

From Curiosity to Citizenship:

**Building Civic-Minded Learners Through
Inquiry, Discourse, 3D Modeling**

Justin Karkow

VP, Teaching & Learning



Today's Agenda

Curiosity Launch: Notice & Wonder

2: Coverage vs. Inquiry

3: Inquiry Immersion

4: Structured Civic Discourse

5: 3D Modeling as Civic Inquiry

Close: From Curiosity to Citizenship



SOCIAL STUDIES
ESSENTIALS



Driving Question:

How do we move from teaching social studies as information acquisition to teaching it as civic participation?



SOS Learning Activity



Notice & Wonder



SOCIAL STUDIES
ESSENTIALS









"C.P. & U.P. join, Promontory Point, Utah.." Discovery Education, IRC, 2005, <https://app.discoveryeducation.com/learn/player/6d3a2b81-2ba8-43e7-bcba-34336c8e8ff3>.



Activate Thinking

Spark curiosity, tap into prior knowledge, and prime student engagement.



Build Knowledge

Support students with making connections and acquiring new knowledge related to a topic.



Apply Learning

Provide opportunities for students to practice, develop skills, and use what they have learned.



BIG IDEA

After viewing magnified sections of a Discovery Education image, students are tasked with making predictions about what the image is and what they will be studying.

Half the Story is an engaging way to introduce a topic or unit of study. Students are challenged with making predictions and considering other perspectives as the strategy unfolds.

Marzano, R. (2010). *Teaching inference. Educational Leadership*, 67(7), 80-01.

SKILLS

- Citing Evidence
- Identifying Key Ideas & Details
- Identifying Point of View & Purpose
- Inferring & Predicting





What do you notice?
What do you wonder?

US History: New Horizons: Westward Expansion



"Our *manifest destiny* [is] to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of our yearly multiplying millions." John L. O'Sullivan, 1845

US History: New Horizons: Westward Expansion



What impact did Manifest Destiny have on the growth and development of the United States?

A group of diverse young children are participating in a recycling activity in a grassy park. In the foreground, a boy in a white shirt and brown pants is leaning over a large green recycling bin, which has a white recycling symbol on it. A girl in a striped shirt and dark pants is also leaning over the bin. Other children are in the background, some holding smaller green bins. The scene is outdoors with trees and a clear sky.

Coverage vs. Inquiry



SOCIAL STUDIES
ESSENTIALS

Left



Right



*Social Studies
is primarily about
learning facts and
events.*

© 2005 Instructional Resources Corporation

*Social Studies
is primarily about
investigating questions
and problems.*

*What challenges prevent
inquiry-based social studies?*



Inquiry Immersion





How Did the Transcontinental Railroad Change Travel, Trade, and Settlement?





SOCIAL STUDIES ESSENTIALS

UNIT 4

Expansion, Technology, and Reform

How were different groups of people impacted by the changes that occurred in the United States from the 1800s to the 1860s?



LESSON 3



The Transcontinental Railroad

Students will describe how the Transcontinental Railroad changed travel, trade, and settlement.



- Or -

DiscoveryEducation.com

Username: ISTELive26

Password: Discovery

Intentional Instructional Design and Throughlines

K–1

Build Foundations

- Videos & stories
- Emergent literacy
- Speaking and listening



2–3

Strengthen Skills

- Short text
- Small-group writing
- Image-based support



4–5

Apply and Analyze

- Context-rich lessons
- Historical thinking
- Middle and High School inquiry prep



Throughline

**narrative → reading & writing in social studies → disciplinary literacy → inquiry →
primary & secondary sources**

Social Studies Essentials *Units at-a-Glance*



	Kinder	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
Unit 1	Who Am I?	Citizenship in Our Classroom and Community	Levels of Government and Government Services	How Communities Change Over Time	The Northeast Region	Indigenous Societies and Exploration
Unit 2	Rules, Responsibilities, and Being Helpful	Patriotism and Symbols of the United States	Geography	Ancient Communities	The Southeast Region	Colonial America and Democratic Ideas
Unit 3	My Home and Community	Leaders and Government	Human-Environment Interaction	Important Events and People in Early U.S. History	The Midwest Region	The American Revolution and Founding Documents
Unit 4	Time and Traditions	Time and History Foundations	History and Heritage	Citizens and Government	The Southwest Region	Expansion, Technology, and Reform
Unit 5	Geography	Economics	Economics in Daily Life	Economics in Business	The West Region	Civil War and Reconstruction



