

Social Studies Curriculum Review Landscape

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Introduction

Social studies curricula are influenced by a multitude of political and social factors, including national efforts, states’ revisions to standards, education legislation/policies, and guiding frameworks. Many of these influences have sparked a renewed interest in social studies education and have prompted discussions about what curriculum materials are needed to address teacher needs and student learning outcomes. For instance, states and national organizations in the field are more frequently and seriously considering what high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) look like in social studies, leading to a greater awareness among educators about HQIM in social studies.

Louisiana is one of many states during the past few years that have revised their social studies standards, leading to an evaluation of curricula in alignment with the new standards and a need for HQIM. As part of the state’s social studies curricula review, Louisiana developed a new, high-quality review tool for its social studies materials. Notably, Louisiana is one of 12 states supported by the High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Development (IMPD) Network¹ and is considered a leader, along with the other states in the IMPD Network, in identifying and using HQIM. However, not all states have a social studies–specific curriculum review tool to support the state, district, and/or educators in identifying HQIM in social studies.

Conversations about what constitutes “high quality” in social studies and efforts in states, like Louisiana, to develop a curriculum review tool have revealed a need for more research or information on the state of social studies curriculum reviews and resources for identifying high-quality instructional materials across states.

This report seeks to provide context for the current landscape of social studies curricula to highlight the need for HQIM in social studies. The hope is that this report provides a starting point for discussions on identifying HQIM and serves as a guide for the development of social studies curriculum review tools, evidence guides, and training materials for potential use by states and districts interested in engaging in their own curriculum reviews.

¹ Formed in 2017 by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) and a cohort of states, the High-Quality Instructional Materials and Professional Development (IMPD) Network seeks to support the selection and adoption of high-quality curricula and instructional materials and provide teachers access to professional development resources to support these materials (CCSSO, 2022). States supported by the IMPD Network include Arkansas, Delaware, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Texas. More information about IMPD can be found at <https://learning.ccsso.org/high-quality-instructional-materials>.

This report is divided into five main sections:

1. **Background** provides a comprehensive picture of state and national legislative efforts to expand and limit social studies education. This section also explores key frameworks and pedagogical shifts impacting social studies curricula.
2. **Curriculum Products** highlights a sample of notable social studies curriculum products currently available. This section explores these products by grade coverage, type of resources (core vs. supplementary), disciplinary focus, framework/standards alignment, and format (print vs. digital).
3. **Market Landscape** focuses on the curriculum market landscape, including political and social factors, legislation, research, and influences on market share. In addition, this section outlines some of the challenges of reviewing social studies curricula in terms of quality and availability of materials by grade band or course.
4. **Curriculum Review Landscape** provides an overview and comparison of existing social studies curriculum review tools by state. This section includes a general analysis of the commonalities and differences between curriculum review tools.
5. **State Conditions** discusses some state-specific contexts, such as political and social influences, accountability systems, and social studies assessments. This section includes an analysis of how state variability in social studies education policies, requirements, and conditions—as well as other factors—may impact curriculum review tools and the adoption/implementation of curricula.

The report concludes with a **Summary of Findings and Recommendations** intended to synthesize key takeaways and considerations for individuals invested in social studies or curricula at various levels to address gaps in HQIM in social studies.

The American Institutes for Research (AIR)'s mission is to generate and use rigorous evidence that contributes to a better, more equitable world. As part of this mission, AIR worked with EdReports to compile relevant data and information to provide a general overview of the current K–12 social studies curriculum review landscape. This report is intended to start conversations about the strengths and areas of growth or need in K–12 social studies curricula. The content of the report is current as of the time it was written; however, AIR acknowledges that the landscape of social studies curricula is ever-changing. Our goal is for this report to lead to further research, investigations, and conversations on ways to prioritize and expand student access to high-quality social studies education at all levels.

Background

This section provides an overview of state/national efforts, guiding frameworks, and pedagogical shifts that impact the development of social studies curricula.

National Landscape

Social studies education has increasingly been at the center of local, state, and national discourse. At the national level, for instance, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 2022 U.S. History and Civics results have placed a spotlight on social studies. When viewed alongside 2014 and 2018 NAEP assessments, the average 2022 U.S. history score for eighth-grade students “decreased by 5 points compared to 2018 and by 9 points compared to 2014” (National Assessment of Educational Progress [NAEP], 2022b). Eighth-grade students’ performance in NAEP Civics also decreased for the first time since 1998, by 2 points (NAEP, 2022a), sparking numerous conversations related to the marginalization of the field as well as the quality of social studies education.

In addition, conversations have been increasing about the quality of social studies standards. In June 2021 the Thomas B. Fordham Institute released a report—[*The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021*](#)—that evaluated the quality of the state standards based on their content, rigor, clarity, and organization. Results presented in the report highlighted gaps in state civics and U.S. history standards, subsequently influencing the standards revision process undertaken by states.

Finally, in December 2022, the federal spending package for the 2023 fiscal year passed in both houses of Congress. This effort resulted in a significant increase to K–12 civics and history education funding—from \$7.75 million to \$23 million. As a result of this increase, the Department of Education issued four American History and Civics Academies grants and 25 American History and Civics National Activities grants. These grants have served approximately 4,000 educators and 400,000 students through professional learning for curriculum development and student programming (CivXNow, 2024). In March 2024 Congress passed a Fiscal Year 2024 budget that maintains the \$23 million K–12 civics and history education funding.

State Legislation and Policy Changes

State legislation, including mandates for social studies standards, course options, and instructional supports, prompts adjustments to social studies curricula. In recent years, state legislation and policy changes have included efforts to expand students’ access to culturally relevant content and resources, develop students’ digital or media literacy skills and civic readiness, and address equity concerns. Examples of these types of state efforts are provided in Exhibit 1.

Exhibit 1. Example State Legislative and Policy Efforts in Expanding K–12 Social Studies Education

State efforts	Example legislation or policy changes
Revise standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alaska is in the process of revising its K–12 social studies standards to include and address civics, Alaska history, and tribal government for the 2024–25 school year. • Arkansas adjusted its K–12 social studies standards, which included switching Grade 7 geography with Grade 5 U.S. history (which covers the nation’s beginning to 1850). • Nevada signed Senate Bill (SB) 107 into law in 2017, requiring the Council to Establish Academic Standards for Public Schools “to develop standards of content and performance for ethnic and diversity studies that examine the culture, history, and contributions of diverse American communities” (Kwon, 2021, p. 6).
Require or expand access to courses or curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, New Jersey, and Rhode Island public schools will now be required to teach Asian American and Pacific Islander history. • Connecticut passed legislation on including Black and Latino studies and Native American studies in the social studies curriculum. State and tribal leaders are in the process of creating a Native American studies curriculum for K–12 students (Sherman, 2022). • In 2024 Wisconsin signed into law Act 266 mandating Hmong and Asian American histories in K–12 curriculum.
Expand instructional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Mexico passed the Black Education Act in March 2021, which is designed to provide more culturally relevant resources and information on Black history. In addition, the act requires all New Mexico school personnel to undergo annual antiracism training (O’Hara, 2023).
Focus on equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • California adopted and mandated an ethnic studies model curriculum. • Indiana approved ethnic studies standards in 2018 and offers an annual ethnic studies elective course to high school students, with schools determining which ethnic or racial groups to represent in the curriculum. • Minnesota added ethnic studies to its social studies standards. • Washington’s Ethnic Studies Advisory Committee created the Washington State Ethnic Studies Framework, which includes a crosswalk between the Washington state social studies learning standards and the framework.
Promote digital or media literacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delaware has passed legislation (SB 195) that requires “evidence-based media literacy standards,” with instruction focused on helping students differentiate between fact and fiction online and on the effects of “inappropriate technology use,” which can be taught by social studies educators (Barrish, 2022). • New Jersey passed NJ Bill S588 in January 2023, which requires information and media literacy to be taught across Grades K–12. • Texas requires media literacy to be taught in all K–12 classrooms. Standards related to media literacy are integrated in curriculum across subject areas (Condo, 2023).
Emphasize civics education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2010 Florida passed a law (Florida Statute 1003.4156) requiring students to participate in a civics course in middle school, including an aligned assessment to measure the growth of students’ civics knowledge (Sawchuk, 2019). • Illinois passed HS 2265 in 2019 requiring all Illinois middle schools serving Grades 6 through 8 to provide a civics class. A law to bring quality civic education to all public high schools in Illinois has been in place since 2015 and illustrated “early evidence of strong student civic learning and engagement outcomes,” resulting in the law to implement civics classes in middle schools (McCormick Foundation, 2019). • Massachusetts was the first state to require all middle and high schools to incorporate a minimum of one student-led civics project into the curriculum (Sawchuk, 2019).

The efforts outlined in Exhibit 1 focus on legislation that seeks to expand students’ access to materials. However, in some states—such as Virginia and Texas—legislation was proposed or passed that specifies and/or limits how controversial/divisive topics—such as racism—are discussed in the classroom and how students engage with civic education. Since January 2021, approximately 44 states have proposed, vetoed, overturned, stalled, or signed into law bills centered on restricting critical race theory in the classroom and limiting discussions about racism and sexism (Schwartz, 2023). In 2024 approximately 10 bills have been proposed and two have passed in Alabama and Utah (Sawchuk, 2024). Exhibit 2 provides examples of these types of legislative and policy efforts.

Exhibit 2. Example State Legislative and Policy Efforts in Limiting K–12 Social Studies Education

State efforts	Example legislation or policy changes
Revise standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In 2021 South Dakota’s Department of Education rejected an initial draft of the revised social studies standards, citing concerns about political agendas and sharing true and honest South Dakota history. In 2022 the governor restarted the standards revision process and commissioned a retired professor from Hillsdale College to revise the standards.
Deny access to courses or curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Arkansas passed an executive order which determined that the newly developed Advanced Placement (AP) African American Studies course will not count for credit (Sawchuk, 2024). South Carolina banned public K–12 school districts from spending funds issued by the Department of Education on curricula, including lesson plans, textbooks, or instructional materials, that include topics relating to race or sex and prohibits public K–12 schools from using any state funds to provide instruction on related concepts. Texas eliminated private funding for curriculum or professional development materials and prohibits schools and state agencies from requiring an understanding of the 1619 Project.
Restrictions on instructional materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HB 2439 was passed in Arizona granting “parents’ access to public-school library catalogues and the right to see a list of all materials and books borrowed by their child” (Markham-Cantor et al., 2023). Florida requires all instructional materials used by K–12 public schools that mention reproductive health to be approved by the Department of Education. This instruction can teach only that gender is biological, stable, and determined by birth. School employees are not allowed to share their personal pronouns unless they correspond to their biological gender at birth. The legislature also passed the “Stop Woke Act,” which targets critical race theory (CRT) in schools by prohibiting the teaching of CRT in K–12 public schools (Girod, 2024). Utah passed HB 427, which restricts K–12 schools from using any instructional or curriculum materials that include ideas related to race, color, national origin, religion, disability, or sex.

