

STRATEGIES TO TEACH SOCIAL STUDIES

This document is designed to provide you with a brief description of a few key strategies. It is not an exhaustive list. Your task as a trainer of teachers (and as a teacher) will be to match the appropriate strategy with the content and skills students are to master.

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1) Introduction

There are many ways to teach social studies. Open any issue of the *Texan*, *Social Education*, or the *Journal of Geography* to find descriptions of an array of teaching-learning strategies. Peruse the teacher's edition of any social studies textbook for a variety of suggestions regarding how to teach students specific content. Many resources are available to help teachers hone their ability to teach in interesting and engaging ways.

This document is designed to provide you with a brief description of a few key strategies. It is not an exhaustive list. Your task as a trainer of teachers (and as a teacher) will be to match the appropriate strategy with the content and skills students are to master.

2) A Note on Cognitive Strategies

What does it mean to learn? Have you ever reflected on the mental processes you use to learn something? Ask your students the strategies they use when they “study.” Unfortunately, students today have relatively poor cognitive strategies or known ways people learn. It is up to teachers to teach students how to learn.

Metacognition means “thinking about thinking.” It refers to the awareness and control students have of their cognitive processes. Good learners have an array of learning strategies they can use. They know how to solve problems, how to set goals, evaluate their own progress, monitor their achievement, and assess whether they understand material. They can use graphic organizers to study, read and review material with a purpose, rehearse skills until they master them and so on. Poor students need explicit instructions and guidance concerning how to do these things. It is simply not enough for teachers to say, “Learn this.” We need to show students how to learn.

Keep this in mind as you think about each of these teaching strategies. They should help students to learn material and skills as well as learn to be better learners.

What can teachers do to develop metacognition?

- Share and model self-monitoring processes.
Show your students how you proofread and evaluate work, check to see how lessons are going, and so on. Take, for example, a piece of work and show students how you would analyze it to make it better. Ask them to track their thinking processes by asking themselves, “What could I do to improve?” “What help do I need?”
- Explain strategies that students can use.
Think outloud how you would go about solving a problem, making a decision, studying for a particular test, or understanding a challenging piece of reading material.
- Clarify why particular strategies are helpful and useful.
There are three types of knowledge: declarative knowledge (knowing what), procedural knowledge (knowing how), and conditional knowledge (knowing when, what, and how). Help students to develop their conditional knowledge by letting them in on what works, when, and why.
- Clarify and model when particular strategies are appropriate.
Modeling is key. You teach the way you were taught; you learn the way you learned. Your methods might not suit all of your students’ thinking styles, but it is a start. Show kids how you learn. Learn together. Model in your lessons good ways to manage the complex learning process. Make predictions or show students how to develop hypotheses. Describe visual images that help you to remember. Share an analogy, which links prior information with new information. Verbalize confusing points.

3) Activating Prior Knowledge

Learning is a process of adding new ideas to old ideas. Teachers need to recognize the importance of prior knowledge on learning and give students opportunities to remember what they already know.

What are some ways to activate prior knowledge?

- **Brainstorming**
This is a familiar technique. Students are given a topic and invited to call out their ideas. Everything is accepted and the teacher writes down the words, ideas, key phrases etc. Time is needed for students to think, process, and recall but the session should end when the responses slow down or get silly.
- **Cognitive Mapping**
See section 15 entitled [“Using Graphic Organizers to Enhance Student Thinking.”](#)
- **KWL**
Divide a piece of paper into three parts. Title one section “KNOW.” Give students time to write what they already know about that topic you are introducing. Title the middle column “WANT to learn.” Again, give students time to write a few ideas about what they wish to learn about this topic. You may wish to provoke responses by asking questions like, “How will knowing this help you as an adult? As a citizen? As a political, economic, and social decision maker?” Finally, title the third column “LEARN.” At the end of the lesson, ask students to reflect on what they did gain in terms of knowledge and skills.

