Session Summary
This introductory session addresses two fundamental questions: Why do we teach social studies? and How can we bring social studies concepts to life for students? Because teaching social studies entails creating effective citizens, teachers need strategies to help students understand its relevance in their lives. To help you improve your teaching, in this session you will:

• Explore reasons for teaching social studies.
• Distinguish between deep and fragile knowledge.
• Analyze lessons using NCSS themes and best-practice methodology.
• Incorporate content and methods in your own teaching.

Learning Goals
At the end of this session, you will be able to:

• Define teaching for deep understanding.
• Connect content with methodology.
• Apply elements of powerful teaching and learning.

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: You will need to make copies of the following materials for all participants (pages 16–26):

Learning and Understanding in Social Studies • Viewing Chart
Powerful Teaching and Learning • Developing and Analyzing a Lesson
Summary
Explore

Key Concepts

• Social studies
• NCSS themes
• Fragile knowledge
• Deep understanding
• Powerful teaching and learning

Readings

Before arriving for this session, read each of the articles listed below to learn how key concepts apply to students’ deep understanding of social studies. As you read, look for these concepts, their definitions, and examples of each.

After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions. Copy the Reading Questions form on pages 14–15.

1. What are the key elements of the NCSS definition of social studies?
2. What is the role of social studies in the general curriculum?
3. Briefly describe the 10 themes of social studies. What academic discipline(s) provide the foundation for each theme?
4. Describe the difference between deep and fragile knowledge.
5. Describe performance-based understanding and explain how it provides evidence of deep understanding.
6. Briefly describe the five elements of powerful teaching and learning.

Assignment: Bring your written work to the session, and save it to submit as an assignment.

Visit the Web Site: These articles are available online at the workshop Web site at:
www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies
Go to session 1 and select Printouts.

Articles

“What Is Social Studies?”
Describes the role of social studies within the curriculum and provides an overview of the 10 themes.

“Deep and Fragile Knowledge”
Summarizes the elements of deep and fragile knowledge.

“What Is Understanding? A Deeper Look”
Explores the relationship among teaching, learning, and understanding.

“Powerful Teaching and Learning”

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Be sure that everyone has access to these readings. You may want to have a few copies available for those without Internet access.
Activity 1: Getting Started

Watch the video introduction to familiarize yourself with the workshop series, the participants, and this session.

View Video Segment: Introduction: Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment at the beginning of the video. Watch for about 18 minutes.

In this video segment, participants reflect on the challenges and rewards of teaching social studies, why they teach, and how they gauge students’ understanding.

Activity 2: What Do You Know?

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Distribute the Learning and Understanding in Social Studies form.

In this session, you will identify teaching strategies that bring concepts to life for your students; but first, consider how you learn. Begin by thinking of something that you once learned in social studies and now understand quite well. Then, think of how you developed that understanding, and how you demonstrate it.

Follow the instructions on the Learning and Understanding in Social Studies form.

Visit the Web Site: This activity is also available online as an Interactive Activity at:

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies

Go to session 1 and select Engage.

Activity 3: Reflect on Your Work

When you have completed the activity, review your steps to deep understanding and consider the following questions:

• When would you say you had achieved deep understanding?
• What do you notice from your own method of learning that might be applied in your teaching?
**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Viewing Chart.

The NCSS themes outline content and standards that encourage deep understanding. They give teachers a basis for deciding what to teach and the content students are expected to understand. The following video segments illustrate classroom examples of the themes as well as elements of powerful teaching and learning.

Use the Viewing Chart to analyze the teachers’ content goals.

Before you watch each classroom segment, review the 10 themes and recall from your reading what they are designed to teach. As you watch, check off the themes that are most relevant in each lesson. Then compare your answers to those of the workshop participants as they discuss their findings.

Also as you watch, think about the strategies teachers use to present the content. This will help prepare you for an upcoming activity.

**View Video Segment: Identifying Themes in Classroom Examples:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 19 minutes into the video. Watch for about 30 minutes.

This segment provides a review of the NCSS themes and the elements of powerful teaching and learning, illustrated in two classroom lessons. In the first lesson, Ms. Jones-Inge’s fourth-grade class explores how they can make a difference in their world and community. In the second lesson, Cynthia Vaughn’s first-grade students study the relationship among citizens, community, and leaders.

Now that you’ve read about and identified applications of themes and powerful teaching and learning, answer the following questions:

- Select one of the two segments you viewed. How do the themes and methodologies used in the lesson help students gain deep understanding?
- What content and methodologies are most relevant to your teaching? Why?