State efforts	Example legislation or policy changes
Restrictions on instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In February 2024 Alabama passed a bill that will restrict the teaching of “divisive concepts” and limit diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) programs at public schools, universities, and state agencies (Somasundaram & Natanson, 2024). • Georgia’s HB 1084 law is in effect, which restricts K–12 schools from teaching nine identified “divisive concepts” in the classroom. • By passing HB 377, Idaho banned public schools from engaging in the teaching and learning of CRT to prevent students from adopting beliefs related to CRT ideas and theories. • Iowa, Indiana, North Carolina, and Kentucky all have laws in place that prohibit any classroom discussion that relates to human sexuality. • In 2022 Virginia passed Executive Order No. 1, which restrains the use of divisive topics, such as CRT, and prohibits students from interacting with concepts including ethnicity, race, sex, or faith in K–12 public schools (Spooner, 2022).

Note. Information on state efforts was derived from the PEN America Index of Educational Intimidation Bills, a comprehensive database created by PEN America, and from independent scans of state legislation.

Many of these debates center on prevailing concerns that critical race theory (CRT)² is present in or influencing K–12 education. This concern has led some states to restrict concepts believed to represent CRT in the classroom. For example, restrictions have been imposed not only on what can be taught but on what materials educators can use for instruction, such as the 1619 Project.³ In Florida, criteria or guidelines for state-approved social studies textbooks have been added that prohibit the inclusion of CRT, social justice, culturally responsive teaching, and social and emotional learning. In addition, Florida passed the Parental Rights in Education Act, which prohibits instruction on sexual orientation and gender identity before Grade 4 and developmentally appropriate materials in subsequent grades.

In a handful of states, legislation has been proposed surrounding curriculum transparency and parents’ rights related to instructional materials. For example, in 2024 Alabama introduced HB169 which, if passed, would require schools to post classroom curricula on their website, and permit parents or guardians to request information on instructional and supplemental materials used in the classroom (National Conference of State Legislatures, 2024). Parents or guardians have the right to learn how any instructional materials were adopted by the State Board of Education and physically examine any instructional materials used in the classroom.

² Broadly speaking, CRT is an academic theory grounded in the concepts that race is a social construct and racism is a systemic issue. To an extent, CRT has been conflated with antiracism and social justice, along with concepts such as culturally responsive teaching and other diversity and inclusion efforts (Sawchuk, 2021).

³ Started by *The New York Times Magazine* in 2019, the [1619 Project](#) is an initiative focused on “placing the consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of our national narrative” (New York Times Magazine, 2019).

Impacts of State Legislation on Curricula

Although there have been efforts during the past few years to expand or limit what is taught in social studies classrooms, awareness and perceived influence on social studies curricula vary by state. Among states with restrictions, there was a slight increase in educators from Florida, Kentucky, and Tennessee who were aware that they were subject to state restrictions, while there was a substantial increase in awareness in Arkansas from 2022 to 2023 (Woo et al., 2024, p. 11). Of the states with restrictions, there was a slight impact of legislation on educators' choice of curriculum materials and instructional practices. Although not specific to social studies, approximately 14% of educators from states with restrictions indicated that limitations influenced their curriculum choice and instructional practices to a moderate or large extent, compared with 18% who indicated that restrictions slightly impacted their choices (Woo et al., 2024, p. 12).

Preliminary data from [Mapping the Landscape of Secondary US History Education](#), produced by the American Historical Association, also highlight educators' experience with objections or criticism about how educators teach U.S. history following the wave of limitations and controversy relating to issues such as CRT. Forty percent of respondents indicated that they faced objection/criticism only once or twice in their career, 14% indicated several times in their career, and 2% indicated frequently in their career, with 44% stating they have never experienced this issue in their career (American Historical Association, 2024).

Although state legislation may not be as initially influential on educators' curriculum materials and instructional practices as outwardly perceived, educators have mixed perceptions of the negative and positive impacts of these efforts. Educators against limitations cite impacts on students' well-being and social and emotional development, school climate, access to knowledge and diverse perspectives, and student engagement. Comparatively, educators who positively view the efforts contend that these topics are more appropriate at home or are too mature for younger students (Woo et al., 2024, pp. 24–31). Conversations are ongoing about the relative impacts of limiting race or gender topics in the classroom and their implications for student learning.

Guiding Frameworks

Guiding frameworks and pedagogical shifts have influenced the content and skills articulated in social studies standards and subsequent curricula developed or adopted from these standards.

From a content perspective, some states are using or reviewing resources from various national content organizations, such as the University of California, Los Angeles Public History Initiative's [National Standards for History](#), the Center for Civic Education's [National Standards for Civics and Government](#), the Council for Economic Education's [Voluntary National Content Standards](#)

[in Economics](#), the National Council for Geographic Education’s [National Geography Standards](#), and the National Council for the Social Studies’ [National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#), along with the NAEP frameworks in [civics](#), [economics](#), [geography](#), and [U.S. history](#), to support their standards revisions.

For skills, many states are shifting their focus to include components of inquiry. For example, in 1994 the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) published its national curriculum standards;⁴ in 2010, NCSS began development of the [College, Career, and Civic Life \(C3\) Framework](#) (a 3-year, multistate effort released in 2013). In addition, in 2021 the [Educating for American Democracy \(EAD\) initiative](#)—which involves a diverse collaboration of more than 300 academics, historians, political scientists, K–12 educators, district and state administrators, civics providers, students, and others from across the country—developed a road map for civics and history education. The C3 Framework and EAD initiative both focus on inquiry-based learning and emphasize taking informed action. To date, approximately 38 states have incorporated, excerpted, or cited the C3 Framework in their standards (Grant et al., 2023, p. 364).

Structure of Social Studies Standards and Pedagogical Shifts

The structure or organization of social studies standards influences the content and skills articulated in social studies curricula. The content, skills, and structure of state standards vary widely from state to state. Regardless of this variation, secondary education is commonly influenced by dominant social studies disciplines (i.e., history, geography, government, and economics), whereas elementary social studies “includes the interdisciplinary study of history, geography, economics, and government/civics and is well-integrated with the study of language arts, the visual and performing arts, and STEM” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2023). Currently, all 50 states plus the District of Columbia, cover civics/political science/government, history, and geography in their standards. Approximately 48 states and the District of Columbia, cover economics. Aside from covering the core disciplines, 33 states plus the District of Columbia, fully or partially incorporate financial literacy in their standards, with 16 states also fully or partially integrating behavioral sciences (e.g., sociology, psychology, anthropology). States may include financial literacy concepts in various forms, such as in anchor standards, offered courses, and graduation requirements. More comprehensive information on the disciplines incorporated in social studies standards by state can be viewed using the American Institutes for Research® (AIR®) 2023 [Social Studies Standards Map](#).

⁴ Note that the national curriculum standards were originally being developed by a consortium of states through CCSSO; however, this work was given to the National Council for the Social Studies for publication after backlash surrounding the Common Core standards.

In addition to the emphasis on social studies disciplines, there has been national and state emphasis on the interrelationships among social studies subjects and English language arts (ELA), particularly at the elementary level. The writing and reading abilities necessary for social studies competency are strongly linked to comprehension and communication skills that bolster literacy and ELA achievement. For instance, Grade 2 students who received 60 literacy-rich social studies lessons performed better on reading assessments, scoring 23% higher than other students who did not receive literacy-rich social studies lessons (Halvorsen et al., 2012). The relationship between social studies and ELA subject areas is reflected in many current state social studies standards, particularly in those states that incorporate or reference the Common Core Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies for teachers of Grades 6–12.

Furthermore, social studies education incorporates global perspectives. Research on global studies education has focused on identity development (i.e., students’ identities), global awareness and citizenship, chronological understanding, and “habits of mind” (Girard & Harris, 2018).

1. Curriculum Products

Although social studies curricula vary widely across states and districts, some trends have emerged. Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy (2021) released a Social Studies Knowledge Map that analyzed K–12 social studies curricula across various states and districts. The institute found that most curricula in the states and districts analyzed provided a strong foundation in elementary grades with instruction in civics, government, and state and local history. However, the analysis also revealed that only some curricula suggested cultivating an open classroom climate or gave attention to multiple perspectives. The Social Studies Knowledge Map identified four main observations across most curricula: (a) elementary grades often lacked primary sources, (b) units displayed topical incoherence across materials, (c) religion and philosophy were rarely incorporated, and (d) there was insufficient focus on Central American, South American, African, and Asian history.

To investigate and build on these trends, AIR conducted an independent review to identify a sample of social studies curriculum products that are available, including state curricula, if applicable (i.e., recommended, suggested, or adopted by state education departments), and open educational resources (OER). The curriculum products were primarily characterized by use as either core or supplementary resources; there were also a few resources that targeted ELA with social studies embedded. Curricula varied by grade coverage, type of resource (core vs. supplementary), disciplinary focus, framework/standards alignment, and format (print vs. digital).

Content Coverage by Grade

In our analysis, we reviewed a sample of available curriculum products and scanned state education websites and other websites that highlighted or mentioned curriculum products. Of the curriculum products we analyzed, there were core and supplementary resources available for Grades K–12 and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, with more comprehensive options available at the middle and high school grade levels (Exhibits 3 and 4). Note that core curriculum resources are designed to be the main instructional resource for a course and specific content area whereas supplementary resources (e.g., lessons/units, videos/podcasts, books, articles) are meant to support, enrich, and expand on the core curriculum.

Exhibit 3. Core Curriculum Products Available From Companies

Curriculum product	Description		Availability by grade													
	Subject(s)	ELA focus	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	AP
Cengage (+ Nat Geo)	Multiple	No	—	—	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Center for Civic Education	Civics and government	No	—	—	—	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Core Knowledge	Social studies	Yes (alignment)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	—	—	—	—	—
Discovery Education	Multiple	No	—	—	—	—	—	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	—
Fishtank Learning	ELA with embedded social studies	Yes	○	○	○	○	○	○	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Gibbs Smith	Social studies	Yes (alignment)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	Multiple	Yes (alignment)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
inquirED	Social studies	Yes (alignment)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	—	—	—	—	—
McGraw Hill	Social studies	Yes (alignment)	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
New Visions Social Studies	Social studies (e.g., global history, geography, and U.S. history)	Yes (alignment)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	○	○	○	○	—
Next Gen Personal Finance	Financial literacy	No	—	—	—	—	—	—	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	—

Curriculum product	Description		Availability by grade													
	Subject(s)	ELA focus	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	AP
OER Project	Social studies and science combined (e.g., world history)	No	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
SAVVAS	Multiple	Yes (alignment)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Social Studies School Service	Social studies	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Studies Weekly	Social studies	Yes (ELA integration)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	—	—	—
Teachers' Curriculum Institute	Social studies	Yes (ELA integration)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

Note. Information was compiled from the Council of State Social Studies Specialists (CS4) and independent reviews by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in 2022. This exhibit provides a sample of available curriculum, and AIR is not recommending any curriculum products. ELA = English language arts; AP = Advanced Placement; ● = curriculum product is available at grade level; — = curriculum product is not available at grade level.