These are three ways students can be helped to recognize knowledge they already have which relates to new concepts or skills they are learning.

4) Collaborative Processes

Collaboration means working together. This is an important work place skill identified by the U.S. Department of Labor as one of the keys to successful adult employment. It is also an essential skill for citizens in a democracy. Two heads are better than one, especially in the classroom. Students enjoy working in groups on shared goals. They learn to depend upon and use each others’ strengths to solve problems and complete tasks. Research shows that collaborative work supports greater retention of subject matter, improved attitudes toward learning, and teaches kids how to get along with each other.

There are many different types of collaborative work. The graphic “Collaborative Learning Techniques” summarizes a number of different uses of this technique.

Collaborative Learning Techniques

Name	Description
Roundrobin	Each student in turn shares something with his or her teammates, this works well for expressing ideas and opinions, e.g., developing consensus on the civic responsibilities of Texas citizens.
Corners	Each student moves to a corner of the room representing a teacher-determined alternative. Students discuss within corners, then listen to and Paraphrase ideas from other corners, e.g., to evaluate and debate
Numbered Heads Together	The teacher asks a question, students consult to make sure everyone knows the answer, then one student is called upon to answer, e.g., a group of students discuss how scientific discoveries and technological innovations benefit U.S. citizens, making sure everyone knows a variety of reasons. Then, the teacher calls upon individual group members to assess progress.
Pairs Check	Students work in pairs within groups of four. Within pairs, students alternate. One answers a question/completes a task while the other coaches. After every two questions, the pair checks to see if they have the same answers as the other pair.
Three Step Interview	Students interview each other in pairs, first one way, then the other. Students each share with the group information they learned in the interview, e.g., at the conclusion of a unit on why people have adapted to and modified the Texas environment, students interview each other to discover how they use natural resources to meet basic needs.
Think Pair Share	Students think to themselves on a topic provided by the teacher; they pair up with another student to discuss it; then they share their thoughts with the class, e.g., students are asked to give examples of the processes used by individuals, political parties, interest groups or the media to affect public policy. After quiet thought, they share with a neighbor, then the entire class.
Team Word Webbing	Students write simultaneously on a piece of butcher paper, drawing main concepts, supporting elements, and bridges representing the relation of concepts in a generalization. This helps students to analyze and to see relationships in complex systems, e.g., to compare the historical origins, central ideas, and the spread of major religious and philosophical traditions.
Inside Outside Circle	Students stand in pairs in two concentric circles. The inside circle faces out, the outside circle in. Students use flash cards or respond to teacher questions as they rotate to each new partner. This can help to check for understanding, review and process information.
Co-op	Students work in groups to produce a particular group product to share with the whole class; each student makes a particular contribution to the group.

Many of the other strategies listed in this site use some aspect of collaboration. Here are two additional types.

- **Peer of Cross Age or Cross Ability Tutoring**

In this technique students provide “tutoring” to peers or younger students. The best way to learn it to teach. Make pairs of students experts in different topics and have them teach each other their expertise. The Jigsaw Method is an elaboration of this. “Home groups” are established, then one member from each “home” joins a new, “expert group.” They develop expertise, then return to the home to teach other group members and to learn their expertise.

Jigsaw: An Example.

Goal: to learn more about the political, economic, social, and personal background of framers of the US Constitution.

Method: Form home groups. Assign each member of the home groups a framer to research, e.g., James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, James Mason. The framer expert groups meet, research, teach each other, rehearse how they will share their expertise with the home group, then return to “home” to teach about their framer.

- **Reciprocal Teaching**

Reciprocal teaching, developed by Palincsar and Brown, is like an interactive dialogue between teacher and students. It helps students to become involved in the content they are discussing by helping them to read and better understand. There are four steps.

Step 1: Summarizing. Students restate what they have read in their own words. They work to find the most significant information in the text. Begin with summaries of sentences or paragraphs; later, stretch students to large units of text.