Instructional Minutes

- 5 units per grade
- 6 lessons in each unit
- K/1 – 40 minutes a week
- 2/3 – 60 minutes a week
- 4/5 – 80 minutes a week

Assessment Details

- Age-appropriate summative and formative in both units & lessons
- Item types vary – include multiple choice, drawing, drag & drop, audio response



Structured Civic Discourse

© 2005 Instructional Resources Corporation

SOCIAL STUDIES
ESSENTIALS

Agree

**Strongly
Agree**

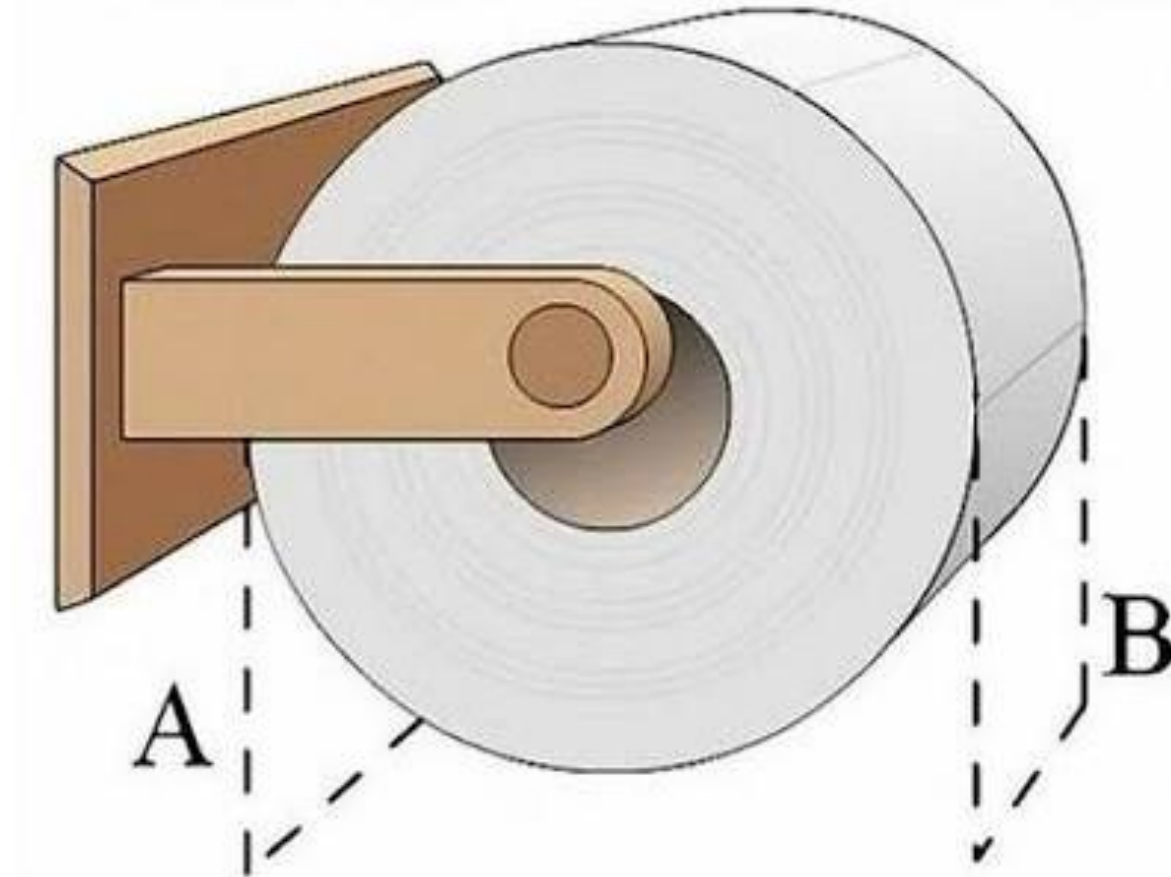
SOS Learning Activity

Four Corners

Disagree

**Strongly
Disagree**

*A toilet roll holder should ideally face
"under" (with the loose end of the paper
hanging in the back, toward the wall)*





VOTE

*Social studies should be
integrated into literacy
instruction rather than taught
separately.*

A large American flag is shown waving on a tall metal pole against a clear blue sky. The flag features the standard stars and stripes, with the stars in the upper left corner. The flagpole has a gold-colored finial at the top.

