.PreK.3 Ask and answer questions in order to seek help, get information, or clarify something that is not understood. SL.PreK.4 Describe familiar people, places, things, and events with modeling and support. SL.PreK.5 Add drawings or visual displays to descriptions as desired to provide additional detail. SL.PreK.6 With modeling and support, speak audibly and express thoughts, feelings, and ideas clearly.

READING	WRITING	SPEAKING AND LISTENING
<i>RI.PreK.9</i> With prompting and support, discuss similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic (i.e. in illustrations or descriptions). <i>RI.PreK.10</i> Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.		

Unit 2: Geography

Unit Enduring Understanding: Personal identity is shaped by community. Location, families, schools, and institutions create and support the broader community culture.

Unit Question: What makes my school community special?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Place	Where are we?	PK.2.1 Students will explain what makes their school special using geographic terms by: - identifying important objects in the classroom using the terms near/far, left/right, behind/in front, and up/down. (PK.2.1.a) - describing the location of the school in relationship to other locations near and far away. (PK.2.1.b)
Human and Environmental Interaction	How does where we live impact how we act?	PK.2.2 Students will analyze the unique human and environmental interactions in their school community by: - identifying ways that people in Maryland adapt to their environment including wearing different types of clothing throughout the year in their school. (PK.2.2.a) - identifying ways that people in Maryland adapt their environment to meet their own individual and group, and family needs including cutting down trees for development. (PK.2.2.b)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Movement	How do people connect?	PK.2.3 Students will describe how transportation and communication link people and places by: - explaining how transportation is used to move people from place to place. (PK.2.3.a) - identifying means of transportation available both in their community and beyond. (PK.2.3.b)

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<i>RI.PreK.9</i> With prompting and support, discuss similarities and differences between two texts on the same topic (i.e. in illustrations or descriptions). <i>RI.PreK.10</i> Actively engage in group reading activities with purpose and understanding.		

Unit 3: Economics

Unit Enduring Understanding: Economic systems are created to address scarcity of resources. Economic thinking helps individuals and groups make decisions and allocate resources.

Unit Question: How do choices made by me and others impact our lives?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Scarcity	Why can't we have everything we want in school?	PK.3.1 Students will analyze the role of scarcity in their lives by: explaining why people can't have everything they want using classroom and school examples. (PK.3.1.a)
Choice	How can we make good choices?	PK.3.2 Students will analyze decision making by: determining that people make choices because of limited resources. (PK.3.2.a)
Trade	Why do people trade?	PK.3.3 Students will analyze trade by: - identifying barter as a form of trade. (PK.3.3.a) - explaining that people benefit when they trade voluntarily. (PK.3.3.b) - describing times when they have traded, the goods or services that were exchanged, and the benefit they got from the trade. (PK.3.3.c)

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Financial Literacy	How do people choose their jobs and careers?	PK.3.4 Students will analyze choices made regarding career paths by: - identifying jobs and careers in their community. (PK.3.4.a) - identifying the personal characteristics and interests that are needed for certain jobs and careers. (PK.3.4.b)

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Unit 4: History

Unit Enduring Understanding: Historians use tools to understand the past.

Unit Question: How can we learn about the past?

Unit Content

CONTENT TOPIC	ESSENTIAL QUESTION	INDICATOR AND OBJECTIVES
Chronology	How do people change and stay the same over time?	PK.4.1 Students will analyze change over time by: - defining a historian as someone who learns about the past. (PK.4.1.a) - applying chronology to daily and weekly schedules. (PK.4.1.b)
Life in the Past	How is our life different today than in the past?	PK.4.2 Students will utilize the tools of the historian by: - explaining how photographs help raise questions about the past and show what happened in an event. (PK.4.2.a) - analyzing photographs of familiar objects like toys and technology from the past. (PK.4.2.b)

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