Step 2: Generating Questions. Students ask questions about the material. In order to do this, they must identify significant information, pose questions related to this information and check to make sure they can answer their own questions.

Step 3: Clarifying. Students focus on reasons why the text is difficult to understand. For example, the vocabulary may be challenging or they may not have the prerequisite knowledge required to make sense of what they have read. Students may answer each other’s questions or the teacher may fill in the gaps required to make sense of the text.

Step 4: Predicting. Students speculate on what will be discussed next in the text. To be successful, students must recall relevant background knowledge so they can connect what they are reading and thinking about with what they already know.

5) Inquiry Teaching

Inquiry teaching is a process of asking and answering key social studies questions. Students develop questions, collect and organize data related to the questions, analyze the data, and draw inferences or conclusions about the data to answer their questions. This is “the scientific method” applied to social studies and, in many cases, mirrors the ways real social scientists (economists, historians, geographers, political scientists etc.) conduct research.

A hallmark of inquiry teaching is student activity. Teachers facilitate student learning. Among the advantages of inquiry teaching are:

- Students generate their own knowledge;
- Answers are discovered by students and are, therefore, more memorable;
- Divergent, creative thinking is encouraged;
- Higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) are emphasized;
- Skills integrate with knowledge as students organize and analyze their data in a variety of ways (maps, graphs, charts, etc.)

Although there are a number of variations, inquiry teaching basically involves five steps.

Step 1: Identifying and clarifying questions, issues, problems. This can be student generated (within limitations) or teacher-created.

Step 2: Propose a hypothesis. Suggest possible solutions or explanations to the problem/question. Developing a hypothesis will help to guide student research.

Step 3: Gathering and organizing evidence. Locating and collecting data is key. This stage allows students to develop key social studies skills identified in the TEKS, e.g., selecting relevant versus irrelevant data, evaluating the value of primary versus secondary data, organize and interpret information, classifying and categorizing, presenting the information etc.

Step 4: Evaluating, analyzing, and interpreting the data. Based on the evidence and data available, what possible solutions or explanations are feasible?

Step 5: Concluding, inferring, and making generalizations. Is the hypothesis proven or disproved? What is the answer to the question? What inferences can be made from this? What additional questions are raised by the information and analysis?

This type of teaching and learning is often best if students work collaboratively. *The History Alive!* project uses a form of inquiry teaching but calls it “problem solving group work.” It suggests students address issues such as:

- Creating mini dramas on life during the Great Depression;

- Organizing a press conference on the eve of the Civil War;
- Envisioning Native American cultures;
- Creating monuments to daily life in Constantinople;
- Structuring a “Meet the Press” to discuss the question, “Can common people be trusted to govern themselves?”

In each case, a topic (the Civil War, the Great Depression, Native American cultures) was framed as an inquiry question. Inquiry questions hook student interest and provide a structure on which to develop engaging instruction and assessment. Students are actively engaged in research to answer questions and learn oral, visual, and written presentation skills.

6) Problem Solving

Problem solving is one of the most important skills students learn in school. Problem solving has a special role in the social studies. It is featured prominently in the TEKS skills and is the focus of many instructional strategies.

Students use facts, concepts, and generalizations in the process of finding solutions to problems and reaching decisions about issues. Note that both problem-solving and decision-making are termed a process. These two processes involve a series of steps a student follows to some conclusion. Problem-solving and decision-making processes generally require students to use facts, concepts, and generalizations they already know to arrive at a solution or decision.

This chart illustrates the thinking skills necessary to effectively implement the decision-making skills.

Decision-making Skills	Thinking Skills
Recognizing and clearly stating issues to be decided.	Introducing facts, analyzing and raising questions.
Suggesting alternatives.	Analyzing to identify key generalizations, issues and conflicts, synthesis to propose courses of action.
Tracing the probable consequences of each alternative.	Interpreting and analyzing data; developing concepts; projecting consequences.
Recognizing what is required for a decision.	Evaluating each set of consequences, prioritizing and qualifying reasons for action.
Deciding.	Judging.