Exhibit 4. Supplementary Curriculum Products Available From Companies

Curriculum product			Availability by grade													
	Subject(s)	ELA focus	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	AP
1619 Project	Multiple	Yes (partial)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
BrainPOP	Multiple	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
C3 Teachers	Social studies	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Choices	History/civics	No	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	—
DocsTeach (from the National Archives)	History focus	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
EDSITEment!	History focus, some civics	Yes (alignment)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Facing History and Ourselves	History, some civics	Yes (alignment)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Gilder Lehrman	History focus, some civics	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
iCivics	Civics	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Learning for Justice	History focus	Yes (alignment)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—

Curriculum product	Subject(s)	ELA focus	Availability by grade													
			K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	AP
Library of Congress (and Citizen U Primary)	History	No	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	—	—	—
Mikva Challenge	Civics focus	No	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
News Literacy Project	Media literacy	Yes (alignment)	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Newsela	Multiple	Yes (alignment)	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Open Social Studies	Social studies	Yes (alignment)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
PBS Learning Media	Social studies	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Pollyanna	Racial literacy focus	Yes (ELA integration)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
PrimarySource.org	History and civics	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Private i History Detectives^a	History	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Digital Inquiry Group (DIG)	History focus, some civics	No	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Smithsonian	History focus, some civics	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Teach Democracy	History, some civics	Yes (alignment)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Teaching American History	History focus	No	—	—	—	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—
Zinn Education Project	History focus, some civics	No	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	—

^a History’s Mysteries rebranded to Private i History Detectives with resources available on iCivics.

Note. Information was compiled from the Council of State Social Studies Specialists (CS4) and independent reviews by the American Institutes for Research (AIR) in 2022. This exhibit provides a sample of available curriculum, and AIR is not recommending any curriculum products. ELA = English language arts; AP = Advanced Placement; ● = curriculum product is available at grade level; — = curriculum product is not available at grade level.

Types of Resources (Core vs. Supplementary)

From our analyses, we noted that a majority of the curriculum products were categorized as supplementary rather than core resources. The education technology website EdSurge lists and reviews 44 social studies curriculum products. Of this sample of social studies programs, six are listed as “core curriculum” (EdSurge, 2022). Suppliers of core programs often offer curriculum supplements. Typically, add-on supplementary materials are free, with options to purchase additional tiers of resources. Some of the other supplementary resources that are available online tend to be free or lower cost than the core resources.

The information we gathered is further informed by educators' use of curriculum products in the field. In 2019 Simba Information surveyed 18,000 educators about their use of instructional materials and curriculum products. Of these educators, 48% identified as classroom teachers, 34% identified as social studies teachers, 13% identified as social studies department chairs, 7% identified as curriculum/instruction supervisors, and 7% identified as assistant superintendents/principals (Simba Information, 2019, p. 1). Although more supplementary resources than core programs may be available, roughly 70% of social studies educators surveyed noted that they have a core program and follow it closely or pick and choose from it for their classroom instruction (Simba Information, 2019, p. 3). Of the educators working with students in Grades K–5, 40% reported not having a core social studies program (Simba Information, 2019, p. 15). In part, this result may be due to a lack of availability of high-quality curriculum products for lower grades and limited instructional time. In Grades K–5, about 10.60% of instructional time is spent on social studies, compared with 53.40% for English and 25.30% for mathematics (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2018). Less instructional time for social studies at the elementary level could necessitate the use of shorter resources as opposed to a core program. Also, social studies education at Grades K–5 focuses on more general topics, whereas social studies education at the middle and high school grades is more discipline specific (e.g., courses in U.S. history, civics, geography, and economics).

Furthermore, trends have emerged in the use of certain curriculum materials in social studies. In 2022 the RAND Corporation administered the [American Instructional Resources Surveys \(AIRS\)](#) to principals and teachers, gathering information on what curriculum materials educators use across grade levels in social studies. A key finding from the survey was that state-level infrastructure to support social studies instruction at the elementary level either was missing from states or varied widely (Diliberti et al., 2023, p. 1). Of the elementary-level educators who responded to the survey, 51% reported using “curriculum materials I create myself” once a week or more, on average, for their social studies curriculum (Doan et al., 2022, p. 29). Elementary educators also reported using the following once a week or more: Teachers Pay Teachers (70%), BrainPOP (60%), YouTube (48%), Scholastic News (37%), and Kahoot! (32%; Doan et al., 2022, p. 30). Given the AIRS findings, Diliberti et al. (2023) suggested that elementary school teachers may assemble social studies resources because of a lack of guidance from schools or states about what instructional materials to use (p. 25). Yet, their interpretation also suggests that educators may use a variety of resources for different reasons (e.g., finding engaging materials, meeting students' needs, highlighting diverse voices; pp. 25–26).

In middle and high school, a higher percentage of respondents selected the following social studies materials provided by their school or district: curriculum materials teachers create themselves (25%); curriculum materials my school or district created (22%); McGraw Hill for U.S. history (18%) and world history (17%; Doan et al., 2022, p. 67). Approximately 20% of

respondents also indicated that there were “no particular curriculum materials” provided as a requirement or recommendation by their school or district (Doan et al., 2022, p. 67). Diliberti et al. (2023) noted that at the secondary level, social studies is taught in subject-specific courses (e.g., U.S. history, civics) and that this separation may influence why there are more instructional materials and supports for secondary educators compared with elementary school educators (p. 15). Therefore, educators who teach discipline-specific social studies courses at the middle and high school levels tend to have core materials specific to their subject matter.

Alignment With Frameworks and/or Standards

When looking at different curriculum products, what the curriculum aligns with or targets can vary. Products from larger publishers or companies tend to target elements of the C3 Framework and often indicate that they align with state content standards. For example, the SAVVAS Learning Company’s website states that it “leverage[s] the C3 Framework to make US History experiential and culturally relevant for all students” (SAVVAS Learning Company, 2022). Some curriculum products overtly state how lessons align with the C3 Framework, whereas other products center on developing students’ inquiry skills, without citing or mentioning alignment with the C3 Framework. Another social studies curriculum product called Core Knowledge aligns its curricula with Common Core ELA and writing standards across K–8 history and geography curricula, but it develops its core social studies concepts off its own framework, which it updates regularly to be aligned with best practices and current research (Core Knowledge, 2022). For some supplementary resources such as PBS Learning Media (2022), lessons are sortable by state standards (if available) or alignment with the C3 Framework. This is also the case with curricula available from iCivics (2022), which has lessons that are searchable by states’ social studies standards.

Format (Digital vs. Print)

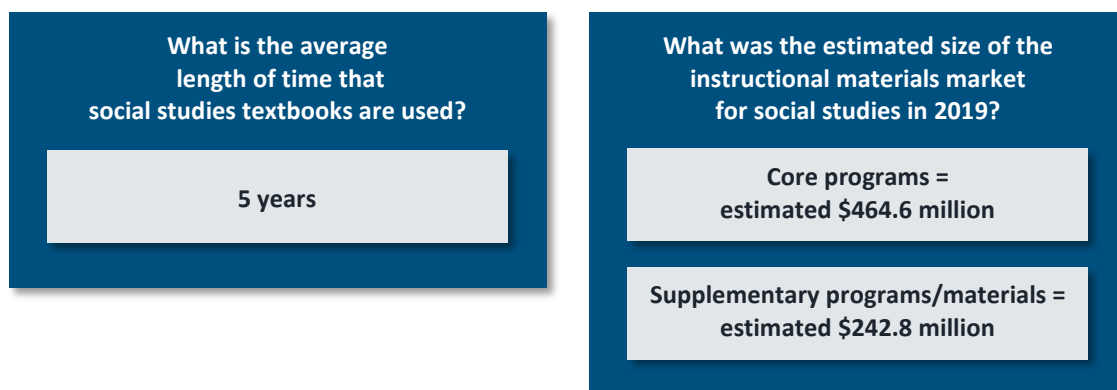
A majority of educators surveyed (71%) indicated that the social studies programs they use in their classrooms are in print, compared with 29% of educators who indicated that they use digital programs (Simba Information, 2019, p. 19). These percentages differ depending on which grades educators teach. Elementary educators (79%) were more likely to report using printed materials than were middle and high school educators (65% and 68%, respectively). Comparatively, 18% of educators surveyed noted that they used “unspecified online resources” as their primary tool, instead of a core program (Simba Information, 2019, p. 25). This figure, in particular, has changed with the increasing availability of online curriculum resources and products (e.g., iCivics, Newsela). Moreover, 22% of surveyed educators indicated that more than 75% of instructional materials they use are “access[ed] for free via [the] internet,” which further highlights how digital resources are becoming more relevant (Simba Information, 2019, p. 10). However, teachers ranked having programs “available [in] both print and digital” as the number one most important attribute (Simba Information, 2019, p. 20).

Print and digital media are further informed by the changing use of textbooks in history classrooms. AHA’s *Mapping the Landscape of U.S. History Education* preliminary study data show that more than 30% of secondary history educators surveyed were more likely to say that they never use a textbook or, if they do, that the textbooks are used as reference material as opposed to daily resources (Kryczka et. al, 2024). Instead of textbooks, educators are creating lessons from various no-cost digital resources. Specifically, 83% of surveyed educators said that they use federal museums, archives, and institutions either often or occasionally to gather information and to support lesson plans (Grossman, 2024).

2. Market Landscape

As noted previously, social studies curricula are influenced by a multitude of political and social factors, including education legislation/policies, research, and national and state frameworks and standards. In effect, these factors also greatly influence the trends and challenges in the social studies curriculum market. Exhibit 5 provides more information on the characteristics and conditions influencing the curriculum market.

Exhibit 5. Characteristics and Conditions Influencing Market Share



Note. Adapted from the *K–12 Social Studies Market Survey Report 2019* by Simba Information (2019).

In recent years, more social studies curriculum materials have become available from publishers and online sites, which has helped give educators more curriculum options for their instruction. When describing where more than 75% of their instructional materials come from, 22% of surveyed educators indicated that they accessed materials for free via the internet, and 21% indicated that they used materials purchased from publishers (Simba Information, 2019, p. 10). Among the materials that educators used from publishers, the most-used core social studies materials came from Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, McGraw Hill Education, and Pearson. This pattern was noted across our analyses of individual curriculum products and across state

department of education websites. States that posted reviewed instructional materials tended to share resources from the same or other large publishers.

In addition to being affected by recent legislation, social studies curricula continue to be influenced by the publishing marketplace. Generally, states update curriculum materials in accordance with changes made in California, Texas, and New York, likely because of the high population of elementary and secondary students. Projected fall 2024 enrollment in elementary or secondary schools for these states is 5,619,800 students in California, 5,491,200 students in Texas, and 2,406,100 students in New York (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023a). Social and political factors within these states also impact the direction of curriculum materials, such as textbooks. In 2020, the *New York Times* analyzed social studies textbooks in California and Texas. The results of this analysis highlight key differences in textbooks provided in each state, even though they were the same books from the same publishers. *New York Times* reporter Dana Goldstein explained the differences, speaking specifically to the influence of state-appointed advisory panelists when requesting textbook modifications from publishers:

So the state boards of education will appoint folks to these panels. And in California, Democrats really control that process. And the opposite is true in Texas, where Republicans have dominated the process. So for example, a Texas panel asked one publisher, please be clearer about the influence of the Protestant Great Awakening on the Founding Fathers. They're always looking to highlight that influence of Christianity. By contrast, in California, they're saying, you know, when you mention Levi Strauss, can you mention that he was an immigrant and a Jewish immigrant? They're always looking to add diversity to the curriculum. (National Public Radio, 2020)

According to Simba Information's market survey (2019), the most textbook sales in 2019 came from California, which adopted new K–8 social studies instructional materials. This was the first time that California had adopted new instructional materials in social studies since 2006, and the state has the largest K–12 enrollment in the United States. In 2022 Oklahoma adopted new instructional materials, but the impact was not as significant within the national market because of Oklahoma's smaller population of K–12 students. Furthermore, the social studies market "faces the challenges from the growing availability of free resources that is seen across the subject disciplines" (e.g., iCivics has a robust civics program that is free; Simba Information, 2019, p. 36). Therefore, in some cases and for some subjects, there are enough free, high-quality online resources available so that states and districts do not need to buy commercial products or may purchase some core materials but still rely on free or low-cost online instructional materials to supplement instruction. Larger publishers still hold the dominant market share, but this is tempered by the availability of free or low-cost online curriculum products and resources (Exhibit 6).

