

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning

Explore the arts, science, and social studies of New York State through cultural education!

Young learners thrive by sharing time and cultural education experiences together. Experiential learning boosts brain power while cultivating a sense of understanding and belonging in the world. Use this simple framework and thoughtfully curated resource kit to support your P-3 learning environment.

Bring experiential programming into your classroom!

Connect with field trips, virtual field trips, traveling programs, grant opportunities, and more.

A project by the Office of Early Learning and the Office of Cultural Education



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



What is Cultural Education?

Cultural education refers to organized programs or learning experiences rooted in arts & humanities, natural sciences, and history & heritage. This connects well with P-3 content areas including, but not limited to, arts, science, and social studies.

We believe that cultural education forms an important part of a broad and balanced curriculum, and that students should be provided with an engaging variety of cultural experiences throughout their time at school.

Cultural education helps us understand and appreciate the world around us. It cultivates a sense of wonder and belonging.

Table of Contents

1. Introduction & Project Overview
2. Cultural Education Experiences & Institutions
3. Supporting Cultural Education Experiences & Culturally Responsive-Sustaining Education
- 4-8. The Arts
- 9-16. Science
- 17-23. Social Studies
24. Additional Resources

Project Overview

Cultural Connections is a framework and digital resource kit intended to enhance the ability of New York State schools and Early Childhood Programs to deeply engage students in STEAM and history through cultural experiences, including the arts, science, and social studies.

The immersive resource for classrooms, serving Prekindergarten to Grade 3 students, recommends ways schools and collaborating partners can connect with cultural institutions such as museums and science centers for class trips and/or learning experiences that can be brought right into classrooms.

Cultural Connections is organized by content area connections and features a variety of vetted resources.

We encourage you to make rich connections with New York State by bringing cultural experiences into the lives of students.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Cultural Education Experiences

Cultural education can be an out of classroom experience or can easily be infused within the learning environment.

An out of classroom experience could include a field trip to any type of cultural institution. These are community organizations that focus on arts, science, social studies, or a mixture of these content areas. Cultural institutions include: art galleries, historical societies, libraries, museums, parks, planetariums, science centers, zoos, and more!

Inquire with your local cultural institution about expanded learning opportunities such as virtual field trip options or outreach services where informal educators visit classrooms or schools.

Helpful guidance is available at FindNYCulture.org, a free database of 4,600+ New York State cultural institutions. Search by institution type, location, grade level, and subject. In addition to searching for cultural institutions, a section of the website is dedicated to connecting educators with funding opportunities to support field trips.

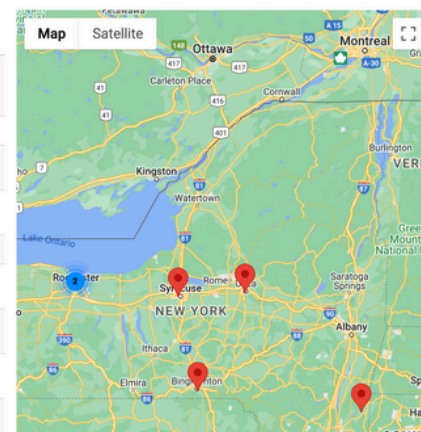
Types of Cultural Institutions

*Aquarium | Arboretum | Archives
Art Gallery | Arts Council
Botanical Garden | Children's
Museum | Conservancy
Environmental Education Center
Fish Hatchery | Forest
Historic Site/House
Historical Society
Library | Local Government
Museum | Nature Center
Nature Preserve | Park
Planetarium
Public TV & Radio | Science Center
Theater | Wildlife Refuge
Zoo*



Screenshot of the FindNYCulture.org website.

Name	Popular Name	City	Website	Regents Incorporated?
Binghamton Zoo at Ross Park		Binghamton, NY	Website	
Buffalo Zoo		Buffalo, NY	Website	
Central Park Zoo		New York, NY	Website	
Prospect Park Zoo		Brooklyn, NY	Website	
Queens Zoo		Flushing, NY	Website	
Rosamond Gifford Zoo		Syracuse, NY	Website	
Seneca Park Zoo		Rochester, NY	Website	
Seneca Park Zoo		Rochester, NY	Website	
Staten Island Zoo		Staten Island, NY	Website	



Screenshot of a search for 'zoo' on the FindNYCulture.org website.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Supporting Cultural Education Experiences

Cultural Education can occur both in and out of the classroom. There are a variety of ways to seek support in bringing cultural education to your students. Seek a materials donation for in-classroom projects, connect with free pass programs to visit cultural institutions, or request resources from partner organizations such as on-demand videos, virtual field trips, and kit loans. Finally, many organizations offer funding to support field trips, speaker stipends, or project supplies.