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.
Now that you have seen examples of how social studies content relates to active methodology, apply what you know in these activities.

**Activity 1: Analyzing Methodology**

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Powerful Teaching and Learning form.

This activity takes a closer look at examples of powerful teaching and learning in the classroom library segments. Using the Powerful Teaching and Learning form, review descriptions of each segment and then identify the elements of powerful teaching and learning best represented in each segment.

**Visit the Web Site:** This activity is also available online as an Interactive Activity at:

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies

Go to session 1 and select Apply.

**Activity 2: Developing and Analyzing a Lesson**

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Developing and Analyzing a Lesson form.

In this activity, you will begin to develop a new unit. Be sure to include the following:

- the title of the unit;
- the learning goals;
- the first lesson in the unit;
- the objectives; and
- the content themes.

Using the Developing and Analyzing a Lesson form, create a draft of the first lesson. Once you’ve completed the draft, write your answers to the following questions:

- Which theme(s) provide the basis for the content in your lesson?
- What elements of powerful teaching and learning will you address in the lesson? How will you use them?
- How does the lesson help students gain deep understanding of the topic?
- How might other subjects be incorporated into your lesson?

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment. Note: If you are taking all eight sessions for credit, you may continue to work on this unit in subsequent sessions. Save a copy of your work.
Evaluate

What Did You Learn?

You began this session by examining why you teach social studies, and how you can make social studies come to life for your students. Watch the final video segment to learn how workshop teachers responded to these questions.

**View Video Segment: Sum-It-Up Panel:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 50 minutes into the video. Watch for about eight minutes.

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Summary form.

Now write a summary of what you’ve learned. Be sure to include:

- the relevance of social studies in students’ lives;
- teaching strategies you will use to ensure deep understanding;
- how NCSS content themes can inform your teaching; and
- how you might incorporate elements of powerful teaching and learning in your practice.

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.

Check the Assignments list that follows to be sure you’ve completed all assignments for this session.
Assignments

Submit Your Work

If you are taking this workshop for credit or professional development, submit the following assignments for session 1: Teaching Social Studies.

1. **Explore**: Read the articles and respond to the questions that follow using the Reading Questions form.
2. **Explain**: Watch the video segments, complete the Viewing Chart, and answer the questions that follow.
3. **Apply**: Complete the Developing and Analyzing a Lesson activity.
4. **Evaluate**: Summarize what you’ve learned.

For Next Week

See Explore: Readings for session 2 for next week’s reading assignment.

Resources

Print


Web

Active Learning Practices for Schools
http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/
Provides information about teaching for understanding.

National Council for the Social Studies
http://www.ncss.org/
Provides an online version of *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. 
After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions:

1. What are the key elements of the NCSS definition of social studies?

2. What is the role of social studies in the general curriculum?

3. Briefly describe the 10 themes of social studies. What academic discipline(s) provide the foundation for each theme?
4. Describe the difference between deep and fragile knowledge.

5. Describe performance-based understanding and explain how it provides evidence of deep understanding.

6. Briefly describe the five elements of powerful teaching and learning.
This activity is designed to help you think about the process of learning and understanding in social studies. Follow the prompts and write in your responses.

1. Think of a concept that you learned in social studies and now understand well. Write your response in the box below.

   Compare your answer:
   Others said:
   • elections
   • geography
   • presidents
   • wars
   • cultural traditions


   Compare your answer:
   Others said:
   • volunteering for campaigns
   • using maps
   • reinforcement through current events/news
   • exposure to other cultures

3. What do you notice from methods of learning that might be applied in your teaching? Write in your response below.
4. Now that you've identified how you developed an understanding, think about how you demonstrate it. How do you know when you really understand something?

Write in your response below.

Compare your answer:

Others said:
- being able to explain it
- initiating or organizing related events
- making connections
- doing something regularly
- taking a leadership position

5. What do you notice from these performances of understanding that might be applied in your teaching?

Write in your response below.

Conclusion:

What did you learn in this activity? Most people said that they understood something better when they had opportunities to apply what they knew, and when they were challenged to demonstrate or explain their knowledge in different settings. Take what you learned from this activity and think about how you can apply new teaching strategies to enhance students' understanding of social studies.
This segment provides a review of the NCSS themes and the elements of powerful teaching and learning, illustrated in two classroom lessons. In the first lesson, Ms. Jones-Inge’s fourth-grade class explores how they can make a difference in their world and community. In the second lesson, Cynthia Vaughn’s first-grade students study the relationship among citizens, community, and leaders.