Exhibit 6. Core Programs Being Used by Educators, by Publisher/Creator and Grade Level

Publisher	All grades	Grades K–5	Grades 6–8	Grades 9–12
Pearson ^a	27%	28%	21%	36%
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt	20%	21%	17%	25%
State/district/school created	18%	18%	16%	17%
McGraw Hill Education	16%	6%	23%	16%
Teacher’s Curriculum Institute (TCI)	10%	10%	16%	1%
Studies Weekly	5%	17%	1%	0%
Other/various	15%	15%	15%	22%

Note. Adapted from the *K–12 Social Studies Market Survey Report 2019* by Simba Information (2019).

^a In 2020, Pearson sold Pearson K12 Learning to Nexus Capital and rebranded as Savvas Learning Company.

Specifically highlighting the use of state-/district-/school-created resources and Studies Weekly articulated in Exhibit 6, a portion of elementary social studies educators reported using these materials regularly (i.e., at least once a week or more) in the 2021–22 school year. In the 2022 AIRS, 28% of elementary social studies educators surveyed ($n = 721$) indicated that they regularly use curriculum materials their school or district has created, with 26% indicating that these materials are either recommended or required by their school or school district (Doan et al., 2022, p. 29). For Studies Weekly, 16% of educators use the resource regularly, and the same percentage of educators indicated that Studies Weekly was recommended or required by their school or school district. Half (50%) of elementary social studies educators also reported regular use of self-created materials.

Although many curriculum products are available, in its report on the OER landscape, the Southern Regional Education Board (SREB; 2017) wrote that researchers have long noted that “teachers often do not have instructional materials that are aligned with their state’s college- and career-readiness standards” (p. 6). This lack is further complicated by publishers’ development of social studies curriculum materials that different states purchase and use, but states’ standards may not be fully covered by the curriculum. The creation of the C3 Framework has seemed to help draw some commonalities across the social studies curriculum materials market. Of the products we analyzed, some companies touted their programs’ alignment with the C3 Framework, but we also know that states have used the C3 Framework in different ways. For example, Vermont has adopted the C3 Framework for that state’s social studies standards, whereas other states (e.g., Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Hawaii, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, and Wisconsin) have modeled their social studies standards on the C3 Framework (Grant et al., 2023, p. 364). Comparatively, some states have focused on inquiry skills in their state standards. As a result, states’ use of the C3 Framework is influencing the market for instructional materials, but there is still variability in how the C3 Framework is being used in states and by companies marketing social studies instructional materials.

Because of these variabilities in the curriculum market, it remains challenging for educators to ascertain the quality of curriculum materials or whether those materials align with individual states’ social studies standards. Some states and districts are addressing this issue by reviewing instructional materials and by using OER to pool resources for educators. In 2018 CCSSO and New America teamed up to analyze how states were using OER to meet their needs for curriculum and instructional materials across subject areas. In the analysis, the teams found that roughly 20 states led reviews of curriculum materials based on quality of content in comparison with state standards and state-specific criteria (Tepe & Mooney, 2018). Of these 20 states, there were notable states that (a) posted reviewed social studies instructional materials based on alignment with standards and other criteria and (b) shared the social studies rubric they used (State Educational Technology Directors Association, 2019).

In addition, states have started putting in more effort to create OER and instructional materials via multiple pathways, depending on their state contexts. Some states have joined collaborations with other states, publishers, higher education institutions, state agencies, districts, and teachers to create repositories and libraries of OER. For example, the #GoOpen initiative was launched in 2015 by leaders from 14 states and 40 districts who focused on creating openly licensed materials, including lesson plans, worksheets, and materials (Prescott et al., 2019). This movement has now grown to more than 20 states and 116 districts that all are committed to publishing OER, implementing statewide technology strategies for adopting OER, and continuing to partner with other states and districts to share learning and professional development resources. Similarly, the K–12 OER Collaborative was launched in 2014 across 12 states with the goal of addressing the need for high-quality, standards-aligned K–12 OER for ELA and mathematics (Tepe & Mooney, 2018). This collaborative led to the launch of Open Up Resources, a nonprofit committed to creating and hosting open curricula (Exhibit 7 provides more information on states sharing OER).

Exhibit 7. States Sharing Open Educational Resources

Multistate OER collaboration	Participating states
States involved in the #GoOpen Initiative	Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin
Open Up Resources (K–12 OER Collaborative)	Arizona, California, Georgia, Idaho, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, North Carolina, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wisconsin

Note. Adapted from Tepe & Mooney (2018), Navigating the New Curriculum Landscape: How States Are Using and Sharing Open Educational Resources, <https://www.newamerica.org/education-policy/reports/navigating-new-curriculum-landscape/>

Seeking to leverage teachers’ expertise, Michigan launched the Open Book Project and coordinated efforts with teachers across the state to develop social studies curricula that are open and free for use for most grade levels (Tepe & Mooney, 2018). Similarly, the University of Utah was selected by the state to help develop open mathematics textbooks for Grades 7 and 8, which ended up being used by districts across the state. The trend of developing or curating educational resources from state educators continues to grow. Tepe and Mooney (2018) wrote that roughly 16 states had repositories of resources created and curated by educators that are free and open for use. Using these resources helps free up funding so that less money is spent on instructional materials and can instead be devoted to professional learning.

The market for OER initiatives is quite promising. OER initiatives can help states coordinate their state curriculum efforts by ensuring that educators have access to high-quality, open curricula and that individual states do not have to start from scratch on efforts to develop or use OER. A growing number of OER are available across different subjects, and an experienced network of states, districts, and educators is engaging in work to develop and curate high-quality instructional resources. More specifically, notable OER are popular within the social studies field (Exhibit 8).

Exhibit 8. Notable Open Educational Resources

Resources	Description
Digital Inquiry Group (DIG) ^a	Offers history lessons (Reading Like a Historian curriculum focused on historical inquiry), assessment (Beyond the Bubble focused on assessments measuring students’ historical thinking), and curricula on civic online reasoning
Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History	Users can search for resources by historical time periods, topics, or types of resources (e.g., curricula, essays, lesson plans).
New Visions Social Studies Curriculum	Offers full scope-and-sequence curriculum frameworks for global history, Geography I and II courses, and U.S. history courses
OER Project	Offers standards-aligned history courses that are categorized as <i>short</i> (4–6 weeks) or <i>long</i> (3–12 months). Educators can choose from themed courses covering distinct periods of world history, including an AP World History course.

Note. AP = Advanced Placement.

^a DIG, an independent nonprofit organization, was originally part of Stanford University as the Stanford History Education Group.

Although all the previously mentioned resources are categorized as OER, there is a difference between freely available OER and OER licensed materials. OER are defined as either “teaching, learning, and research materials that reside in the public domain” or “have been released under an open license that permits their free use and re-purposing by others” (Creative Commons, n.d.). Typically, OER licensed materials, such as the New Visions Social Studies Curriculum, use a Creative Commons license that indicates how the public can freely use materials under

copyright law. Programs, such as the OER Project, are freely available but are not OER licensed. In particular, the OER Project resources are designed to be comprehensive courses as opposed to piecemeal instructional materials.

Implementation Challenges and Impacts

There are clear trends within the social studies instructional materials market, with opportunities for more growth and innovation in the future. A growing number of instructional materials—both free and purchasable—are available to educators, and states and districts are finding ways to measure the quality of materials for educators. However, there are still some challenges in the field of high-quality curriculum development work. Although social studies instructional materials may be deemed high quality, there is limited information about how materials impact student achievement. Although there are studies and sites (e.g., What Works Clearinghouse) that provide breakdowns of the effectiveness of certain programs on student achievement by populations of students, this information tends to be focused on subjects such as ELA and mathematics. Similar information on social studies programs and materials is not as widely available. In part, this lack of information may be because, compared with ELA and mathematics, there is less emphasis on social studies, which translates to a lack of investment in social studies research. In addition, student achievement in content areas such as ELA and mathematics is closely monitored by state and/or national assessments. Some states have state social studies assessments, but these tend to be limited to fewer grades. Furthermore, student achievement results from state social studies assessments are state specific, which further complicates how student achievement can be compared or analyzed across states. Another challenge and area for further investigation is measuring the fidelity with which curriculum materials are implemented at the district and classroom levels. Although curriculum materials may be of high quality, it is difficult to discern how instructional materials are being used and whether they are being used as intended. Further research and investigation into these matters is vital for the field.

3. Curriculum Review Landscape

The state of social studies curriculum—including what is available, what is needed, and the perceptions of its quality—demonstrates a need for HQIM along with comprehensive measures for identifying these types of resources. Currently, more than half the states provide guidance to districts on determining curriculum quality, with at least 20 states leading curriculum reviews and evaluating the quality of curricula based on state criteria (Tepe & Mooney, 2018, p. 10). Such state-led reviews can include a panel of individuals (e.g., teachers, academic experts, state leaders) chosen by the state to review instructional materials using specific guidelines to determine the material’s level of quality or alignment with state requirements. These ratings

then may be publicly displayed and used by districts when considering whether to use the instructional materials for their local adoption process.

Aside from state-led reviews, some states provide districts external reviews, rubrics, or resources to determine curriculum quality, whereas other states may employ teacher-user reviews. In teacher-user reviews, individual teachers can evaluate instructional materials. Then, in some cases, the instructional materials that teachers evaluate are curated and shared with educators across the state via state websites or other systems. For some states, there are restrictions on what instructional materials districts and schools can use, or there is a lack of capacity to provide specific information and guidance on curricula (Tepe & Mooney, 2018, p. 12). As a result, these states may use other review resources. Although the resource may not be specific to social studies, states may use a resource such as the [Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool](#) to evaluate K–12 ELA/literacy and mathematics materials (i.e., textbooks or textbook series) for alignment with shifts and major components of states’ academic standards.

Although more than half of all states provide guidance on determining curriculum quality either through some type of rubric, criteria, or guidelines, only about 19 of those states (California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Tennessee, Washington, and West Virginia) include curriculum review tools or guideline documents specific to social studies.

To allow for local control or decision making, many of the provided rubrics, criteria, or guidelines are designed for district rather than state use. This emphasis on district-level social studies curriculum review tools aligns with the education professionals who influence the curriculum selection process. In the 2019 Simba Information study on the social studies market, respondents were asked who makes the final purchasing decisions on curriculum materials. Of the roles represented, 65% of respondents cited district social studies/curriculum supervisors as the main decision makers for social studies purchasing decisions; 31% cited classroom teachers and principals/assistant principals; 27% cited social studies teachers/specialists; 24% cited school social studies chairs; 6% cited committee/school board members/other; and 3% cited superintendents/assistant superintendents (Simba Information, 2019, p. 33).

