



New Jersey Student Learning Standards

Social Studies Disciplinary Concepts and Core Ideas

The *Disciplinary Concepts and Core Ideas* play an integral role in the framing of the standards by making connections among the performance expectations. Disciplinary concepts incorporate key concepts, principles, theories and processes of social studies. The disciplinary concepts are divided among four main strands. The chart below groups the disciplinary concepts by their corresponding strands.

Civics, Government and Human Rights	Geography, People and the Environment	Economics, Innovation and Technology	History, Culture and Perspectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic and Political Institutions • Participation and Deliberation • Democratic Principles • Processes and Rules • Human and Civil Rights • Civic Mindedness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial Views of the World • Human Population Patterns • Human Environment Interaction • Global Interconnections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic Ways of Thinking • Exchange and Markets • National Economy • Global Economy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity and Change • Understanding Perspectives • Historical Sourcing and Evidence • Claims and Argumentation

The following provides core ideas within each disciplinary concept. Core ideas help to prioritize the important ideas and core processes that are central to a discipline and have lasting value beyond the classroom. They provide clear guidance as to what should be the focus of learning by the end of each grade band level (i.e., end of grades 2, 5, 8, and 12). Core ideas can be utilized by teachers to ensure students are walking away from each unit with the essential understandings, ready to build upon that knowledge in the next grade band. By examining the core ideas across the grade bands, teachers can gain an understanding of what students know coming into their classes and what they will need to know in the coming grades.

Civics, Government, and Human Rights

Civic and Political Institutions

The study of civic and political institutions includes concepts of the law, politics, and government that are essential to understanding the important institutions of society and the principles these institutions are intended to reflect.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local community and government leaders have roles and responsibilities to provide services for their community members. • Rules for all to live by are a result of the actions of government, organizations, and individuals. • The actions of individuals and government affect decisions made for the common good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In a representative democracy, individuals play a role in how government functions. • In a representative democracy, individuals elect representatives to act on the behalf of the people. • Levels of government (i.e., local, state, and federal) have different powers and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and civil institutions impact all aspects of people’s lives. • Governments have different structures which impact development (expansion) and civic participation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic and political institutions address social and political problems at the local, state, tribal, national, and/or international level. • Constitutions, laws, treaties, and international agreements seek to maintain order at the national, regional, and international levels of governance. • Constitutions establish a system of government that has powers, responsibilities, and limits that can change over time.

Participation and Deliberation

Participation requires learning about public issues and determining how and when to take action to address them. Deliberation requires civic dispositions, such as honesty, mutual respect, cooperation, and attentiveness to multiple perspectives that individuals should use when they interact with each other on public matters. Deliberation includes learning processes that enable citizens to engage in constructive, informed, and decisive dialogue about important public issues. Both participation and deliberation require an understanding of the diverse arguments regarding the underlying principles as well as founding documents and their meanings.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When all members of the group are given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process, everyone’s voice is heard. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through participation in the decision-making process (e.g., voting, petitions, contacting elected officials, serving in their community) people can initiate change. • Effective conflict resolution is possible when evidence, diverse perspectives, and intended/unintended consequences are considered. • A major role of citizens in a representative democracy is to make responsible decisions about who should govern. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic participation and deliberation are the responsibility of every member of society. • Members of society have the obligation to become informed of the facts regarding public issues and to engage in honest, mutually respectful discourse to advance public policy solutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic participation and deliberation are essential characteristics of individuals who support democracy and its principles. • Civic deliberation requires civic dispositions, attentiveness to multiple perspectives, and understanding diverse perspectives.

Democratic Principles

Understanding democratic principles, such as equality, freedom, liberty and respect for individual rights, and how they apply to both official institutions and informal interactions among citizens is a fundamental concept of being a citizen in a democratic republic.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The democratic principles this country was founded upon guide the actions of local, state and national government (e.g., authority, rights, responsibility, fairness, privacy, freedom to make choices). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fundamental rights that allow democratic societies to function can be seen at all levels of government in society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The principles of the United States government are based on political philosophies, ideas, and experiences of earlier governments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Democratic principles concerning universal human rights, concepts of equality, and the commitment to human freedom are commonly expressed in fundamental documents, values, laws, and practices. Social and political systems throughout time have promoted and denied civic virtues and democratic principles. Personal interests and perspectives impact the application of civic virtues, democratic principles, constitutional rights, and universal human rights.