Connecting with Experiences:

[Boards of Cooperational Services \(BOCES\)](#)

[Cool Culture](#)

[FieldTripDirectory.com: New York City](#)

[FieldTripDirectory.com: New York State](#)

[FindNYCulture.org](#)

[Find Your Local Library](#)

[I Love NY](#)

[WNET Parenting Minutes: NYC's Cultural Resources](#)

Potential Funding Sources for Cultural Education:

[Community Foundations](#)

[Field Trip Grants](#)

[Local Parent Teacher Association \(PTA\)](#)

[New York State Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation](#)

[New York State Teacher Centers](#)

Ask your administration or school district foundation what funding may be available

Virtual Field Trips:

[Discovery Education](#)

[FieldTripsDirectory.com: Virtual Resources & Field Trips](#)

[KidVision Field Trips](#)

[PBS LearningMedia Field Trips](#)

Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education Framework

The Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education Framework helps educators create student-centered learning environments that affirm racial, linguistic and cultural identities; prepare students for rigor and independent learning, develop students' abilities to connect across lines of difference; elevate historically marginalized voices; and empower students as agents of social change. The CR-S framework is grounded in four principles:

- *Welcoming and Affirming Environment*
- *High Expectations and Rigorous Instruction*
- *Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment*
- *Ongoing Professional Learning*

**CULTURALLY
RESPONSIVE-
SUSTAINING
EDUCATION**



CR-S guidelines that connect with cultural education will be highlighted throughout this guide.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



The Arts

Dance
Music
Theater
Visual and
Media Arts



<https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/arts>



Through creating, performing, responding, and connecting in the arts, students generate experiences, construct knowledge, and build a more integrated understanding of self and community. They explore and express ideas, feelings, and beliefs about the past and present; discover new ideas; and begin to envision possible futures. Through careful study of their own and others' art, students explore and make sense of the broad human condition across time and cultures.

Arts literacy also fosters connections between the arts, and between the arts and other disciplines, thereby providing opportunities to access, develop, express, and integrate meaning across a variety of content areas. Indeed, an arts literate individual recognizes the value of the arts as a place of free expression; and the importance of observing and participating in the social, political, spiritual, financial, and aesthetic aspects of their communities (both local and global, in person and virtual); and works to introduce the arts into those settings

New York State Learning Standards for the Arts share ARTISTIC PROCESSES and ANCHOR STANDARDS for all ARTS disciplines.



New York State
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Knowledge > Skill > Opportunity

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



The Arts

Considerations

- How do you currently integrate the arts within your classroom?
- What focus areas or new experiences would you like to explore with your students?
- Do you want to create an in-classroom experience or are you looking for an expanded learning opportunity?
- What resources are needed to support this work?

Tips

When planning, remember that all arts disciplines share these artistic processes:

- Cr | Creating
- Pr | Performing, presenting, producing
- Re | Responding
- Cn | Connecting

Even if you, the educator, do not consider yourself 'artistic', your confidence and enthusiasm will set the tone for cultural education exploration in the learning environment. Embrace and celebrate!

Guiding Questions

What is art?

What are types of art?

Who is an artist?

Where do you find art?

How are you an artist?

What art do you make?

How does art make you feel?

Why do people make art?

Why is art important?

What does an artist look like?

What jobs are there in the arts?



