

New draft kindergarten to Grade 6 (K-6) curriculum

Social studies

Overview

Social studies is the study of history, geography, economics, civics and citizenship, and government and politics. Students explore important questions and actively engage with issues to understand lessons from the past and to become active and well-informed citizens in their communities. Students use a knowledge-based curriculum and combine social science methods, including research, source evaluation and evidence interpretation, to enhance understanding, draw conclusions and build robust critical-thinking skills.

New draft curriculum content update summary

What we heard

We considered feedback from multiple engagement activities and heard some common themes:

- Content load – reduce content within some grades or learning outcomes
- Age-inappropriateness – some knowledge, understandings, and skills and procedures need to be better aligned with students’ developmental level in a specific grade; more pre-requisite learning is needed in some grades to support the knowledge, understandings, and skills and procedures
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit content – additional content is needed to support First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives; content needs to represent First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives and contributions authentically
- Diverse perspectives – additional content is needed to support understanding of Alberta’s diverse pluralistic society
- Critical thinking - skill development is needed to support learners with problem solving and critical engagement with content

What we updated

We made the following content updates:

- Content load – refined examples and reduced content in several grades
- Age-appropriateness – adjusted and or shifted content between grades for developmental appropriateness
- First Nations, Métis and Inuit content – included First Nations, Metis and Inuit histories, perspectives and contributions throughout K-6
- Diverse perspectives – recognized diverse perspectives, cultures, beliefs and contributions to support understanding of issues faced by society, such as discrimination and racism
- Critical thinking – strengthened language in learning outcomes and knowledge, understanding, and skills and procedures across K-6 to support competency development

Current and new draft curriculum comparison

The following table shows how elements in the current K-6 social studies curriculum, published in 2005, compare to the new draft curriculum. The comparisons provide examples and do not represent all the changes that were made.

	Current (2005) curriculum	New draft (2024) examples
Disciplinary knowledge and skills	History, geography, civics, economics and other social studies-related disciplines are not addressed in a consistent way across every grade.	Content on history, geography, economics, politics and citizenship is present in every grade.
Citizenship	Focus on inclusion of civics varies by grade.	Citizenship is an organizing idea across all grades. Students learn about civic actions and responsibilities in all grades.

First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives	First Nations, Métis and Inuit perspectives are not addressed consistently across grades.	First Nations, Métis and Inuit histories, contributions and perspectives build from year to year, including treaty rights and agreements.
Diverse perspectives	References to diverse people and communities vary from grade to grade. Only one reference to Black history (in Grade 5).	Starting in kindergarten, learners explore cultural and ethnic diversity in the classroom, school and community. As learning progresses, students engage with diversity across Canada and throughout the world.

Snapshot by grade

The snapshots below provide an overview of the content students will explore in each grade.

Kindergarten: Culture, tradition and community

Children explore tradition, history, culture and language as they:

- develop a sense of self in relation to their community and others
- examine needs and wants, belonging and working together
- understand rules, expectations and civic responsibility

Content covered in kindergarten includes:

- places in communities
- culture and traditions
- needs and wants
- leaders in communities
- civic responsibilities

Grade 1: Local communities and cultures

Students explore traditions and cultures in their local community as they:

- develop understanding of themselves and those around them to appreciate the ways in which people work together
- understand roles and responsibilities in the community

Content covered in Grade 1 includes:

- key features of our physical world, including landmarks
- First Nations, Métis, Inuit and francophone communities
- goods and services, buying and selling
- respecting diverse cultures
- supporting cultural understanding and collaboration
- Canada's official symbols

Grade 2: Canada (Communities and heritage)

Students develop an understanding of Canada and build an appreciation of the diversity of people and places as they:

- explore Canada's Indigenous communities
- build an understanding of Canada's political structure and decision-making process, and engage in democratic discussions

Content covered in Grade 2 includes:

- Canada's physical regions, provinces and territories
- leaders in Canada, including the prime minister, the premiers, the King, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders
- traditions and heritages across Canada, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit

- forming opinions and distinguishing facts from opinions
- basic economic concepts of buying and selling and exchanging goods to meet needs and wants in communities

Grade 3: Alberta and the prairies

Students explore the people and places in Alberta and Western Canada as they:

- develop understanding of the contributions and perspectives of diverse Albertans over time
- learn stories of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, francophone and immigrant communities
- recognize Alberta's unique geographic features, official symbols and government structure

Content covered in Grade 3 includes:

- physical geography of Alberta
- First Nations and Métis contributions to Alberta
- francophone settlement and contributions to Alberta
- discrimination and racism in Alberta
- provincial and municipal governments
- Alberta's official symbols
- Alberta's natural resources
- voting, charitable giving and volunteerism

Grade 4: Colonial Canada and Confederation

Students explore the arrival of French explorers and traders, and investigate the transition from French to British rule and events leading up to Confederation as they:

- develop an understanding of the establishment of Canada
- explore how the French and British interacted with First Nations

Content covered in Grade 4 includes:

- Jacques Cartier and early settlements
- Samuel de Champlain and the establishment of Quebec City and New France
- the Treaty of Paris and the transfer of Canada to the British
- United Empire Loyalists
- the Rebellions of 1837, responsible government and Confederation
- the fur trade and Canada's natural resources
- citizenship rights and responsibilities

Grade 5: Ancient civilizations

Students explore the enduring legacies of civilizations as they:

- develop appreciation of ancient societies and their contributions to contemporary life
- investigate the systems and structures of civilizations and empires
- examine major innovations and discoveries of the past and their influence on modern society

Content covered in Grade 5 includes:

- ancient civilizations (China, Greece, India, Rome, Persia and Arab)
- trade networks, farming, agriculture and the importance of rivers
- authoritarian governments, social structures
- ways ancient civilizations and empires influence society today
- the origins of taxes and their use by government

Grade 6: Democracy (History, principles and operation)

Students explore the principles of democracy, including history and development, as they:

- explore the history, principles and operation of democracy
- investigate the historical evolution of democracy
- examine the importance of active and responsible civic participation as the foundation of a democratic society

- compare select democratic decision-making models used today

Content covered in Grade 6 includes:

- Athenian democracy, Roman Republic and Haudenosaunee Confederacy
- creation of laws, rights and freedoms
- discrimination and racism in Canada
- provincial government
- formal and informal civic participation
- direct democracy vs. representative democracy
- economic freedom and personal choice