Processes and Rules

Processes and rules are how groups of people make decisions, govern themselves, and address public problems. This includes problems at all scales, from a classroom to local, state, and national public policy to the agreements among nations. Additionally, this includes studying how various rules, processes, laws, and policies work, which requires an understanding of political systems and defining and addressing public problems.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rules and people who have authority are necessary to keep everyone safe, resolve conflicts, and treat people fairly.• Processes and rules should be fair, consistent, and respectful of the human rights of all people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are different processes for establishing rules and laws.• Rules, laws, and policies are designed to protect the rights of people, help resolve conflicts, and promote the common good.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In a democratic government, there are multiple processes by which individuals can influence the creation of rules, laws, and public policy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Historical, contemporary, and emerging processes, rules, laws, and policies are modified as societies change in an effort to promote the common good and strive to protect human rights.

Human and Civil Rights

Human rights are universal, inalienable, and interdependent claims that derive from the inherent worth of every individual. They are the birthright of every human being regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status. Human rights include the right to life and liberty, freedom from slavery and torture, freedom of opinion and expression, the right to work and education, and many more. These universal rights are not granted by states or governments but are inherent to every person.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals may be different, but all have the same basic human rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is the responsibility of individuals and institutions at the state, national, and international levels to promote human rights. Individuals have the right to be safe and not to be bullied or discriminated against. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and civil rights include political, social, economic, and cultural rights. Social and political systems have protected and denied human rights (to varying degrees) throughout time. Fundamental rights are derived from the inherent worth of each individual and include civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and civil rights support the worth and dignity of the individual. Human rights serve as a foundation for democratic beliefs and practices. Governments around the world support universal human rights to varying degrees.

Civic Mindedness

Civic mindedness is grounded in democratic principles and promotes civic virtues. Responsible citizens are informed and thoughtful, participate in their communities, act politically, and embrace civic dispositions. Important civic dispositions for a democratic society include civility, open-mindedness, compromise, and toleration of diversity. In a democratic society, individuals show concern for others' rights and welfare, fairness, trust in humanity and political systems, and a sense of public duty. The belief that one's own actions – alone or in combination with others – can make a difference is closely related to democratic principles and participation.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certain character traits can help individuals become productive members of their community.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Certain dispositions help individuals contribute to the health of American democracy.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The well-being of a democracy depends upon informed and effective participation of individuals committed to civility, compromise, and toleration of diversity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An understanding of the role of an individual as a member of a state, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, how civic values are determined and practiced, and examples of how civic identity and values in one place are different in other places, is essential.

Geography, People and the Environment

Spatial Views of the World

Spatial views of the world focus on the creation of maps and use of geospatial technologies. Creating maps and other geographical representations is an essential and enduring part of seeking new geographic knowledge that is personally and socially useful and that can be applied in making decisions and solving problems. Once maps or other representations are created, it prompts new questions concerning the locations, spaces, and patterns portrayed.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A map is a symbolic representation of selected characteristics of a place.• Geographic data can be used to identify cultural and environmental characteristics of places.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maps and other geographic representations, geospatial technologies, and spatial thinking can be used to understand and communicate information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geospatial technologies and representations help us to make sense of the distribution of people, places and environments, and spatial patterns across Earth’s surface.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geographic data can be used to analyze spatial patterns.• Maps, satellite images, photographs, and other representations can be used to explain relationships between the locations of places and regions, and changes in their environmental characteristics.

Human Population Patterns

Human population, patterns and movement focus on the size, composition, distribution, and movement of human populations and how they are fundamental and active features on Earth’s surface. This includes understanding that the expansion and redistribution of the human population affects patterns of settlement, environmental changes, and resource use. Patterns and movements of population also relate to physical phenomena including climate variability, landforms, and locations of various natural hazards and their effects on population size, composition, and distribution.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Physical and human characteristics affect where people live (settle). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Regions form and change as a result of unique physical conditions, economies, and cultures. Patterns of settlement differ markedly from region to region, place to place, and time to time. The experiences people have when they migrate to new places differs for many reasons, including whether it is by choice or condition. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The diffusion of ideas and cultural practices are impacted by the movement of people and advancements in transportation, communication, and technology. Relationships between humans and environments impact spatial patterns of settlement and movement. Global changes in population distribution patterns affect changes in land use in particular places. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demographic shifts and migration patterns both influence and are impacted by social, economic, and political systems. Environmental and cultural characteristics of a place or region influence spatial patterns.