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Dance, Music, and Theater Strategies

PreK/Kindergarten:

- Confidently model movement, singing, and theater for students
- Strongly guide the exploration of dance, music, and theater
- Model sharing and selecting artwork

Kindergarten/First Grade:

- Explore music, dance, and theater concepts
- Prompt and support evaluating artistic work
- Encourage daily artistic expression

First Grade/Second Grade:

- Recognize how and why artistic choices are made
- Create dance, music, and theater
- Evaluate and discuss the purpose of artwork

Second Grade/Third Grade:

- Perform music, dance, and theater independently and as a group
- Analyze music, art, and theater from a variety of cultures
- Develop skills to provide constructive and helpful feedback when analyzing the arts



Media and Visual Arts Strategies

PreK/Kindergarten:

- Explore art making through materials and imaginative play
- Model why art is chosen and where to display
- Recognize, select, and react to art

Kindergarten/First Grade:

- Engage in imaginative play with materials and reflect on the process
- Discuss how artists present their artwork
- Reflect, compare, and categorize art

First Grade/Second Grade:

- Explore artistic materials and collaboratively create artwork
- Categorize art and describe how it is presented and who presents it
- Categorize artwork and express preferences

Second Grade/Third Grade:

- Use a variety of approaches and materials to create art and express meaning
- Examine the meaning of art and choices made by artists, cultures, and organizations to present it
- Identify, compare and contrast themes, characteristics, and functions of art works.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



In-Classroom Arts Experiences

- Assemble Collages of Collected Fall Leaves
- Assign Roles & Produce Dramatization of a Historical Event
- Build a 3D Butterfly or Bird
- Compose and Perform a Class Song
- Conduct an Author Study
- Construct a Group Mural of New York State
- Create an Assemblage of Found Objects
- Design a Class Logo
- Draw Comics or a Graphic Novel
- Incorporate Seeds or Grains in Making Musical Instruments
- Host an Arts Themed Library Unit
- Install Classroom Museum Exhibits
- Implement a Gallery Walk
- Invite Guest Artists from the Community
- Make Self-Portraits
- Perform a Mini Play
- Reenact a Fairy Tale with Student Created Puppets
- Recreate a Famous Painting in Person
- Research Famous Artists and Share Findings
- Sing NYS Folk Songs and Record Audio to Share
- Use Letter of the Week to Build a Song
- Use Nature as Inspiration for Movement
- Use Your Body to Spell a Word
- Write a Class Newspaper

Resources

Dance, Music, and Theater

[Backstage](#) | Article

[Carnegie Hall Kids](#) | Online Games

[Drama Trunk](#) | PDF

[The Kennedy Center](#) | Web Post

[PBS KIDS: Music Games](#) | Online Games

[PBS LearningMedia](#) | Dance, Music, Theater

Media and Visual Arts

[MetKids](#) | Online Interactive

[National Endowment for the Arts](#) | Article

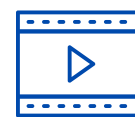
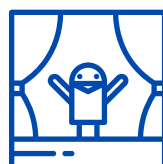
[NYSM Visual Thinking Strategies](#) | Guide

[PBS KIDS: Arts Games](#) | Online Games

[PBS LearningMedia](#) | Media Arts Resources

[PBS LearningMedia](#) | Visual Arts Resources

[Smithsonian Kids](#) | Games & Videos



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



The Arts

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Partner with a school based arts educator to dive more deeply into a unit. Request an 'in-district' field trip to watch older students perform a musical. Approach school administration about devoting time and resources to this work.

Connect with the arts through a variety of cultural institutions in your own community including art councils, art galleries, museums, theaters, even on your public broadcasting station!

There are also working artists all around us: actors, authors, dancers, graphic designers, illustrators, media makers, musicians, painters, photographers, sculptors, and more. Invite them to join the learning environment to share their story or lead a project.

Refer to pages 2 and 3 of this guide for more ideas and links to expanded learning opportunities.



Connection to Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education

The following guidelines from the [CR-S Education Framework](#) are just some examples of the ways integrating cultural education through the arts helps achieve a more culturally responsive sustaining education system:

- *Invite families and community members to speak or read in the classroom as a means to teach about topics that are culturally specific and aligned to the classroom curriculum and/or content area.*
- *Take field trips to community-learning sites, such as museums, parks, cultural centers, neighborhood recreational centers, and community centers, to foster students' cultural understanding and connection to the surrounding community.*
- *Incorporate cooperative learning activities to encourage understanding of diverse perspectives; support students working cooperatively toward goals; and highlight students' unique strengths in the group (e.g., public speaking, note-taking, writing, drawing, etc.).*