Priorities related to the evaluation and selection of high-quality curricula can vary based on grade level. Of the social studies educators surveyed across three grade bands (i.e., K–5, 6–8, and 9–12), the most important curriculum attribute was the availability of materials in both print and digital formats. The second and third most important attributes across grade bands were adaptiveness to individualized learning and emphasis on real-life applications (Simba Information, 2019, p. 19). Respondents ranked the remaining attributes differently based on

grade bands, including attributes such as (a) integration of current events, (b) integration of civics content, (c) inclusion of training/professional development, (d) inclusion of instructional videos, and (e) inclusion of learning games. In a focus group surveying teachers in six cities on the evaluation and selection of HQIM, four main criteria were identified. The predominant factors teachers used to determine the quality of instructional materials included the following:

- **Content Accuracy and Visual Appeal:** Materials refrain from errors (content and editorial) and are well written and visually appealing.
- **Standard Alignment and Depth of Knowledge:** Materials are aligned with and effectively address the standards and have appropriate depth of knowledge, questions, and activities.
- **Usability and Support:** Materials are easy to use for teachers, students, and parents, support new teachers, and contain all necessary instructional components (i.e., instructions, materials, activities, assessments, and answers).
- **Student Engagement and Accommodations:** Materials are interesting/relevant to students, diverse (e.g., hands-on, group/individual) and differentiated, and leverage cultural and background knowledge. (Bugler et al., 2017, p. 5)

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on school systems also has placed an increased spotlight on online or digital materials. Rice and Ortiz (2021) proposed a 4A Online Instructional Material Evaluation Framework to review digital instructional materials:

- **Accessibility:** Materials can be easily opened or viewed by users and are in accordance with applicable accessibility laws.
- **Active Engagement:** Materials provide an opportunity for learners to interact with content from behavioral, cognitive, and emotional perspectives.
- **Advocacy for Inclusion:** Materials represent diverse peoples with contextual nuance, compassion, and respect.
- **Accountability:** Materials are transparent (i.e., articulate origins/purpose, are supported by standards/principles, and are clear about personal information/user data collection).

The provided rubrics, criteria, and/or guidelines are generally in alignment with the identified criteria for selecting high-quality curricula. Each emphasizes alignment with state standards, accessibility, accuracy, and student engagement. The following subsections outline the similarities and differences among states with social studies–related curriculum review tools and/or guidelines.

Purpose and Structure

Unsurprisingly, there is variability in how states with social studies–related curriculum review tools or guidelines structure their rubrics and criteria (i.e., emphasized areas of focus). Exhibits 9 and 10 provide a general overview of the structure of social studies–specific rubrics or guidelines provided by 19 identified states.

Exhibit 9. Curriculum Review Tools by Resource Type, Use, and Grade or Course Level

State	Resource type	Curriculum review tool or guideline use	Grade or course level
California	Guidelines or requirements	General instructional materials	K–8 only ^a
Florida	Guidelines or requirements	General instructional materials	K–12
Illinois	Evaluation Tool	General instructional materials	K–12
Iowa	Rubric	General instructional materials and units	K–12
Kentucky	Rubric	General instructional materials	K–12
Louisiana	Rubric	General instructional materials	K–12
Maine (inquirED) ^b	Guidelines and rubric	Units and lessons	K–5
Maryland	Guidelines or framework	General instructional materials	K–12
Massachusetts	Rubric	General instructional materials	K–12
Mississippi ^c	Rubric	Textbooks and instructional program	K–6, 7–12
Nebraska	Rubric	General instructional materials	K–12
New Mexico ^d	Rubric	Textbooks	Separate for each grade (K–8) and course (9–12)
North Carolina	Rubric	Textbooks	Grade bands: K–5, 6–7, 8, and 9–12
Ohio	Rubric	General instructional materials	K–12
Oregon	Guidelines	General instructional materials	Separate for grade bands (K–5, 6–8) and courses (9–12)
Rhode Island	Rubric	General curriculum materials	K–12
Tennessee	Rubric	Textbooks	Separate for each grade (K–8) and course (9–12)
Washington	Rubric	Units and lessons	K–12
West Virginia ^e	Rubric	General instructional materials	Separate for each grade (K–8) and course (9–12)

^aSpecific guidelines and requirements indicated for K–8 only; however, similar principles can be used for 9–12 courses.

^b Social Studies Curriculum Guide developed by [inquirED](#).

^c Two rubrics were identified for Mississippi on identifying high-quality instructional materials. The rubrics are for [elementary](#) and [secondary](#) social studies.

^d The grade- and course-specific rubrics in New Mexico are for evaluating core instructional materials. A separate rubric is used for evaluating supplementary instructional materials that is not grade or course specific.

^e The provided West Virginia rubric is for 2019-2025. A version for [2025-2030](#) for county school districts is provided on the Department’s website.

Exhibit 10. Curriculum Review Tools by Level of Use, User, and Purpose

State	Level of use	User	Purpose
California	State and district	Predominantly for state board of education (SBOE) representatives; can be used by publishers and local education agencies (LEAs)	To provide criteria for state-adopted K–8 materials and provide guidance for publishers/LEAs on selecting and developing instructional materials for Grades 9–12
Florida	State and district	State and district expert reviewers, guest reviewers, and publishers	To provide requirements for state-adopted materials
Illinois	Classroom	Teachers	To help teachers identify how inclusive and inquiry-based selected resources are for classroom use
Iowa	District and classroom	Social Studies Curriculum Revision Team (by district) and teachers (units)	To guide curriculum revision in districts and support teachers in evaluating units/instructional practices
Kentucky	District	District reviewers and schools	To guide districts and schools in assessing existing or purchasing new instructional resources and to determine what revisions may be needed to ensure alignment with the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Social Studies
Louisiana	State	State reviewers (teachers)	To support local school systems and educators in making informed decisions regarding which materials to adopt
Maine (inquirED)	District and classroom	District reviewers and schools	To support teachers and/or districts in reviewing curriculum
Maryland	Classroom and education sector	Teachers and education leaders	To support teachers and education leaders in identifying key criteria in HQIM
Massachusetts	State	State reviewers (current classroom teachers)	To identify and communicate evidence of alignment and quality of instructional materials for LEAs to use in determining which HQIMs meet their localized needs
Mississippi	District (developed by MDE, school districts, and teachers)	Teachers	To determine how well instructional materials align to the Mississippi College-and-Career-Readiness Standards for Social Studies and other criteria for HQIM

State	Level of use	User	Purpose
Nebraska	District and classroom	District, school leaders, and social studies educators	To help districts, school leaders, and educators guide the process in determining if social studies instructional materials can be considered high quality
New Mexico	State	State reviewers (teachers/administrators) and publishers	To support school and district selection of instructional materials
North Carolina	State	North Carolina Textbook Commission and publishers	To support the adoption of state-approved textbooks
Ohio	Districts and schools	District and school leaders	To support districts in determining how well instructional materials align to standards and local criteria
Oregon	State and district	Instructional Materials Criteria Committees (IMCC) and districts for independent adoption processes	To provide a list of state-approved instructional materials and guide districts' adoption of instructional materials based on independent needs
Rhode Island	State and district	State review teams, schools, and LEAs	To provide a list of state-supported reviews of core curriculum materials and to provide a review process for schools or LEAs to evaluate curriculum materials
Tennessee	State	Social Studies Textbook Advisory Panel	To provide a list of state-approved textbooks and guide districts' adoption of textbooks based on independent needs
Washington	Classroom	Teachers	To allow teachers to review and inform the development of existing and new lessons and units
West Virginia	State	Publishers, West Virginia Instructional Materials Review Committee (IMRC), and West Virginia Instructional Materials Advisory Committee (IMAC)	To provide guidance for publishers submitting instructional materials for adoption and evaluation criteria for IMRC/IMAC reviews of submitted instructional materials

Note. MDE = Mississippi Department of Education.

Rubric and Guideline Comparison (Assessments)

Of the 19 identified states, approximately 15 have social studies rubrics or evaluation tools. Key components of these rubrics are provided in the Appendix.

Among the 15 states' social studies–related rubrics, requirements are provided for the evaluation of formative and summative assessments linked to instructional materials. Generally, the rubrics provide succinct considerations (i.e., between one and four indicators for evaluating assessments). In contrast, states with guidelines, such as California and Florida, provide more extensive assessment requirements or considerations for integrating best practices or highlighted assessment strategies.

The main commonalities among rubrics and guidelines that evaluate or provide criteria for assessments are as follows:

1. *Specific, Observable, and Measurable*: Emphasis is placed on assessing components that are specific, observable, and measurable to demonstrate what students know and can do (i.e., their level of understanding).
2. *Varied Models of Assessment*: Emphasis is placed on assessing and measuring students' performance through various methods such as preassessments, formative/summative assessments, and self-assessments (e.g., document-based questions, debates, drawing conclusions/justifying solutions, research projects, reflections). Some states included exemplars of students' work for reference. The purposes of these different models are to both inform instruction and indicate students' content and/or skill mastery (e.g., identify strengths, misconceptions, and gaps in knowledge).
3. *Bias and Accessibility*: Emphasis is placed on assessments that are unbiased and accessible to all students, which also can include culturally and linguistically diverse students. Maine provides a separate checklist for determining the fairness, bias, and cultural responsiveness of assessments.
4. *Students' Performance*: Emphasis is placed on associated materials for effectively interpreting students' performance, including comprehensive rubrics and/or guidelines or scoring guides.

Additional considerations are focused on alignment with state-created College- and Career-Readiness Standards for the Social Studies (Mississippi), Common Core State Standards (New Mexico and California), and state standards for social studies (North Carolina). Iowa is unique in including a component in which assessments in a unit promote “communicating conclusions and/or taking informed action” (Iowa Department of Education, n.d.). California includes a component for measuring library media centers and information literacy skills related to history/social science topics, and Florida outlines a list of effective assessment strategies that instructional materials should employ. This list includes assessing attitudes, cognitive strategies, comprehension/understanding, concepts, creativity, critical thinking, insight, metacognition, multiple intelligences/learning modalities, motor skills, problem solving, procedural knowledge/principles/rules, scientific inquiry, thinking skills, and verbal information/knowledge or facts.

4. State Conditions

Political and Social Influences on Curriculum Review Tools

Each state has a unique set of education legislation that can guide the evaluation and selection of social studies curricula. The goals and political or social motivations within a state can appear in curriculum review tools or have the potential to impact future versions of curricula.

Terminology included or excluded also can reflect political or social ideologies. In a study conducted between November 21 and 28, 2021, by Philanthropy for Active Civic Engagement (PACE), 5,000 registered voters were asked to articulate their perceptions (i.e., positive, neutral, or negative) and associations (e.g., liberal/progressive vs. conservative) of 21 terms related to civic engagement and democracy. In the [PACE Civic Language Perceptions Project dashboard](#) (n.d.), respondents appeared to associate terms such as *activism*, *democracy*, *diversity*, *racial equity*, *social justice*, and *unity* more often with liberals/progressives, whereas terms such as *citizen*, *justice*, *liberty*, and *patriotism* were associated more often with conservatives. The percentage difference between association with liberals/progressives and conservatives was typically 5% or more for these terms; however, for *justice*, though there was more association with conservatives, there was a minimal difference between the two groups (i.e., 40.4% associated the term with conservatives vs. 40% with liberals/progressives).