*Current events should be a regular part of
K-8 social studies instruction.*

Elementary students are too young to engage in civic action.





As you return to your seat...

**What made this conversation
constructive rather than divisive?**

3D Modeling as Civic Inquiry



East Meets West

AI Investigation

Social Studies

Transcontinental finished
The Way East

May 10,
1869





From Curiosity to Citizenship

SOS Instructional Strategy



SNOWBALL FIGHT

SKILLS

- Citing Evidence
- Identifying Key Ideas & Details
- Questioning
- Summarizing

BIG IDEA

Students watch a video segment to gain new knowledge, write their new learning on paper and share their thinking using a “snowball fight” format. Students crumple their responses and throw them into the center of the room. Next, students select a new “snowball” and add key ideas to the original statement.

Snowball Fight is a great strategy to promote thinking, reflection, and sharing between peers.

Mackay, R. F. "Playing to Learn: Panelists at Stanford Discussion Say Using Games as an Educational Tool Provides Opportunities for Deeper Learning." Stanford University. Stanford, 1 Mar. 2013. Web. 17 Apr. 2016.



PHASES OF LEARNING



Become
Interested



Commit



Engage



Make Sense



Practice



Apply & Find
Meaning

*One shift I want to
make in social studies
instruction is...*

Session Schedule



Sunday, June 28

11:30 AM – 12:20 PM

Igniting Future Pathways:
Bringing Careers to Life with Free,
Real-World Learning



1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

AI in the Classroom: Practical Tools,
Smart Workflows, Future-Ready
Teaching Strategies

IBM SkillsBuild

Monday, June 29

8:00 AM – 8:50 AM

Igniting Innovators Breakfast:
Real World STEM Problem Solving
with 3M Young Scientists



9:30 AM – 10:20 AM

Beyond the Prompt: How AI Is
Transforming Student Creativity
and Engagement

10:30 AM - 11:20 AM

From Compliance to Curiosity:
Digital Citizenship in 2026



IBM SkillsBuild

1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

Pathways to Possibility Playground:
Career Readiness for All Students



3:00 PM – 3:50 PM

From Curiosity to Citizenship:
Building Civic-Minded Learners
Through Inquiry & 3D Modeling

Tuesday, June 30

10:00 AM – 10:50 AM

Cracking the Literacy Code:
Teaching Students to Read, Write
& Think Across Subjects



11:00 AM – 11:50 AM

Building a Systemwide Instructional
Model That Makes Learning Stick

1:00 PM – 1:50 PM

From Telling to Thinking: Disrupting
Math Instruction That Doesn't Work

2:00 PM – 2:50 PM

Valuable Screen Time!
How Industry Partnerships Bring
the World to Students



DENSI 2026: Powering Progress

Join educators from across the country for hands-on learning, inspiring conversations, and practical strategies you can take straight back to your classroom.

July 14 & 15, 2026 / 10:00 – 3:00 PM ET



Move teaching forward | Practical, classroom-ready strategies educators can use right away to support student engagement, innovation, and growth.

Strengthen your impact with Discovery Education | Learn new ways to use DE tools more deeply, creatively, and confidently to amplify teaching and learning.

Connect with educators who get it | Join a passionate, supportive community of educators to share ideas, spark inspiration, and learn together - no travel required.

Stay ahead of what's next in education | Explore timely topics shaping today's classrooms, with guidance from trusted voices and experienced practitioners.



Register at the QR code or link below:
<https://bit.ly/4xzcBOE>

Your Summer Playbook for Tier 1 Instruction That Sticks

Join Bryan Goodwin, CEO of McREL Institute, and Stephanie Workman-Bolden, SVP of Partner Success at Discovery Education, for a practical session designed to help districts turn summer planning into stronger instruction this fall.

Virtual Event

Wednesday, July 8

1:00 PM ET | 10:00 AM PT

SCAN THE QR CODE OR VISIT bit.ly/4vMeGFf



THANK YOU!

