



Kentucky Department of
EDUCATION

Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

*Establishing the Learning Environment and the Kentucky
Academic Standards for Social Studies*

The [Establishing the Learning Environment Overview](#) provides the research base associated with this evidence-based instructional practice.

What are connections between the Evidenced-Based Instructional Practice #1: Establishing the Learning Environment and the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Social Studies*?

In the *KAS for Social Studies*, students are required to have a voice in the educational process as a student's ability to effectively communicate their own conclusions and listen carefully to the conclusions of others can be considered a capstone of social studies disciplinary practices. The *KAS for Social Studies* is organized around the inquiry practices of questioning, investigating, using evidence and communicating conclusions. Students will consider or pose questions and then investigate those questions through the disciplinary lenses of civics, economics, geography and history. Students complete the inquiry process by communicating evidence-based conclusions.

Under this framework, Kentucky students actively will engage with the social studies concepts, ideas and practices needed to participate in and navigate the community, state, nation and world in which they live. In an ever-changing and increasingly interconnected world, students must be lifelong critical thinkers and questioners who can undertake multidimensional, complex reasoning. Thus, students must be active participants in classrooms that foster and support a culture of inquiry.

Therefore, teachers need to create a safe and orderly environment. In social studies, we describe this as creating collaborative civic spaces. Collaborative civic spaces are safe places where students can work cooperatively on civic issues and action plans through civil discussion and democratic discourse. By creating collaborative civic spaces, students can see each other as resources, rather than competitors. As a result, social studies classrooms in Kentucky must be a safe space where students can engage in civil discussion, reach consensus when appropriate and respect diverse opinions.

How is this achieved in Kentucky classrooms?

- Elevating student voice in the learning process through asking and investigating compelling and supporting questions;
- Building respectful relationships;
- Establishing and maintaining community expectations and agreements about behavior; and
- Knowing where students are in their learning and modifying instruction to support student growth.

What are planning considerations for the successful implementation of the Evidenced-Based Instructional Practice #1: Establishing the Learning Environment to ensure that all students have equitable access and opportunity to learn the standards contained in the *KAS for Social Studies*?

- Understand that students asking and investigating compelling and supporting questions is essential to the study of each social studies discipline. The requirement as to whether or not a student must generate their own compelling and/or supporting questions, with or without teacher support, varies depending on the student's grade level in the *KAS for Social Studies*. Thus, it is imperative that teachers understand the expectations of the standards to ensure that students are engaging with grade-level, standards aligned, evidence-based questioning strategies.
- Enable students to effectively communicate their own conclusions and listen carefully to the voices of those whose conclusions may be different through traditional products, such as essays, reports, tables, diagrams, graphs, multimedia presentations and discussions and newer forms of media.
- Consider the following attributes of dialogue in collaborative civic spaces when planning for building respectful relationships:
 - Engage productively with the local, national, and international issues and events that animate our political system.
 - Address meaningful and timely questions about public problems that deserve both students and the public's attention.
 - Link issues to curricular goals.
 - Select issues that resonate with students.
 - Locate or create learning materials to provide necessary background information. Through these learning materials, provide the best arguments on varying sides of an issue. When providing information on the varying sides of an issue, multiple points of view should be present that represent multiple and complex perspectives.
 - Employ several different ways of making joint decisions (deliberating, debating and voting, agreeing to disagree, delegating the decision to experts, choosing randomly, etc.) and demonstrate the pros and cons of each.
 - Develop ground rules to ensure inclusive and productive discussions occur in a climate of respect and civility in which all responsible perspectives are taken seriously.
 - Facilitate in-depth understanding of issues or events to enable individuals to form their own opinions and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others' ideas and expressing their own thoughts clearly and persuasively.
 - Undertake discussions with thoughtfulness related to the ethical dilemmas involved in teaching about contentious issues.
- Create a classroom contract, or agreement, between the members of the classroom community (teacher, students) to which all parties are held accountable.
- To provide equitable learning environments for all students, educators must have clearly defined success criteria and know how to adjust instruction to ensure students are meeting the intended learning outcomes. Educators must know where students are in their learning and how to modify instruction to support student mastery of the standards. This will help create an effective learning environment where students' learning needs will be met.

- Assessment opportunities include all efforts to document students' learning before (pre-assessment), during (formative), and at the end of a unit segment or at the culmination of the unit (summative).
- Consider utilizing performance assessments to engage students and increase student efficacy. Performance assessments:
 - Ask students to think and to produce—to demonstrate learning through work that is authentic to the discipline and/or real world.
 - Yield a tangible product and/or performance that serves as student evidence of learning.
 - Unlike a selected-response item that asks students to select from given alternatives, a performance assessment presents a situation that calls for learners to apply their learning in context.

What strategies and resources can support the implementation of Evidence-Based Instructional Practice #1: Establishing the Learning Environment within the KAS for Social Studies?

Fostering Teacher-Student Relationships

For more information on building respectful relationships in the social studies classroom, visit:

- KDE's [Creating Collaborative Civic Spaces Module](#)
 - Section C: Engaging Student Voice in Community Building provides information on how to build respectful relationships within a classroom.

Establishing the Physical and Social Environment

For more information on establishing the physical and social environment of the social studies classroom, visit:

- KDE's [Creating Collaborative Civic Spaces Module](#)
 - Section C: Engaging Student Voice in Community Building provides information on how to establish and maintain community expectations and agreements about behavior. In addition, guidance on creating classroom agreements in collaboration with students is provided.
- [Kindergarten Strongly Aligned with Teacher Notes](#)
 - This document provides examples of how social studies supports students in understanding rules and procedures, why they are important and how they support a safe and orderly learning environment.
- [Grade 6 Strongly Aligned with Teacher Notes](#)
 - This document provides an example of how student opportunities for movement can be included within the classroom and during instruction.
- [High School Strongly Aligned 3 with Teacher Notes](#)
 - This document provides examples of how evidence-based instructional practices can be used to implement safe and supportive classrooms while engaging with social studies disciplinary content and skills.

Improving Student Motivation

For more information on improving student motivation through student Self-Efficacy and Student Mindset, visit:

- KDE's *Inquiry Practice Module*

- In the *KAS for Social Studies*, students should have opportunities to develop compelling and supporting questions, gather evidence, synthesize information to construct new understandings, construct explanations and arguments, engage in deliberative and democratic procedures, and act civically by identifying and addressing problems. *The Inquiry Practices Module* provides support for understanding and implementing the inquiry practices of the *KAS for Social Studies*. Module resources include the [PowerPoint](#) and [Module at a Glance](#) document.
- KDE's *Performance Assessments in Social Studies Module*
 - This module explains the value of creating and implementing effective performance assessments in social studies. Since the *KAS for Social Studies* requires students to engage in disciplinary strands, inquiry practices and disciplinary concepts and practices, educators need ways to assess these in integrated ways as standards implementation requires new thinking about how assessment can be used to support student growth. Module resources include the [PowerPoint](#) and [Module at a Glance](#) document.
- KDE's [Standards Family Guides](#)
- The Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) Family Guides have been developed to help families familiarize themselves with the content of each grade level's standards. Each guide contains a standards overview for Reading & Writing, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies and is available in English and Spanish.