Nickerson (1994) summarizes three approaches to problem solving:

Polya’s Four Steps

- Understand the problem

- Devise a plan
- Carry out the plan
- Look back

Hayes Six Steps

- Find the problem
- Represent the problem
- Plan the solution
- Carry out the plan
- Evaluate the solution
- Consolidate gains

Bransford and Stein IDEAL

I=Identify the problem

D=Define and represent the problem

E=Explore possible strategies

A=Act on the strategies

L=Look back and evaluate the effects of your activities

Among the strategies suggested to solve problems are:

Problem Decomposition

Break a complex problem into smaller “sub” problems, and solve each subproblem to solve the big problem.

Working Backwards

Start from a final goal state and move backwards. If you can’t get from A to B, try going from B back to A.

Means-End Analysis

Begin by describing the final solution. Analyze how that goal state is different from the current situation, then take action to minimize the difference between the two.

Forward Chaining

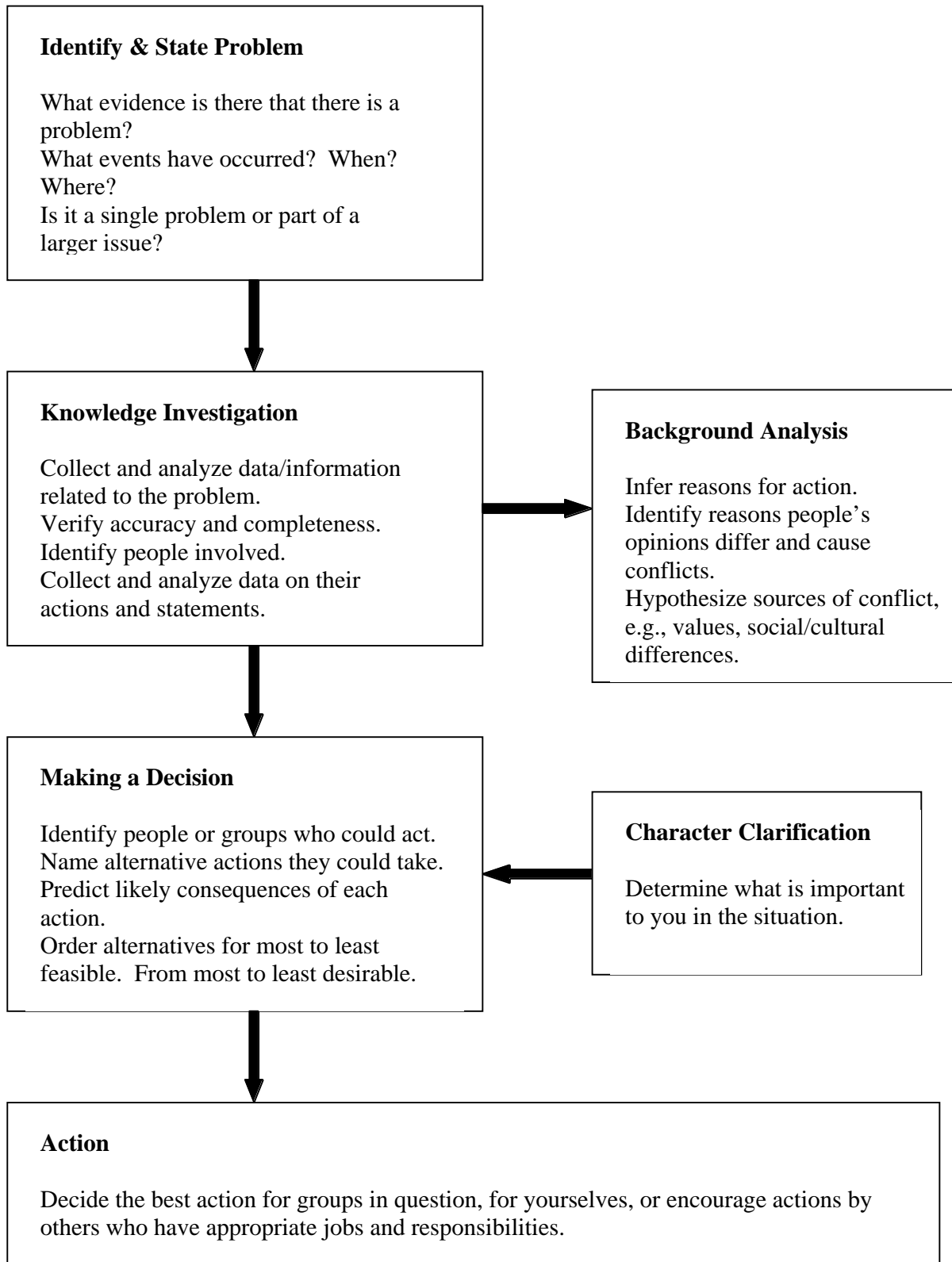
Begin with what is given. Describe it, then move to the goal state. This is the strategy used by experts in a field.