The delineation between terms and associations should be viewed with caution; however, they provide a baseline understanding of the association between terminology and political ideology. Notably, the perceptions of these terms (positive, neutral, or negative) shifted between 2021 and 2023. Based on preliminary findings from the 2024 Civic Language Perceptions Project, respondents generally viewed civic terms more positively in 2023. Terms such as *belonging*, *citizen*, *civic engagement*, and *liberty* were viewed more positively in 2023, with a 14–20 percentage point difference from 2021 (PACE, n.d.). *Diversity* was the only term with a negative difference between 2021 and 2023 (–2.9 percentage point difference), indicating a potentially less positive perception of the word.

Some of these terms, or similar concepts, appear in social studies state curriculum review tools or guidelines. California, Florida, and the District of Columbia, for example, each have either guidelines or rubrics for determining the quality of instructional materials that have elements of political or social influence. California provided a list of criteria that materials must meet for state adoption. These requirements—especially those guiding history or social science content and standard alignment—are linked to specific California Education Codes. The criteria also have a mixture of liberal- and conservative-associated terminology, including brief mention of *democracy*, *pluralism*, *justice*, and *patriotism*.

Similar to those of California, Florida’s social studies criteria are outlined and linked directly to applicable state legislation. For instance, a subcomponent of content requirements is “multicultural representation.” This subcomponent states that “portrayal of gender, ethnicity, age, work situations and various social groups must include multicultural representation. See Sections 1003.42, 1006.31(2)(a) and 1006.34(2)(b), Florida Statutes” (Florida Department of Education, n.d., p. 7). The specific criteria outlined for material adoption are based on Rule 6A-7.0710, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.). The emphasis on legislative requirements in the criteria also indicates political influences. Within the social studies specifications, Statute s.1003.42, F.S. is referenced, which states the prohibition of critical race theory (CRT) and social-emotional learning, along with culturally responsive teaching and social justice in instructional materials.

Comparatively, the District of Columbia, rubric includes a criterion focused on social justice. This criterion holds space for whether curricula reflect components of social justice through inquiry, informed action, and social-emotional learning opportunities, each with a focus on students’ voices. Key terms such as *privilege*, *diversity*, *activism*, and *civic participation* also appear in the rubric in relation to whether the curricula allow students to question dominant narratives or build social and cultural awareness. The inclusion of social justice is reminiscent of the District of Columbia political culture and opportunities allotted to students in the nation’s capital. Providing enriching history and civic opportunities that empower students to think critically and become active participants in civic life is a vision for social studies education in District of Columbia that has been encouraged through education programs, student-led initiatives, and community partnerships.

Furthermore, in revising the most recent District of Columbia standards, an advisory committee developed social studies standards [Guiding Principles](#) that focus on structure/content, knowledge/skills (such as those related to antiracism, power/bias, environmental literacy, global perspectives, digital literacy, and student agency), diversity/inclusion (e.g., “Hard History,” “windows and mirrors”), and instruction flexibility/equity. These opportunities for and emphasis on student empowerment are reflected in the District of Columbia Social Justice Curriculum Rubric, which highlights the influence of state and local contexts.

Although not all the social studies–related rubrics or guidelines from each state include terminology consistent with the PACE study, some states provide language or resources that may allude to political or social influences. For instance, Iowa’s Rubric to Evaluate the Quality of Units in Social Studies includes a key instructional shift focused on the ability of units to provide opportunities for taking informed action. Maine also provides a plethora of additional resources for social studies—outside a rubric—that are focused on promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion; decolonizing curriculum; and assessing bias in instructional materials.

Implications for Curricular Adoption and Implementation

The adoption and implementation of curricular materials is impacted by a multitude of state-dependent factors that include accountability and assessments, policies and legislation, and parental views and involvement. Each impact on curricular adoption and implementation is considered next.

Accountability and Assessments

States vary in terms of established policies or requirements that impact education. State accountability systems can serve different purposes, including sharing information, setting policies, and establishing practices that are used in part to measure school and district progress in addressing state or local goals related to supporting and improving student achievement. Approximately six states (Delaware, Florida, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Ohio) have social studies indicators in their Every Student Succeeds Act plan for elementary/middle and/or high school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2023b).

Although most states require students to complete social studies coursework to graduate, approximately 28 states have assessment systems that include civics, citizenship, or social studies education. As noted previously, states vary in terms of what they may require in their assessment systems. For students to graduate, various states—including Arizona, Idaho, Missouri, North Dakota, Tennessee, and Utah—require students to take a portion of the naturalization test used by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In some states, students may have to pass a portion of the exam, but other states (e.g., Indiana, Louisiana, South Carolina) specify that students will not be prevented from graduating or passing a course if they do not pass the naturalization exam. In addition, approximately 21 states assess social studies topics at different grades through state-level assessments and/or end-of-course assessments in social studies. Exhibit 11 outlines the assessment systems for each state.

Exhibit 11. State Assessment Systems

State assessment system	States
Includes requirement for graduation (i.e., take variation of naturalization test used by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services) ^a	Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Kentucky, Missouri, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Oklahoma, ^b Tennessee, Utah, Wisconsin
Includes K–12 assessments that may or may not be specified for certain grades or assessed grade levels may be subject to change	Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Michigan, Mississippi, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Wisconsin
End-of-course assessments in social studies subjects	Florida, Maryland, Mississippi, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, South Carolina, Texas, Virginia

Note. Information was compiled and cross-referenced from state department of education websites and from the *50-State Comparison of Civic Education Policies* by the Education Commission of the States (2016), <https://reports.ecs.org/comparisons/civic-education-policies-04>

^a Alaska introduced SB 29 in 2023 which, if passed, will require high school students to take a civics exam for graduation. In addition, states such as Indiana, Louisiana, and South Carolina require or provide an option for students to take a form of the naturalization test; however, students are not required to pass the exam for graduation. In Nebraska, administration of the naturalization test is an optional method to fulfill Nebraska Revised Statute 79-724.

^b HB 2030 took effect in November 2021. This legislation requires all high school students in Oklahoma to pass an assessment containing 100 history and government items from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services website (Krehbiel-Burton, 2022).

Policies and Legislation

Other policies and legislation impact the state conditions relating to the procurement, adoption, and implementation of curriculum materials. The State Educational Technology Directors Association (2019) indicates that at least 21 states have statutes on the adoption of instructional materials, and all except Hawaii, Ohio, and West Virginia include references to digital materials. Exhibit 12 provides more detailed information on the policies and conditions impacting state adoption and implementation of instructional materials.

Exhibit 12. Policies and Legislation on the Adoption of Instructional Materials, by State

Policies and legislation	States
State statutes on instructional material adoption ^a	Alabama, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, West Virginia
Contract with publisher	Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, West Virginia
Contract with state	Colorado, Louisiana, Maine, New Jersey, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas
Provide procurement guidelines for companies/publishers interested in selling instructional materials in the state	Arizona, Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Carolina, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia
Regional purchasing consortia	Idaho, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nebraska, New York, North Dakota, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Texas, Washington, Wisconsin
State funding for instructional materials	Florida, Georgia, Idaho, Iowa, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia

Note. Information was compiled from the 2019 State Educational Technology Directors Association's *Digital Instructional Materials: Acquisition Policies for States*, <https://dmaps.setda.org/>

^a All except Hawaii, Ohio, and West Virginia include references to digital materials.

Parental Involvement

In alignment with political and social components articulated within curriculum review tools is the involvement of parental figures in the instructional material process. A barrier to curriculum adoption can be the political and social views of parents or legal guardians, who have an increasing role in determining the instructional materials that are incorporated into the classroom. For instance, when Tennessee instituted laws restricting discussions on controversial topics like race and gender, the Parents' Choice Tennessee advocacy group filed a lawsuit against local and state education leaders on the grounds that the current *Wit & Wisdom* ELA curriculum violated these updated requirements (Schwartz, 2022). All over the country, districts, teachers, and publishers face concerns about how their materials will be received by parents or legal guardians. Book censorship has also grown, specifically in 2021, when at least 1,597 books (predominantly related to or written by LGBTQ+ or Black individuals) were challenged or removed (Natanson, 2022). In 2023 the American Library Association reported that there were "4,240 unique book titles targeted for censorship, as well as 1,247 demands to censor library books, materials, and resources" (American Library Association, 2023).

Although the previously mentioned examples highlight specific action taken against certain curricula or materials, parental views of what should be taught in the classroom vary. In an online nationwide survey conducted between September 14 and 21, 2021, by the Policy Innovators in Education Network, 2,004 registered voters (with 502 additional oversample voters) who were parents of K–12 children were asked a series of questions regarding their views on race-related issues in K–12 education. Some questions focused on how to handle culture and race in schools, what/when certain concepts or resources should be taught/included, and teaching strategies. A majority of participants across party lines supported the teaching of Indigenous and Black history in some grade levels, largely agreeing that Black history, in particular, should be woven throughout curriculum (Policy Innovators in Education [PIE] Network, n.d., slides 27 and 28). Multiple voters and parents emphasized the need for diverse authors in the classroom to create more well-rounded students (PIE Network, n.d., slide 49). Seventy-seven percent of voters supported key curriculum changes focused on teaching more lessons about diverse historical figures who are typically left out of the narrative, 74% supported the incorporation of more diverse books/authors in English classes, and 68% supported the idea of providing lessons in history classes on issues such as slavery, segregation, and racism (PIE Network, n.d., slide 47).

When asked about who should make decisions on how race is taught in schools, 48% of participants indicated that local school districts should be the decision makers, whereas 28% indicated that state government leaders should be the decision makers (PIE Network, n.d., slide 21). Many participants also indicated the need for schools to focus on other topics/skills beyond diversity and inclusion, such as fostering empathy and teaching career/life skills (PIE Network,

n.d., slides 16 and 17). As parents and legal guardians continue to play a more prominent role in students' education, review tools for evaluating social studies curricula and instructional materials may need to be adapted to consider parental views more explicitly.

Summary of Findings and Recommendations

In our report, we have outlined the state of social studies curriculum by examining some of the curriculum products available and how the availability of curriculum products is influenced by the marketplace. Moreover, we analyzed the state landscape of curriculum review tools to gain a deeper sense of how states are evaluating or equipping educators in the field to evaluate HQIM in social studies. Numerous factors and influences (i.e., policies, social factors, and assessment systems) impact how states address instructional materials, and these influences are visible, particularly, in state curriculum review tools.