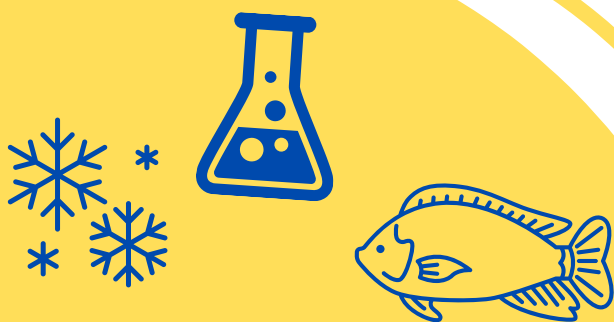


Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science



Physical Sciences

Life Sciences

Earth and Space Sciences



By offering hands-on activities, investigations, and chances for collaboration, we foster curiosity, creativity, scientific comprehension, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills in children. By igniting a love for exploration and discovery in young minds, we are shaping the next generation of innovative thinkers and issue solvers.

A culturally responsive and relevant science classroom embraces diversity and acknowledges the unique perspectives of each student. Integrating examples and references that relate to students' cultural backgrounds enhances the material's relevance and engagement. Encouraging collaboration and discussions helps students see themselves as valued contributors and problem solvers in the scientific community. Creating a supportive and inclusive environment nurtures curiosity, creativity, and a passion for learning in all students.

To ensure that our science classrooms are culturally responsive and relevant, it is essential to fully understand our students, including their cultural backgrounds, life experiences, and interests. Providing opportunities for students to see themselves as scientists is key.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science

Considerations

- What instructional approaches are currently being used in your classroom to implement science instruction?
- How do you tap into your students' natural interests of the natural world?
- How well do you know your students' cultural backgrounds, interests, and experiences?
- Do you provide opportunities for your students to ask questions and investigate their wonderings?
- How familiar are you with Inquiry-Based Learning?

Tips

- Use your students' natural questions and curiosities to guide instruction
- Utilize culturally rich, realistic fiction texts when studying a concept
- Invite curiosity into the classroom
- Explore and collaborate to find answers to questions through hands-on learning and play
- Provide children with time and space to explore
- Use mistakes as an opportunity to scaffold problem solving
- Encourage children to share their discoveries and further explore
- If you have not already, begin to explore the Inquiry-Based Learning instructional strategy and see how it can be incorporated into your classroom and what you are already teaching

Guiding Questions

What is science?

Where is science?

How can science help people?

Who is a scientist?

How do science investigations begin?

Why is science important?

How do scientist use different ways to study the world?

What is something that you are curious about?

Have you ever done an experiment?

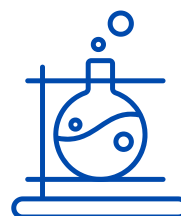
How is science in our everyday lives?

What does a scientist look like?

Why does a scientist investigate?

What jobs are there in science?

How are you a scientist?



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science Strategies

Prekindergarten/Kindergarten

- Model and support students in asking questions and defining a problem by leveraging their existing knowledge and experiences.
- Offer children engaging experiences and explorations of the natural world and designed world that encourage them to ask questions stemming from their observations.
- Plan and execute with guidance structured inquiry investigations that allow students to explore questions, test solutions, and make exciting discoveries with guidance.
- Provide students with chances to persevere through problems and make sense of a problem by using tools and creating models.
- Model and support students in using age-appropriate texts and/or use the media to obtain scientific information.
- Establish a welcoming classroom atmosphere where students can learn by demonstrating positive relationships that are accepting and appreciative of each other's questions and ideas.
- Allow time for students to collaborate with one another within an investigation.
- Model and support students in recording their observations, thoughts, and ideas using pictures or inventive writing.
- Demonstrate and support students in using observations and experimenting to communicate new information with others in oral and/or written forms using models and/or drawings about their scientific ideas.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science Strategies

First Grade/Second Grade

- Facilitate students in questioning and identifying a problem.
- Offer children engaging experiences and explorations of the natural world and designed world that encourage them to ask questions stemming from their observations.
- Model constructing an argument with evidence to support a claim for natural phenomena.
- Plan and execute controlled inquiry investigations that allow students to investigate a specific question or problem and make observations from several sources.
- Explicitly model and support gathering/recording data and providing evidence to answer a question, make comparisons, and look for patterns.
- Support students in using tools and materials to design a device or a simple model that solves a specific problem or a solution to a specific problem.
- Support students in analyzing observations and data to determine if a tool or model works as intended.
- Facilitate students in using age-appropriate texts and/or media to obtain scientific information.
- Facilitate collaborative investigations where students work together to answer a question.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science Strategies