As you watch, identify the content themes represented in each lesson.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Themes</th>
<th>Ms. Jones-Inge’s Class</th>
<th>Ms. Vaughn’s Class</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time, Continuity, and Change</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>People, Places, and Environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Development and Identity</td>
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<td>Individuals, Groups, and Institutions</td>
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<td>Power, Authority, and Governance</td>
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<td>Production, Distribution, and Consumption</td>
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<td>Science, Technology, and Society</td>
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<td>Global Connections</td>
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<td>Civic Ideals and Practices</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Now that you’ve read about and identified applications of themes and powerful teaching and learning, answer the following questions.
1. Select one of the two classroom segments you viewed. How do the themes and methodologies used in the lesson help students gain a deep understanding?
2. What content and methodologies are most relevant to your teaching? Why?
This activity takes a closer look at examples of powerful teaching and learning in the classroom video segments. Read the description of each segment, then identify up to three elements of powerful teaching and learning best represented in the segment. Once you've identified the elements, explain your answers in the boxes provided. Then, compare your answers to other teachers' sample answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Powerful Teaching and Learning</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Meaningful</td>
<td>engaging, connects students with real-world situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>draws on more than one discipline, subject, or skill set</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value-Based</td>
<td>strengthens students’ sense of democratic values and social responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td>incorporates different perspectives and draws on students’ critical-thinking skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active</td>
<td>participatory, makes use of manipulatives or the physical environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Description:
Ms. Jones-Inge’s class has been talking about types of community. Students researched stories in the news to identify problems that exist in the world, and how their class can make a difference. Students identified, discussed, and talked about the hole in the ozone layer above Chile, and its effects on the children and adults who live there.

Select three or more elements displayed in the example above and write in your explanation of why you chose these elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active</td>
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</table>
Description:
Ms. Jones-Inge’s class has been studying the different types of community: the world, country, local community, and school. Each type of community is defined on an index card that students read aloud. Students suggest gifts that would make a difference in the world, and decide which gift ideas are most realistic.

Select three or more elements displayed in the example above and write in your explanation of why you chose these elements.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Element</th>
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<tr>
<td>Challenging</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Active</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cynthia Vaughn’s students have been studying community, citizens, and leaders using a graphic organizer to define different roles and locations. They explore life in a fictional community they’ve constructed with cardboard boxes, mapping their community on the classroom floor and role-playing as local businesspeople.

Select three or more elements displayed in the example above and write in your explanation of why you chose these elements.

| Meaningful    |   
|--------------|---|
| Integrative  |   
| Value-Based  |   
| Challenging  |   
| Active       |   |
### Sample Answers

#### Segment 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Integrative</th>
<th>Value-Based</th>
<th>Challenging</th>
<th>Active</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identifying a problem in the world gives students an opportunity to relate to their peers in Chile.</td>
<td>The lesson draws on literacy skills in the reading activity, and knowledge about the biosphere as they discuss the ozone layer.</td>
<td>Students are asked to consider what they can do to help people in other parts of the world.</td>
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</table>

#### Segment 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Meaningful</th>
<th>Integrative</th>
<th>Value-Based</th>
<th>Challenging</th>
<th>Active</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher’s questions draw on literacy skills as students read aloud from vocabulary cards.</td>
<td>Students are asked to consider what they can do to help people in other parts of the world.</td>
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#### Segment 3

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<th>Value-Based</th>
<th>Challenging</th>
<th>Active</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>![Checkmark]</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identifying state officials provides a real-world context for the lesson; role-playing as businesspeople gives students a personal connection to their fictional community.</td>
<td>The lesson draws on students' art, spatial-ordering, and mapping skills.</td>
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</tbody>
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Social Studies in Action K–5 Workshop - 23 - Workshop 1
Be sure to include the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title of Unit:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unit Learning Goals:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Lesson in the Unit:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Objectives:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content Themes:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a draft of the first lesson. Once you've completed the draft, write your answers to the following questions:

1. Which theme(s) provides the basis for the content in your lesson?

2. What elements of powerful teaching and learning will you address in the lesson? How will you use them?

3. How does the lesson help students gain deep understanding of the topic?

4. How might other subjects be incorporated into your lesson?
1: Teaching Social Studies Summary

Write a summary of what you’ve learned in this session. Be sure to include:

• the relevance of social studies in students’ lives;
• teaching strategies you will use to ensure deep understanding;
• how NCSS content themes can inform your teaching; and
• how you might incorporate elements of powerful teaching and learning into your practice.