



Evidence-Based Instructional Practices

Discussion and the Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Social Studies

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

What are connections between the Evidenced-Based Instructional Practice #4: Discussion and the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Social Studies*?

The preparation of young people for participation in America's democratic society is vital. Engaging in civil discussion, reaching consensus when appropriate and respecting diverse opinions requires that young people collaboratively balance personal interest with the public good. To support students in this work, the Kentucky teacher writers of the *KAS for Social Studies* crafted Communicating Conclusion standards that require students to engage in democratic discourse by using listening and consensus-building procedures to address significant, unresolved issues students may face in their local, regional and global communities. The *KAS for Social Studies* requires that students 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.

Social studies classrooms in Kentucky must be laboratories of democracy where students' voices are elevated and valued to support their ability to process the relationship between social studies concepts and practices, collaborate on civic issues and develop action plans through deliberative and democratic processes and democratic discourse. These are defined in the *KAS for Social Studies* as the following:

- **Deliberative and democratic processes** - a process where deliberation is central to decision-making. This process also looks to generate outcomes that promote the common good through reasoning, rather than through a law-making process.
- **Democratic discourse** - debate where one or more highly-valued positions search for authentic truth and are recognized without giving up their valid claims/position.

These skills, habits and qualities of character will prepare students to accept responsibility for preserving and defending their liberties and empower them to think critically, reason and problem solve. By regularly engaging in discussions, students will be better prepared for the responsibilities and demands of civic life.

What are planning considerations for the successful implementation of the Evidenced-Based Instructional Practice #4: Discussion to ensure that all students have equitable access and opportunity to learn the standards contained in the *KAS for Social Studies*?

- To create safe environments where students feel comfortable participating in discussions, have students co-create community expectations and agreements about behavior when participating in discussions. This may include, but is not limited to, creating classroom contracts for all members of the classroom community and/or developing norms for discussions.
- Develop general classroom discussion guidelines, such as, but not limited to:
 - Allow everyone the chance to speak.
 - Do not interrupt or engage in private conversations while others are speaking.
 - Keep confidential any personal information that comes up in the conversation.
 - Listen carefully and respectfully, without interrupting.
 - Show respectful listening by facing and looking at the speaker, making eye contact, staying quiet, nodding, etc. Be aware that tone and body language are powerful communicators.
 - Commit to learning, not debating.
 - Challenge or criticize ideas, not individuals.
 - Avoid blame, speculation and inflammatory language.
 - Be careful about putting other participants on the spot. Do not demand that others speak for a group that they are perceived to represent.
- Provide opportunities for students to frequently engage in discussions that they facilitate themselves.
- Discussions should allow students to engage with compelling and supporting questions, as defined by the *KAS for Social Studies*, to ensure that students get to participate in democratic discourse and not a recitation of basic recall questions.
- To support students in successfully participating in discussions, acknowledge the role of silence and writing in preparing students to share their ideas. Some students may need a few moments of reflective silence to construct their thoughts, or they may benefit from writing down their explanations or arguments before the discussion begins.
- Consider providing opportunities for performance-based assessment in social studies. This allows elements of discussion to be embedded in assessing students' mastery of the *KAS for Social Studies*. Some examples of discussion that could be implemented as part of a performance assessment in social studies include, but are not limited to: debate, Socratic Seminars, Structured Academic Controversies.

What strategies and resources can support the implementation of Evidence-Based Instructional Practice #4: Discussion within the *KAS for Social Studies*?

KDE's [Inquiry Practices of the *KAS for Social Studies* Module](#)

This module provides support for understanding and implementing the inquiry practices of the *Kentucky Academic Standards (KAS) for Social Studies*.

- Section F: How do the Communicating Conclusion standards support students in synthesizing knowledge to support civic engagement?: This section explains the purpose and function of the Communicating Conclusions standards and how constructing explanations and arguments help prepare students for civic life. Strategies for establishing democratic procedures in the classroom and facilitating student centered discussion and deliberation are included.

KDE's [Creating Collaborative Civic Spaces Module](#)

This module explains the value of creating collaborative civic spaces in classrooms to enable effective communication and discourse among students.

- Section D: The Proven Practice of Deliberation of Current and Controversial issues: This section explores the importance of incorporating deliberation of current and controversial issues in the classroom.
- Section E: Strategies to Support Collaborative Civic Spaces: This section explores attributes of collaborative civic spaces and strategies to support dialogue in collaborative civic spaces.

KDE's [Performance Assessment Module](#)

This module explains the value of creating and implementing effective performance assessments in social studies.

- Section C: Performance Assessments in Social Studies: This section provides a detailed explanation of performance assessments, including its characteristics, advantages and challenges, and provides examples and steps for creating a performance assessment.

KDE's [Social Studies Student Assignment Library](#)

The Social Studies Student Assignment Library provides examples of student assignments that are weakly, partially and strongly aligned to standards. Within the Student Assignment Library, Teacher Notes, which are available for kindergarten – high school, contain guidance on how to incorporate discussions when investigating the inquiry practices and the disciplinary strands referenced in the strongly aligned assignments to the *KAS for Social Studies*.

Within these assignments, students use discussion to promote the deeper learning required by the *KAS for Social Studies*. Some specific examples include, but are not limited to the following:

- Within the [Grade 3](#), [Grade 8](#) and [High School Assignment 3](#) Teacher Notes, educators can examine strategies that support engaging all students in discussion, collaborative conversations among students, and structures and routines for promoting equitable conversations.