Third Grade

- Provide opportunities to ask questions within investigations centered around patterns such as cause and effect.
- Offer students opportunities to identify a problem and supply them with the necessary tools and materials to create a new or enhanced solution for the problem.
- Offer opportunities and materials to develop models to describe a phenomenon.
- Model and support students in collaboratively planning and conducting investigations with peers.
- Encourage students to work together to generate data as the foundation for supporting evidence during investigations.
- Incorporate fair tests by utilizing controlled variables and taking into account the number of trials when conducting an investigation.
- Provide methods of collecting data to support an explanation of a phenomenon or to test a design solution.
- Support and scaffold analyzing gathered data.
- Support constructing an argument with evidence, data, and/or model.
- Model and represent data in tables and/or graphical displays.
- Support students in using evidence to support or construct an explanation.
- Demonstrate how to support a claim regarding the effectiveness of a solution to a problem by providing pertinent evidence of how it aligns with the criteria for solving the issue.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



In-Classroom Science Experiences

- *Perform science experiments using common classroom items based on grade level content, student interests and natural wonderings.*
- *Create models using hands on materials.*
- *Integrate STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) challenges related to the unit of study-involve students in addressing community problems or problems around the world that they can help resolve.*
- *Plan and carry out individual experiments based on student interest, and afterward, showcase their discoveries at a science fair.*
- *Invite guest scientists from diverse cultural backgrounds, either from the community or within your district to discuss their careers and experiences.*
- *Conduct a study of culturally diverse scientists in history.*
- *Embark on a virtual field trip to delve further into the realms of science outside of the classroom in diverse parts of the world.*
- *Use the distinctive characteristics of your community to lead Inquiry-Based Learning explorations or Service-Learning Projects.*
- *Utilize culturally responsive interactive read-alouds to help students grasp scientific concepts that impact diverse communities worldwide and gain insights from various perspectives. The setting of a narrative can serve as a culturally vibrant background to introduce scientific issues and ideas.*
- *Offer students positive role models by sharing lesser-known stories of scientific and historical figures from various parts of the world to emphasize that understanding the world is a collective human effort.*



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Resources

[edutopia](#) | Article
[Education Week](#) | Article
[National Math and Science Initiative](#) | Article
[Diverse STEM Picture Books](#) | Resource
[Virtual Field Trips](#) | Resource
[NYC Cultural Institutions](#) | Resource
[Science Archives](#) | Resource
[Share Science](#) | Videos
[Science Everywhere](#) | Website
[The Wonder of Science](#) | Resource
[PBS Kids](#) | Science Games
[Generation Genius](#) | Videos

Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

IBL is an instructional approach to learning where students take the lead in their learning process, starting with questions stemming from their own curiosity. This approach transforms both indoor and outdoor learning environments into lively spaces for exploration, fostering a scientific mindset among students. By posing questions, making decisions, and conducting investigations to find solutions, students actively engage in the learning process.

This instructional method not only captivates children's interest but also nurtures qualities like curiosity, collaboration, creativity and persistence, while enhancing problem-solving and critical thinking skills. Through IBL, students see themselves as scientists.

IBL is a great approach for delving into the interests and questions of every individual student. By grasping your students' interests, you gain insights into their backgrounds, paving the way for valuable learning experiences that nurture fundamental skills essential for their future endeavors. For more information about IBL and resources, visit NYSED's Office of Early Learning, Science Everywhere! webpage.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Science

Expanded Learning Opportunities

Collaborate with a local school's science educator to delve deeper into a specific unit. Organize an 'in-district' field trip to visit science teachers or a science lab by coordinating with school administration to secure time and resources for this venture.

Immerse yourself in the realm of science by connecting with various cultural institutions in your community like museums, gardens, zoos, or a local wildlife park.

Utilize the knowledge of professionals in diverse scientific fields such as doctors, zoologists, botanists, engineers, and more. Encourage their involvement in the learning environment by sharing experiences or leading projects. For more ideas and resources, refer to pages 2 and 3 of this guide for additional learning opportunities.