Considering Analogous Problems

Try solving a problem by finding a solution to an analogous but easier problem.

Encourage students to use these alone or in combinations when approaching difficult issues.

The diagram on the following page outlines a systematic approach to problem-solving and decision-making. You can follow this strategy to develop activities related to a number of problems and issues.



A General Approach to Problem-Solving and Decision-Making. After Maye.

7) Direct Instruction

Lectures are not all bad, but they are not all good either. Sometimes it is necessary to present some baseline information, explain a new skill, model a thinking process, or provide direct instruction to students before they proceed to grapple with learning on their own.

The typical direct instruction teaching strategy includes six steps:

- Step 1: Daily review.
- Step 2: Presentation of new material.
- Step 3: Guided practice.
- Step 4: Provision of feedback.
- Step 5: Independent practice.
- Step 6: Periodic reviews.

8) Visual Strategies

Variety is the spice of life, so teachers will not want to follow the path of direct instruction every day. The presentation of new material can take many interesting and amusing turns. An interactive lecture, well illustrated with slides or images from authentic sources, is a good teaching strategy. It takes time to develop a richly visual presentation but teaches students content as well as visual analysis skills. The key is to build in student involvement and interactivity as the images are displayed and analyzed. Students will need you to model image analysis at first, then need a little encouragement to interpret what they see independently.

A more powerful learning tool is student construction and preparation of their own visual presentations. Multimedia, Hyperstudio, and World Wide Web pages offer many venues. Students choose the images and develop the story and narration based on interpretation of events, data, and information. To conclude, they make a presentation or produce a visual product.

9) Teaching Facts, Concepts, and Generalizations

You have to teach it all: facts, concepts, generalizations, hypotheses and all other forms of social studies knowledge. And you have to teach it all at once in some artful blend because none of it can exist in isolation. Concepts rely on facts, but facts are not meaningful except as they relate to concepts and generalizations. It is all a complex, interdependent structure, each layer relying on the layer above and below for support and cohesion. Pull one component out, and the structure collapses.

Existing methods of teaching do not provide much help in deciding how each of these elements can be taught together or even sequentially for optimal student learning. Learning is a construction process. Students build understanding, piece by piece and often in highly individualistic ways. Not all students learn the same way. It is up to us to help them in the endeavor.

In the face of this ambiguity, starting with some definitions may help teachers see ways to accomplish this goal.