Given our examination of the state of social studies curriculum, we've identified the following seven main takeaways or "lessons learned" in the field that impact HQIM in social studies:

1	Definition of HQIM. Research and practice reveal significant agreement in the social studies field on what defines HQIM, even if the field itself is often considered "fractured."
2	Commonalities Across State Standards. There is more in common across standards than is often assumed. These commonalities provide great possibilities for the creation of HQIM in social studies.
3	Effect of Incorporating HQIM. When states have incorporated HQIM in other content areas (i.e., reading, mathematics, and science), it has pushed the publishing market to create and provide access to materials.
4	Use of HQIM in Social Studies. Some states and districts are actively defining and exploring HQIM in social studies. However, many states or districts have not instituted similar efforts in social studies.
5	Marginalization of Social Studies. In contrast to middle and high schools that tend to adopt curriculum by content area, elementary schools often lack formal social studies curriculum because of the field's marginalization at this level. This marginality places the onus on elementary teachers to provide social studies instructional materials piecemeal into the curriculum.
6	Increased Use of High-Quality Open Education Resources (OER). High-quality OER are gaining traction in social studies in state and district curriculum, but few constitute core curricular materials.
7	Publishers Prioritize Content. There is some evidence that publishers' work to align materials with state standards tends to focus on content only.

As shown, the need for HQIM in social studies is apparent. However, how can the lack of coherent, widespread adoption of HQIM in social studies be addressed? What pockets of innovation or opportunity exist within the field? To address these questions, we have provided the recommendations for consideration in Exhibit 13.

Exhibit 13. Recommendations for Advancing High-Quality Instructional Materials in Social Studies by Leaders

Teachers

- Advocate for HQIM in social studies to district leaders and other educational leaders.

Districts

- Use existing tools to evaluate HQIM as part of the curriculum review process to ensure that materials are selected because of their quality.
- Once HQIM are adopted, develop a plan to ensure effective implementation with initiatives such as fidelity checks and high-quality professional development. Even when a district (or state) selects HQIM, implementation fidelity checks must be in place to ensure that materials are being used and being used effectively. Furthermore, though the move toward identifying HQIM in social studies is critical, it must be complemented by high-quality professional development aligned with those materials.

States

- Advocate for the adoption of HQIM in social studies by showing how HQIM dramatically increase engagement in student learning.
- If processes are not already in use, consider creating a process to evaluate HQIM and/or communicate existing HQIM.
- Create a systematic implementation plan to ensure that educational leaders (e.g., district leaders, teachers) have the support needed to implement HQIM. This plan could include resources to ensure that district evaluation processes are of high quality, professional development access to support implementation access of HQIM, and resources to monitor implementation fidelity. In 2022 the RAND Corporation published *How States Are Creating Conditions for Use of High-Quality Instructional Materials in K–12 Classrooms: Findings From the 2021 American Instructional Resources Survey*, a report that provides an overview of how some states within the IMPD Network encourage or mandate HQIM and promote professional learning.

Publishers

- Create K–12 materials that reflect shifts in the field (e.g., coherent inquiry processes, effective use of primary and secondary sources) that ensure learning coherence throughout all grade levels. In addition, continue to develop K–12 materials that emphasize both content and skills aligned with state standards.

Although there is variability in the social studies field, there are also commonalities across states and districts that educators can leverage related to policies, practices, and HQIM. This report offers a common platform of knowledge so that we can continue to critically evaluate and find ways to address the needs in the field of K–12 social studies education. Our findings and recommendations act as a starting place for the continued conversations, research, and action.

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Appendix: Components of Select Social Studies Curriculum Review Tools

This appendix provides a closer look at the components/emphases and organization of social studies–specific rubrics for 15 states.

Illinois

Illinois’s Resource Evaluation Tool is organized into Part 1 (*resource description*), Part 2 (*resource overview*), and Part 3 (*inclusive checkpoints*). Part 1 provides general information about the resource being evaluated, including the name, website link, resource type, and grade-band focus. Part 2 outlines nine indicators focused on developmental appropriateness along with connections to Illinois Mandated Units of Study for Social Studies, Illinois Learning Standards, and Domains of Competency in Social Studies. These indicators also emphasize inclusion of diverse perspectives and/or identities, multiple ways for all students to engage with the content and develop skills (including supports for accommodations and/or modifications), opportunities for students to express experiences/perspectives, editorial professionalism, appropriate language, and supports for guided and/or free inquiry.

Part 3 provides eight indicators to measure the inclusivity of resources. These indicators focus on the integration of students’ diverse cultural and social backgrounds, incorporation of local community-based social studies, connection to lived experiences/voices of historically ignored communities, critical analysis used to evaluate systems, inequity and power, supports for taking informed action, and other considerations for inclusivity. Criteria for parts 2 and 3 are rated as *very much*, *somewhat*, *not at all*, and *unsure*. No numerical values are associated with the ratings. Instead, each indicator includes space for reviewers to identify evidence and/or gaps in the resource along with how to modify the resource. The resource culminates in a Reflections & Notes section for reviewers to record any additional analyses and reflections.

Iowa

Iowa’s Rubric to Evaluate the Quality of Units in Social Studies is divided into four dimensions: *alignment to Iowa Core*, *key instructional shifts*, *instructional supports*, and *assessment*. Iowa Core includes standards for social studies, literacy standards for Grades K–5, and literacy standards for history/social studies for Grades 6–12. Key instructional shifts outlined for units involve sparking inquiry, cultivating collaborative civic spaces, integrating content/skills purposefully, implementing literacy practices, providing opportunities to take informed action, increasing text complexity, building academic vocabulary and disciplinary literacy, evaluating sources/using evidence, writing from sources, and balancing informational/literary texts. Within

the instructional supports dimension, emphasis is placed on students' interest/engagement, scaffolding, instructional strategies/practices, differentiation, and technology use. The assessment dimension emphasizes using various modes of assessment, incorporating assessment guidelines for interpreting students' performance (e.g., rubrics, checklists), and providing opportunities for communicating conclusions and taking informed action.

Ratings are provided for each dimension (0–3) with an overall rating for the lesson/unit dependent on the total score for the dimensions. The 0–3 ratings for each dimension are as follows: 0 = *does not meet criteria*, 1 = *meets some of the criteria*, 2 = *meets many of the criteria*, and 3 = *meets most to all of the criteria*. Overall ratings are categorized by *not ready to review*, *revision needed*, *exemplar if improved*, and *exemplar*.

In conjunction with the rubric for units, Iowa provides a [*Best Practices in Social Studies*](#) rubric for educators, instructional coaches, and administrators. Ten best practices are identified that include opportunities for critical thinking and problem solving related to human issues (e.g., inquiry, simulations, problem-based learning), cultural relevancy, cross-disciplinary components, incorporation of technology, and differentiation. Best practices are scored as either *emerging*, *integrating*, or *innovating* based on outlined considerations. References to studies are linked to each of the practices provided. Although this rubric is designed to review teachers' practices, its components also could be used to review social studies curricula.

Kentucky

Kentucky's Instructional Resources Alignment Rubric has four evaluation criteria: social studies concepts and disciplinary practices; instructional design and support; organization, equity, and accessibility; and assessment. At the beginning of the rubric, space is provided for educators to identify conceptual knowledge and disciplinary practices/skills in the standards for their grade/course. Criteria are rated as either inadequate (1) or meets (2), and space is provided for evidence. Outlined criteria for social studies concepts and disciplinary practices are considered nonnegotiable material components. Fewer than 14 points in this section means the material is not of high quality and should not be further reviewed. Criteria include a focus on disciplinary practices (coherent and appropriate rigor), opportunities for inquiry, questioning (higher level thinking skills), skill development, and accuracy of nontext content (e.g., maps, graphs).

Following the social studies concepts and disciplinary practices criteria, the instructional design and support section refers to research-based instructional strategies that offer appropriate scaffolding, focus on content/skill acquisition, provision of engaging activities related to real-life situations, and promotion of cross-curricular/global connections. The organization section relates to research-based information, relevant examples/explanations/online resources, academic vocabulary, and various visual media (e.g., charts, graphs, diagrams). The equity and

accessibility section emphasizes a sensitive portrayal of various groups along with accommodations for multiple learning styles (e.g., students with exceptionalities, English learners, cultural differences). Notably, if a materials scores less than 18 points it cannot be shared as a resource.

Aside from the alignment rubric, Kentucky provides a [*Social Studies Assignment Review Protocol*](#) document for rating assignments as *weakly aligned*, *partially aligned*, or *strongly aligned* with key components. Key components include alignment with content/skills, construction of knowledge, elaborated expressive communication, and connection to students' lives. Educators also are able to evaluate alignment with instructional practices that include inquiry, civic spaces, purposeful content/skills, promotion of literacy practices, and opportunities for taking action. At the end, educators can reflect on their assignment practices to implement meaningful changes.

Louisiana

Louisiana's *Instructional Materials Evaluation Tool for Alignment in Social Studies Grades K–12 (IMET)* contains two main sections focused on nonnegotiable criteria of superior quality and additional criteria of superior quality. Nonnegotiable criteria include *alignment and sequence*, *disciplinary skills and practices*, and *quality of sources*. Each criterion has two to three required indicators of superior quality. Space is provided for indicating whether a metric has been met (yes/no) and for adding justifications or comments with examples. If materials do not meet the nonnegotiable criteria requirements, the materials will not move forward to Section II of the rubric. The additional criteria in Section II emphasize *scaffolding and support*, *usability*, and *assessment*. Depending on how well the materials meet each criterion, the material is evaluated as either Tier 1 (exemplifies quality), Tier 2 (approaching quality), or Tier 3 (not representing quality).

Maine

Although Maine does not have a separate curriculum review tool developed by the state, the Maine Department of Education's website provides a link to the social studies curriculum review guide created by *inquirED*, which developed five rubrics for measuring social studies curricula. These rubrics focus on whether the curriculum integrates inquiry-based instruction; supports culturally responsive education; utilizes standards-based instruction and assessment; connects to high-quality, diverse sources; and provides instructional supports and continuous professional development. Each rubric includes four criteria with associated questions and what to look for in the materials (i.e., indicators). There are three "What should you look for?" features for each criterion, equating to 12 potential points for alignment in each rubric. References to applicable research are provided following the rubrics. An example of one rubric component follows.

Utilizes Standards-Based Instruction and Assessment	
Criteria and Question	Aligns Units and Lessons to Disciplinary Indicators <i>Do units and lessons align to C3 Indicators and/or state standards to build content and skills across the disciplines of History, Civics, Geography, and Economics?</i>
What should you look for?	<input type="checkbox"/> Integrates multiple social studies disciplines within each unit—and all disciplines across a curriculum year. <input type="checkbox"/> Aligns lesson objectives to grade-appropriate C3 Indicators for History, Civics, Geography, and Economics. <input type="checkbox"/> Aligns lesson objectives to grade-appropriate, state-specific disciplinary standards.

Massachusetts

Massachusetts uses the Curriculum Ratings by Teachers (CURATE) rubric for reviewing history and social science curriculum materials. The CURATE rubric is divided into two domains: *standards alignment* and *classroom application*. *Standards alignment* has two criteria (scope and progression and classroom tasks and instruction) while *classroom application* has three criteria (accessibility for students, usability for teachers, and impact on learning). Each criterion has a set of indicators, notes and tips for the indicator and links to resources for further reading (e.g., C3 Framework, Educating for American Democracy Roadmap). All criteria have associated indicators, and each indicator has bulleted explanations to contextualize the indicators. Criteria are rated as either *insufficient evidence* (?), *does not meet expectations* (1), *partially meets expectations* (2), or *meets expectations* (3).