Connection to Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education

The following guidelines from the CR-S Education Framework are just some examples of the ways integrating cultural education through the arts helps achieve a more culturally responsive sustaining education system:

- *Engage students in youth participatory action research that empowers youth to be agents of positive change in their community.*
- *Help students identify their different learning styles in both classwork and homework and incorporate instructional strategies and assignments that are responsive to those learning styles.*
- *Provide students with opportunities to present to their peers through project-based or stations-based learning to leverage student experience and expertise.*

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies



- History of the United States and New York
- World History 
- Geography 
- Economics 
- Civics, Citizenship, and Government



Social Studies provides coordinated, systematic study that draws upon such disciplines as anthropology, archaeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, belief systems and sociology, as well as upon appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics and natural sciences. The primary purpose of Social Studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world (adapted from the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS] definition of Social Studies).

NYS Social Studies Framework's Content Sequence:
Kindergarten: Self and Others
First Grade: My Family and Other Families, Now and Long Ago
Second Grade: My Community and Other Communities
Third Grade: Communities around the World

<https://www.nysed.gov/standards-instruction/social-studies>

<https://www.nysed.gov/sites/default/files/programs/early-learning/pk-standards-resource-we-revised-2021.pdf>

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies

Considerations

- Young children have the capacity to use the skills of reasoning and inquiry to investigate social studies concepts as they explore how people interact in the world.
- Early childhood is a time when the foundations of social studies are established, and curricular standards should explicitly attend to engaging and developing young children's capacity for citizenship, democratic or civic activity and participation in decision-making, as well as critical disciplinary literacies.
- Early childhood educators should receive social studies-specific professional development that includes guidance on how to teach social studies to young learners to cultivate bias-free and discrimination-free communities.
- There is a need for the social studies community to engage in further research on early childhood social studies curriculum and instruction.

(from the National Council for Social Studies' Early Childhood Position Statement)

- Young children can utilize reasoning and inquiry skills to delve into social studies concepts, examining how individuals interact within the world.



Tips

- During a time designated for writing, topics offered by the teacher can encourage students to share their observations of daily life and their beliefs about the world. Students have opportunities to write about what they know and at the same time offer the teacher insights into their lived realities and perceptions of the world, insights that inform the planning of formal social studies lessons.
- When planning books for a read aloud, choose texts that are connected to the current social studies theme.
- Transition times or times when students are waiting for others such as when students are lining up to change classrooms for special subjects or recess can be used strategically for reinforcing social studies instruction. These include games such as "twenty questions" to identify people, places or things or "word analogies", in which the teacher prompts the students' expression of relationships between ideas using social studies content (For instance, doctor; hospital; teacher; school) can be played.
- Many local and state libraries have resources apart from books that they are willing to offer teachers for classroom use also. Culture kits or collections of artifacts (such as those described at www.famearts.org) are collections of materials students can handle.

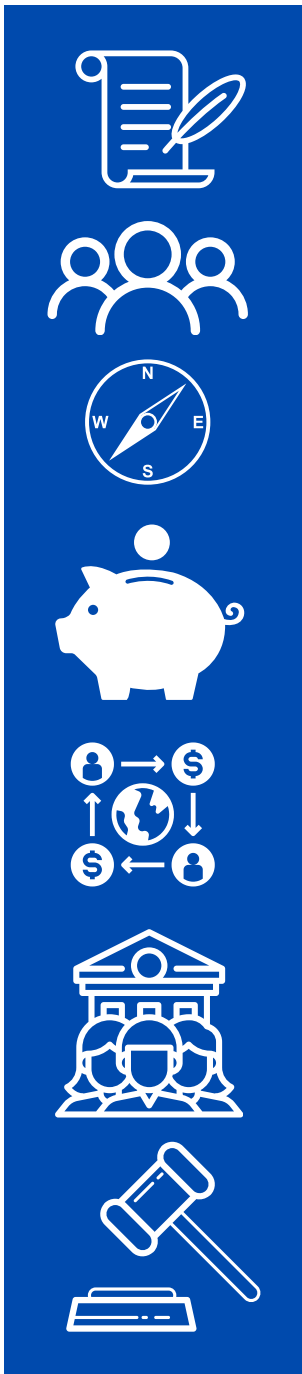
Taken from "Planning for Social Studies Learning Throughout the Day, Week and Year"; Social Studies and the Young Learner 18(1), pp. 29-32 ©2005 National Council for the Social Studies.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies



Guiding Questions

History

*What is history?
What happened in the past?
How can we know if we weren't there?
Why study history?
What can we learn from the past?
How am I connected to those in the past?
How do we know what really happened in the past?*

Geography

*What is geography?
Why is 'where' important?
What makes places unique and different?
How does geography, climate and natural resources affect the way people live and work?
How does where I live influence how I live?
Why do people move?
What do we mean by 'region'?
What stories do maps and globes tell?*

Economics

*What is economics?
Why do we have money?
What is the difference between 'needs' and 'wants'?
How does something acquire value?
What is it worth?
How much should it cost? Who decides?
Why do people work? Should everyone be expected to work?
What is the 'best' job for you?*

Civics, Citizenship and Government

*What is civics?
What are people's rights and duties as a citizen?
What is citizenship?
How can we show good citizenship?
How can we be productive citizens?
What is government?
What does the government do?
How does the government help people?*



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies Strategies

Prekindergarten/Kindergarten

- Extend frequent invitations to families to share their home languages, songs, games, stories and recipes with the class and to participate in daily classroom life.
- Create meaningful displays, such as photos of children and their families, and invite families to share the names and relationships of important people in their children's lives.
- Provide art materials such as paint, markers, crayons, and construction paper that demonstrate awareness of differences among children and their families and offer dolls with a variety of ethnic characteristics.
- Involve children in classroom decision-making processes, such as forming classroom rules, solving problems that arise in the classroom community and listening to others' ideas and perspectives.
- Take children on frequent neighborhood walks paying attention to patterns of life and work in the surrounding environment, including sounds and activities.
- Include books, puzzles, props and other materials representing a range of jobs and cultures. As children play, comment on the tools people use in their jobs.
- Look for opportunities to introduce props in the Dramatic Play area that reinforce children's understanding of community jobs. Pay particular attention to children's interests in the jobs of their families or community members.
- Help children expand their knowledge of how children and families in other places are alike and different from them by reading a variety of books and viewing developmentally appropriate technology that help children understand how people live throughout the world.
- Create social stories with children as a tool for resolving common social problems. Social stories guide children through real life situations and possible solutions.
- Ensure all books and classroom materials are free from bias. Include materials that depict a variety of people, cultures, genders and abilities depicted in non-stereotypical ways. NYSED's [Culturally Responsive Sustaining Education Resources for Educators and Families webpage](#) is a helpful starting point.

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies Strategies

First Grade/Second Grade/Third Grade

- Show What You Love About It - If you're excited to learn about and teach history, your students will notice and they will benefit.
- Connect the Past and Present - History becomes a lot more interesting when you help students connect what they are learning to things that are happening now.
- Move Past the Textbook - There are so many wonderful, authoritative, diverse resources out there that you can put in your students' hands! Your local library can often be a great place to find them.
- Use Visuals - Use primary sources to set the scene, whether it's a photograph, drawing, map, artwork, film clip or even costumes.
- Make It Hands-On - Bring in props to pass around. The students could hold a copy of the Constitution or even something more simple like items from the grocery store to teach about the state's products and industries. You can also do hands-on projects like making relief maps, creating biography buddies and cooking food.
- Incorporate Movement in the Form of:
 - a human timeline
 - acting out a skit (a situation, conversation, or event)
 - a simulation
 - teaching a dance from a certain region/time period
 - using hand motions along with mnemonic devices
 - use project-based learning and inquiry-based instruction
- Read Aloud - Use both nonfiction and historical fiction books for read aloud during a Social Studies lesson each day.
- Include Music and Art - Set up a gallery walk to analyze historical paintings, play music from a specific time period and make up new lyrics to contemporary songs to teach tricky concepts. Complete an art project for each unit you teach.
- Integrate Technology - Utilize social studies and geography websites and apps. Find ways for your students to learn about life long ago using technology.
- Let Students Be Part of It - Research your city/county/region/state. Carve out some time for students to share about their own families and backgrounds. Let them act out scenes from history, research topics that interest them and find interesting historical facts to share! Anything you can do to personalize history will make your lesson more interesting!
- Plan a Field Trip - Lots of museums and organizations have people who will visit the classrooms or take a digital field trips. Invite a guest speaker to do a presentation.



Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



In-Classroom Social Studies Experiences

Interactive Notebooks

These notebooks allow students to take information supplied by the teacher and merge it with their own thinking. These engaging notebooks are a place for students to not just house their work. In addition, they can use them to reflect, practice and demonstrate their learning.

Project-Based Learning

Key characteristics of Project-Based Learning include making the projects central to student learning, aligning them with content standards and ensuring they're authentic, engaging and encourage collaboration. Students also need opportunities to reflect on their work and receive meaningful feedback.

Consider the following when getting started:

- *Start social studies lessons with a guiding question.*
- *Ask students to evaluate their own work. Perhaps utilize a rubric or graphic organizer.*
- *Have students share what they think they need to learn and how they'll try to acquire that knowledge.*
- *Give students the chance to work together.*

Exploration Station

Read a story and then connect it by utilizing topic-associated items during the read aloud. When an item comes up in the story, have students select the correct item from the Exploration Station.

Historical Interpretations

Offer immersive opportunities that use interactive technologies. Provide engaging and tactile techniques to explore culture, community, and history.



Resources

[PBS Learning Media - Social Studies](#)

[NYSED Social Studies Framework](#)

[Integrating Social Studies in Elementary School Lessons](#)

[6 Museums With Exceptional Teacher Resources](#)

[Smithsonian - Educators](#)

[NYS Museum - Education](#)

[Virtual Field Trips](#)

[Nearpod - Virtual Reality for Social Studies](#)

[Using Online Field Trips and Tours in Social Studies](#)

[NAEYC - Knowledgeable and Engaged Young Citizens: Social Studies in Early Childhood](#)

[10 Best Social Studies Tools for Elementary School](#)

[Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People](#)

[How Social Studies Can Help Young Kids Make Sense of the World](#)

[Social Studies in Today's Early Childhood Curricula](#)

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Social Studies

Expanded Learning Opportunities

MAKE IT CROSS-CURRICULAR

One way to expand time on social studies is to integrate it with other content. A natural way to do this is by embedding lessons on history and civics into English Language Arts instruction.

MAKE IT PERSONAL

Your students will care more when what they're learning about hits close to home.

BRIDGE THE PAST WITH THE PRESENT

Help your students see why yesterday matters for today and tomorrow. Help them see why what's happening across the world matters to where they're standing right now.

KEEP IT REAL

Ask students to come up with a specific problem in the community that they'd like to work on collectively and solutions they can propose to policy makers or elected officials.

Refer to pages 2 and 3 of this guide for more ideas and links to expanded learning opportunities.



Connection to Culturally Responsive-Sustaining (CR-S) Education

The following guidelines from the [CR-S Education Framework](#) are just some examples of the ways integrating cultural education through the arts helps achieve a more culturally responsive sustaining education system:

- *Assess the physical environment of the classroom and school to determine whether a variety of diverse cultures, languages, orientations and identities are reflected, represented and valued. Promote a variety of perspectives that represent the diversity of the state of New York beyond designated icons, historical figures, months and holidays.*
- *Connect instructional content with the daily lives of students by using culturally-specific examples (e.g., music, movies, text) that tap into their existing interests, knowledge and youth culture.*
- *Pair traditional curricular content with digital and other media platforms that provide current and relevant context from youth culture.*

Cultural Connections

A framework and resource kit for P-3 learning



Additional Resources

[National Association for the Education of Young Children \(NAEYC\):
Advancing Equity in Early Childhood Education Position Statement](#)

[New York State Education Department \(NYSED\): Office of Cultural Education](#)

[New York State Education Department \(NYSED\): Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion](#)

[New York State Education Department \(NYSED\): P-12 Education | Office of Early Learning](#)

[PBS Parents: Exploring New Cultures with Your Child in Let's Go Luna!](#)

[PBS Parents: How to Teach Children About Cultural Awareness and Diversity](#)

[United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\):
What You Need to Know About Culture and Arts Education](#)