Generalizations

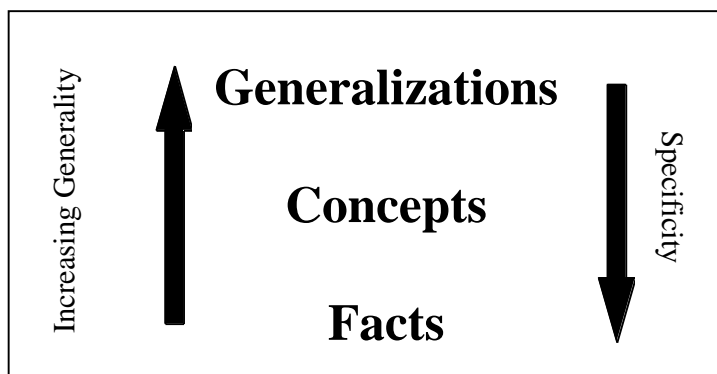
Generalizations are statements about relationships between and among concepts. Generalizations are true and verifiable for all cases on the basis of the best evidence available. For example, if you were once bitten by a German Shepherd (a fact), you cannot generalize that all German Shepherds bite. If, however, you had evidence that all German Shepherds bite, you could make the generalization, “German Shepherds bite.”

Generalizations organize and summarize information obtained from the analysis of facts. A generalization is usually a broad assertion. In contrast, a fact is a truth only about a particular incident or case. Compare these generalizations and related facts to see the difference between the two.

Generalization	Related Fact
Families vary in size and structure.	The average family in the United States has 1.9 children.
The nature of democracy in the United States continually evolves as society grows and changes.	Women received the right to vote in 1924.
People in communities are interdependent.	In Texas, many small communities must buy landfill space from nearby cities.
The climate, topography, and natural resources of a community affect the lifestyle of its people and may determine the types of goods and services the community produces.	The economy of the Lower Rio Grande Valley depends upon the presence of a large number of older residents from the snowy North who winter in the mild regions of Texas.
Geographic factors determine the types of plants and animals that live in region and influence population distribution.	Two-thirds of the population of Texas lives in the wetter eastern portion of the state.
Every nation has a unique history that exerts an	The creation of the Constitution and the Bill of

influence on the events of the present.	Rights gave the United States a unique form of government and way of life.
Throughout history, cultures have borrowed from each other.	Many of the terms used in cattle ranching in Texas today come from Spanish.
Technology exerts a profound influence on cultures.	The invention of air conditioning transformed the population and commerce of Texas.
Economic well-being is a goal of all nations.	Franklin Roosevelt initiated deficit spending to combat the ill-effects of the Depression.

You can see that generalizations are “big ideas” while facts are specific and limited. Generalizations come from an analysis of many sets of facts. Before a generalization is proven, however, it is a hypothesis. Hypotheses are potential generalizations.



The Structure of Knowledge
From Armstrong 1989

10) How to Teach Generalizations

There are two ways to organize activities which help students to develop generalizations or prove hypotheses (potential generalizations), the inductive (discovery) approach or the deductive (expository) approach. Both methods require students to understand the relationships among items and to be actively involved in learning. TAAS includes both kinds of experiences. The steps are summarized here:

Inductive/Discovery Method

- 1) Students examine sets of data and materials.

- 2) With teacher, they identify and explain key points through questions and discussion, observing similarities and differences, patterns, and trends in the data and materials.
- 3) Finally, students draw conclusions from the data, summarize their findings, and discover or infer the generalization.

Deductive/Expository Method

- 1) Students are presented with a hypothesis- a potential generalization. Or students are given a generalization and asked to find evidence to support it.
- 2) The key concepts that are components of the generalization are clarified.
- 3) The teacher provides instructions, questions, materials, and assistance for students to verify the generalization.
- 4) Students identify, find, or create new cases of the generalization.

Whatever approach you take, you are asking students to embark on a process of inquiry. As explained under “Inquiry Teaching” this process includes:

- collecting social studies information (for example, from textbook, primary sources, secondary sources, pictures, interviews and questionnaires).
- organizing social studies information (for example, in a data retrieval chart, T-diagram, map, or graph).
- analyzing social studies information (see cause-and-effect relationships, summarize patterns and trends, similarities, and differences).
- developing summary statements, generalizations, and inferences based on the information and materials.

Students should connect facts to concepts and ideas to produce more general ideas.