Human Environment Interaction

Human-environment interactions are essential aspects of human life in all societies and they occur at local-to-global scales. Human-environment interactions happen both in specific places and across broad regions. Culture influences the locations and the types of interactions that occur. Earth’s human systems and physical systems are in constant interaction and have reciprocal influences flowing among them. These interactions result in a variety of spatial patterns that require careful observation, investigation, analysis, and explanation.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Environmental characteristics influence how and where people live. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human activities affect environmental characteristics of places or regions resulting in positive and negative impacts. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural patterns and economic decisions influence environments and the daily lives of people. • The physical and human characteristics of places and regions are connected to human identities and cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human settlement activities impact the environmental and cultural characteristics of specific places and regions. • Political and economic decisions throughout time have influenced cultural and environmental characteristics. • Long-term climate variability has influenced human migration and settlement patterns, resource use, and land uses at local-to-global scales.

Global Interconnections

Global interconnections occur in both human and physical systems. Earth is a set of interconnected ecosystems of which humans are an influential part. Many natural phenomena have no perceptible boundaries. For example, the oceans are one dynamic system. The atmosphere covers the entire planet. Land and water forms shift over geological eons. Many life forms diffuse from place to place and bring environmental changes with them. Humans have spread across the planet, along with their cultural practices, artifacts, languages, diseases, and other attributes. All of these interconnections create complex spatial patterns at multiple scales that continue to change over time.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global interconnections occur between human and physical systems across different regions of the world. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interactions between humans has led to the spread of cultural practices, artifacts, languages, diseases, and other attributes as well as changes in environmental characteristics. In an interconnected world, increased collaboration is needed by individuals, groups, and nations to solve global issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The environmental characteristics of places and production of goods influences the spatial patterns of world trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global interconnections create complex spatial patterns at multiple scales that continue to change over time.

Economics, Innovation and Technology

Economic Ways of Thinking

Economic decision-making involves setting goals and identifying the resources available to achieve those goals. Economic decision-making includes weighing the additional benefit of an action against the additional cost. Investigating the incentives that motivate people is an essential part of analyzing economic decision-making.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals make decisions based on their needs, wants, and the availability of resources. • Limited resources influence choices. • Economic decisions made by individuals and governments should be informed by an effective decision-making process (e.g., saving, spending, acquiring debt, investing). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic decision-making involves setting goals and identifying the resources available to achieve those goals. • An economy accounts for the benefits and costs of individual choices in dealing with the scarcity of finite resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic decision-making involves setting goals, weighing costs and benefits, and identifying the resources available to achieve those goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources impact what is produced and employment opportunities. • Societies make decisions about how to produce and distribute goods and services and these decisions are influenced by the control of the means of production. • Economic ways of thinking are influenced by economists, economic theories, and economic laws (e.g., Smith, Malthus, Ricardo, Marx, Schumpeter, Keynes, Friedman).

Exchange and Markets

Exchange is when people voluntarily exchange goods and services and expect to gain as a result of the trade. Markets exist to facilitate the exchange of goods and services. Comparison of benefits and costs helps identify the circumstances under which government action in markets is in the best interest of society and when it is not.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goods and services are produced and exchanged in multiple ways. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of human capital, physical capital, and/or natural resources has contributed to the specialization of trade and production. • The exchange of goods and services can have negative and positive effects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People voluntarily exchange goods and services when all parties expect to gain as a result of the trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since most choices involve a little more of one thing and a little less of something else, economic decision-making includes weighing the additional benefit of the action against the additional cost. • The specialization of labor leads to greater efficiency in the means of production and the circular flow of goods and services between markets through a medium of exchange. • Governments affect both public and private markets through regulation, taxation, budget allocations, subsidies, tariffs, price regulation, and policies that increase or reduce production possibilities.

National Economy

The national economy includes studying how the changes in the amounts and qualities of human capital, physical capital, and natural resources influence current and future economic conditions and standards of living. All markets working together influence economic growth and fluctuations in well-being. (Monetary and fiscal policies are often designed and used in attempts to moderate fluctuations and encourage growth under a wide variety of circumstances.)

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The availability of resources influences current and future economic conditions. • Governments play an economic role in the lives of individuals and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A nation's economy is influenced by its government, human and physical capital, availability of resources, and technological progress. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A national economy includes studying the changes in the amounts and qualities of human capital, physical capital, and natural resources. • The production and consumption of goods and services influence economic growth, well-being and quality of life. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multiple economic indicators are used to measure the health of an economy. • Governments and financial institutions influence monetary and fiscal policies. • Advancements in technology and investments in capital goods and human capital increase economic growth and standards of living.