Mississippi

Mississippi’s evaluation tool for instructional materials has three gateways. The first section focuses on *alignment with standards* (*Mississippi College- and Career-Readiness Standards for the Social Studies*) and includes criteria on *alignment and accuracy*, and *learning progressions and coherence*. The second gateway focuses on *rigor and instructional practices*, specifically including criteria relate to *student learning* and *instructional design*. Emphasis is placed on the history, civics/citizenship, civil rights, economics, and geography domains. The third gateway evaluates *usability*, particularly *teacher and student supports*, *assessment*, and *intentional design*. Each criterion has indicators of superior quality that are rated as *no evidence* (0), *limited* (1 or 2), or *adequate* (2 or 4). All indicators of superior quality also include guiding/key questions. Based on the indicator scores, each criteria is rated as *does not meet*, *partially meets*, or *meets*. These same ratings are used to view the criteria in a gateway holistically. Materials must score at least 13 points on Gateway 1 in order to move on to Gateway 2. Then, materials must score at least 15 points on Gateway 2 in order to move on to Gateway 3.

Nebraska

Through the Nebraska Instructional Materials Collaborative, Nebraska has the Instructional Materials Review Rubric that outlines considerations when reviewing instructional materials. There are 10 categories including *connects to the standards, requires disciplinary thinking and inquiry, prompts informed action to validate and deepen learning, requires disciplinary knowledge and skills, is equitable and culturally responsive, provides scaffolding support for students, provides texts that support reading comprehension for informational texts, provides coherent assessment system, is easy to use, and provides instructional supports and continuous PD*. Each category contains criteria of success, and a check is used to determine what criteria of success are seen in the material.

New Mexico

New Mexico's 2022 Social Studies rubrics are provided for each grade level (K–8) and course in high school (e.g., New Mexico history; U.S. history; world history; civics; economics; geography; ethnic, cultural, and identity studies). Each rubric has three sections: standards review, social studies content review, and all content review. Under standards review, grade-specific social studies standards are individually outlined for Grades K–8. These standards are divided by anchor standards, which include civics; economics/financial literacy; geography; ethnic, cultural and identity studies; and inquiry. For high school, the course standards are outlined and can include other disciplines (e.g., U.S. history includes geography; high school U.S. history; and ethnic, cultural, and identity studies). Inquiry is another component of the standards separate from the disciplines. A list of inquiry standards is consistently provided in K–8 and high school. Following the content standards are grade-specific Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies. Under *social studies content review*, criteria are provided for content and design; social studies skills; accessibility; equity; and teacher instructional resources/strategies. *All content review* focuses on coherence; well-designed lessons; resources for planning; assessment; extensive support; cultural and linguistic perspectives; and inclusion of a culturally and linguistically responsive lens.

Both the student and teacher editions of the instructional material are evaluated for each of the outlined criteria. All criteria are given a score of M = *meets the criterion*, P = *partially meets the criterion*, or D = *does not meet the criterion*, and space is provided for commentary. Each section has a standard maximum number of points: 300 for *standards review*, 91 for *social studies content review*, and 209 for *all content review*. Based on the total percentage score of all sections, materials are either *recommended (90% or higher)*, *recommended with reservations (80%–89%)*, or *not recommended and not adopted (79% or lower)*. Materials also are reviewed for cultural and linguistic relevance (CLR) recognition. This recognition is achieved if materials receive a score of 90% or higher on CLR components of the rubric (i.e., cultural and linguistic perspectives and inclusion of a culturally and linguistically responsive lens).

Aside from the curriculum review tool to review core instructional materials, New Mexico also provides a separate [rubric](#) for evaluating supplementary materials. This rubric is used to identify the need for supplementary materials based on four categories: *standards and content alignment*; *cultural and linguistic responsiveness*; *instructional supports to meet the needs of all students*; and *other*. The first three categories are the main focus areas of the rubric, each with one or two overarching questions for reviewers to consider, along with a bulleted list of “guidance/look-fors” when reviewing the materials. Whether supplementary materials address those questions is rated as either *does not meet needs*, *partially meets needs*, or *meets needs*. Space is provided at the end of each category section to include evidence to support the rating. The rubric also includes guidance on how to collect high-quality evidence that supports the evaluation of supplementary instructional materials.

North Carolina

North Carolina’s *Instructional Materials Review Criteria Sheet* for social studies is divided by grade bands (K–5, 6–7, 8, and 9–12), with additional criteria sheets for exceptional children (EC) and English learners (EL). Multiple sheets are provided for Grades 9–12 based on the appropriate course (i.e., American History, Founding Principles of U.S.A. and NC, World History, and Economics and Personal Finance). For the grade-level criteria sheets, there are three parts for evaluation (*content*, *pedagogy*, and *accessibility*), with some applicable subcategories. For each criterion, users indicate yes or no for whether the material meets the criterion. Limited space is provided at the end of each part for any additional commentary.

Criteria for the *content* and *accessibility* parts are relatively consistent between the grade bands, and there are variations in *pedagogy* that are course dependent. For instance, the sheet geared toward Grades 9–12 Economics and Personal Finance includes whether the materials increase students’ awareness of economic/personal financial literacy as well as components of economics/personal finance mentioned in the North Carolina General Assembly in Session Law 2019-82 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, n.d., p. 22). Under *pedagogy* for each sheet, separate criteria are provided that are specific to teacher resources, such as providing ancillary and/or supplementary materials and teaching strategies.

Content criteria for each grade band center on alignment with *North Carolina Social Studies Standards* and *NC Standard Course of Study for Social Studies*; variety of tasks (including integration of social studies disciplinary and critical thinking skills) and task context (e.g., in-school, group-based, discussion); access to or demonstration of content in various ways (e.g., written, verbal, graphically via maps, charts, illustrations, or political cartoons); unbiased/nonstereotypical content; representations of current social studies research/practices; and representations of diverse groups, viewpoints, and student experiences/interests. An added component in Grade 8 is the representation of religious

references (uncensored and included in American history textbooks). *Accessibility* criteria include digital considerations (where applicable), presentation of materials, and associated features/capabilities (e.g., ability to download/save or access content offline, ability to take notes, ability to save for games/activities).

Ohio

Ohio's High-Quality Instructional Materials Rubric for social studies has two gateways: alignment and instructional support. Alignment is broken down into two criteria focused on alignment to learning standards and social studies practices and disciplinary literacy. Instructional supports is comprised of criteria for assessment, teacher supports, and student supports. Each criteria contain indicators outlining components of high-quality materials aligned to Ohio's standards. Guiding questions and evidence look-fors accompany each indicator. Most indicators are rated on a 0-1-2 scale. Some indicators are not numerically rated and instead are marked as *Narrative Evidence*. These indicators do not contribute to the numeric criterion score. Depending on how each indicator is scored, criteria are either rated as *does not meet expectations*, *partially meets expectations*, or *meets expectations*. The same ratings are used to evaluate each gateway holistically. Space is provided for evidence of how the materials align with each indicator.

Rhode Island

Rhode Island's Social Studies Review Tool for Selecting High Quality Curriculum Materials outlines six areas or criteria for evaluating core and supplementary materials. The six criteria include *alignment to Rhode Island's Social Studies Standards*, *disciplinary skills and practices*, *supports for all students*, *literacy development*, *assessment*, and *teacher usability*. Each criterion has four indicators along with guidance for finding evidence for each indicator. For example, the disciplinary skills and practices criterion includes indicators for discourse, multiple perspectives, connections to real-world issues, and asset-based stance. Links are provided in a couple of the guidance for finding evidence sections for addition context or information. Space is provided for reviewer's notes after each indicator. Indicators are rated by a yes/no system. Scores for the area or criterion are determined by the number of indicators met in each criterion for a 0–4 numeric scale. References are included at the end of the review tool.

Tennessee

The Tennessee rubrics by grade and course have two main sections: *alignment to Tennessee State Social Studies Standards* and *additional alignment criteria and indicators of quality*. Each section has subcategories for alignment. Section 1 focuses on alignment with individual content standards, focus (grade-level appropriateness/focus on grade-level standards), integration of content strands (e.g., culture, economics, geography, history, politics/government, Tennessee history), social studies practices, and any mandated Tennessee laws for specific areas. Section 2 includes key areas of focus (e.g., rigor, coherence, literacy); student engagement and instructional supports; monitoring student progress; and teacher support materials. Under key areas of focus, there is additional space for bias and sensitivity considerations applicable at the local level. The rating system is either *yes* or *no* for each indicator, and space is provided for evidence.

Washington

Washington provides three variations of its *Quality Review Rubric for Social Studies Lessons and Units*: a short-form rubric, an extended rubric, and an interactive version of the extended rubric. The short-form and extended rubrics include four categories: *alignment to standards*, *teaching strategies (or social studies practices)*, *instructional supports*, and *assessment*. *Alignment to standards* includes Common Core ELA standards. *Teaching strategies (or social studies practices)* includes connections to the C3 Inquiry Arc (integration of content and skills, questions, and collaboration), literacy practices (academic vocabulary, analysis, speaking/writing from sources, culturally responsive teaching practices, and civic engagement), and additional indicators (text support/complexity, close reading, and 21st century skills). *Instructional supports* refers to purpose for instruction; guidance (teaching/learning of target standards and suggestions for differentiation); engaging materials; varied instructional approaches; students' prior knowledge; evidence-based claims; digital tools/media; effective sequencing; transferable skills (literacy skills, student-directed inquiry, analysis, evaluation, and reflection); and appropriate scaffolding. *Assessment* reference guidance of different assessments (i.e., formative, summative, self-assessment), interventions or extensions, work samples, and aligned rubrics or assessment guidelines. Each category is rated on a 0–3 scale. The overall rating is dependent on the total score points and translates to *not reading to review*, *revision needed*, *exemplar if improved*, and *exemplar*. The rubric includes a list of additional resources as well as resources users should be familiar with before using the document.

External to the rubric for social studies lessons and units, Washington’s Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction provides a [Screening for Biased Content in Instructional Materials](#) document. The screening tool has criteria for the following categories: *variety of roles and character traits; multiple perspectives and contributions; multicultural representation; imagery and language; family representation; teacher guidance; and additional considerations*. Criteria are rated as *NA, not met (0), partially met (1), and met (2)*, and space is provided for comments and examples. This tool includes references to applicable research or resources to support the screening tool. Furthermore, it provides an appendix of key terms that includes definitions of terms such as *bias, belonging, culturally responsive teaching, ethnocentrism, gender expression, and tribal sovereignty*.

West Virginia

West Virginia’s evaluation criteria for instructional materials are dependent on the grade level or course in high school. The following nonnegotiable equity, accessibility, and format criteria are consistent across grades and courses: *interethnic, equal opportunity, format, bias, and Common Core*. The subsequent sections focus on alignment with college- and career-readiness standards and student success standards related to skills/instructional strategies and content standards (e.g., civics, economics, geography, history, personal finance, West Virginia history). The emphasized skills/strategies fall under five categories: *developing personal and educational skills; developmentally appropriate instructional resources and strategies; life skills or career development/life planning/global citizenship (starting at Grade 6); assessment; and organization, presentation, and format*. *Career development/life planning/global citizenship* includes indicators for promoting social justice, responsible leadership, and financial responsibility. The rating system is *yes or no* for nonnegotiable criteria. All subsequent criteria are rated as *N = nonexistent, M = minimal, A = adequate, or I = in-depth*.



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