Global Economy

The global economy is the system of trade and industry across the world that has emerged due to globalization. Economic globalization occurs with cross-border movement of goods, services, technology, information, and human, physical, and financial capital. Understanding why people specialize and trade, and how that leads to increased economic interdependence, are fundamental steps in understanding how the world economy functions. While trade provides significant benefits, it is not without costs. Comparing those benefits and costs is essential in evaluating policies to influence trade among individuals and businesses in different countries.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are benefits to trading goods and services with other countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased economic interdependence among nations is a result of trade, sharing of ideas, and innovation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The global economy is the system of trade and industry across the world that has emerged due to globalization. • Economic interdependence is impacted by increased specialization and trade. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global economic activities involve decisions based on national interests, the exchange of different units of exchange, decisions of public and private institutions, and the ability to distribute goods and services safely. • Economic globalization affects economic growth, labor markets, human rights guarantees, the environment, resource allocation, income distribution, and culture.

History, Culture, and Perspectives

Continuity and Change

Change and continuity over time require assessing similarities and differences between historical periods and between the past and present. It also involves understanding how a change in one area of life relates to a change in other areas, bringing together political, economic, intellectual, social, cultural and other factors. Understanding the interrelation of patterns of change requires evaluating the context within which events unfolded in order not to view events in isolation, and to be able to assess the significance of specific individuals, groups, and developments.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical timelines put events in chronological order to help people understand the past. • Understanding the past helps to make sense of the present. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological sequencing helps us track events over time. • Interactions of people and events throughout history have shaped the world we experience today. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological sequencing helps us understand the interrelationship of historical events. • Political, economic, social, and cultural factors both change and stay the same over time. • Historical events may have single, multiple, and direct and indirect causes and effects. • Historical events and developments are shaped by social, political, cultural, technological, and economic factors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chronological sequencing serves as a tool for analyzing past and present events. • Historical events and developments were shaped by the unique circumstances of time and place as well as broader historical contexts. • There are multiple and complex causes and effects of historical events. • Understanding the interrelated patterns of change by examining multiple events allows for a clearer understanding of the significance of individuals and groups.

Understanding Perspectives

Understanding perspectives requires recognizing the multiplicity of points of view in the past, which makes it important to seek out a range of sources on any historical question. One must recognize that perspectives change over time, so that historical understanding requires developing a sense of empathy with people in the past whose perspectives might be very different from those of today. Analyzing perspectives requires understanding how historical contexts shape people’s perspectives.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two or more individuals can have a different understanding of the same event. • Respecting and understanding the views of others helps one learn about various perspectives, thoughts, and cultures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events may be viewed differently based on one's perspective. • Historical records are shaped by the society that the creator lived in. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An individual’s perspective is impacted by one’s background and experiences. • Perspectives change over time. • Historical contexts and events shaped and continue to shape people’s perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To better understand the historical perspective, one must consider historical context. • Complex interacting factors influence people’s perspective.

Historical Sourcing and Evidence

Historical sourcing and evidence are based on a review of materials and sources from the past. Examining sources often leads to further questions as well as answers in a spiraling process of inquiry. Determining the values and limitations of sources is a process that involves taking into account features of the source itself, such as its creator, date, purpose, and content in order to assess the validity and reliability of the source.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The nature of history involves stories of the past preserved in a variety of sources. • Historians analyze accounts of history through a variety of sources, including differing accounts of the same event. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There are a variety of sources that help us understand the past. • Our understanding of the past deepens through analysis of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical sourcing and evidence are based on a review of materials and sources from the past. • Examining historical sources may answer questions but may also lead to more questions. • Historians consider the relevance and validity of sources to understand the perspectives of those involved when evaluating historical arguments. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical sources and evidence provide an understanding of different points of view about historical events.

Claims and Argumentation

Claims are statements, potentially arguable, about what is valid/true and about what should be done or believed. Claims can address issues of change over time, the relevance of sources, the perspectives of those involved and many other topics. Claims must be based on evidence. Argumentation is a social process of two or more people(s) making arguments, responding to one another and modifying or defending their positions accordingly. Arguments are claims backed by reasons that are supported by evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations into a reasoned argument about the past.

By the end of grade 2	By the end of grade 5	By the end of grade 8	By the end of grade 12
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Historians create arguments outlining ideas or explanations based on evidence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Historians use evidence from multiple sources to support their claims and arguments about the past.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Historians analyze claims within sources for perspective and validity.Historians develop arguments using evidence from multiple relevant historical sources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Evidence from multiple relevant historical sources and interpretations can be used to develop a reasoned argument about the past.