Three Things You Can Do to Improve Your Students’ Ability to Make Generalizations

1. Organize your own teaching and lesson planning around generalizations.
Before you start, list the concepts, generalizations, and central understandings you are planning for. This is difficult. It requires going beyond saying, “Events that led up to the Civil War.” That list of facts may be expressed as one (or more) generalization. For example, one generalization related to events leading to the Civil War might be: Multiple influences including political conflict over territorial expansion, states’ rights, and tariffs as well as economy contributed to the Civil War.
2. Always make students draw conclusions and make generalizations.
Too often we plan great activities for students but never follow through on those activities to make students state conclusions. We may see this as restating the obvious- but they may not! And remember, arriving at a “right answer” does not guarantee that a student has applied or understands a particular generalization.
3. Design assessments to reflect your learning activity.

If your teaching is focused on generalizations and not periods of history or regions of the world per se, then make sure your assessments give students practice in TAAS-like questions which require them to discover or apply generalizations. This is not teaching to the test; it is teaching and assessing for higher-level thinking. If your goal is for students to be able to make and use generalizations, your tests must reflect that.

11) Concepts

Concepts are the categories we use to cluster information. Concepts organize specific information under one label. They are building blocks and links between facts and generalizations. The accomplishments of Davy Crockett, Sam Houston, and Jane Long are facts. Together, these people may be categorized as heroes, a concept. To understand a generalization students first must understand its component concepts. Consider the generalization: People in communities are interdependent. The student who does not know the meaning of two concepts, community and interdependence, can not understand the generalization.

This leads to a general rule: Students must be given lots of opportunities to move through the structure of knowledge, that is, to move from facts to concepts to generalizations.

Teaching Concepts

Research in teaching concepts has identified these general instructional strategies to be effective:

- Step 1: Identify a set of examples and place them in a logical order. Include at least one example that is a “best” example.
- Step 2: Devise materials or oral instructions with a set of cues, directions, questions, differences in the examples and nonexamples used.
- Step 3: Have students compare all the examples with the best example; provide feedback to students on their comparisons.
- Step 4: Focus student attention on the best, strongest, most clear example. What are its attributes and characteristics?
- Step 5: Ask students to develop a definition of the concept or state it for them.
- Step 6: Place the concept in relation to other student knowledge; try to attach this new information to existing student knowledge structures.
- Step 7: Give students examples and nonexamples to assess whether students understand the concept. Ask students to generate additional examples or apply the concept to new situations.

Concept: Refugees

Concept Definition: victims of political violence who see refuge outside their country

Critical Attributes: victim, political violence, seeking refuge, outside, country

Noncritical Attributes: country of origin, age, gender, educational level, socioeconomic status, race, religion

Best Example: In 1995, Hutus and Tutsis fled Rwanda for Zaire to escape ethnic strife after the president was thought to have been assassinated by members of the other ethnic group.

Other Examples: Palestinian refugees who fled Israel in 1948-1949; Guatemalans who have fled to Mexico to escape political oppression in their own nation; exodus of large numbers of Vietnamese who fled Vietnam following the fall of Saigon, 1975.

Nonexamples: criminals who escape their punishment by fleeing to another country; individuals unhappy with their government who travel abroad.

12) Community Based Instruction

Community based instruction is an old idea with a new name. Teachers have always used real life situations and settings to enrich their classroom and curriculum. Think of the traditional social studies examples of community based instruction: community volunteer work, switching positions with town officials for a day, observing court cases, and doing field work. Today's version may be slightly different but it is not new.

Community based instruction gives students authentic experience in applying what they learn in school to real world tasks. It offers students who enjoy working with people an opportunity to develop those skills. Community based instruction can be short or long term; it should have clear educational goals, high expectations for student performance, and be well integrated with school curriculum to be successful.

Types of Community Based Instruction

- Field Studies

A field study is a planned learning experience which involves an educational trip to places where students can observe first hand and study directly in a real life setting (Deutschman 1992). It is the new and improved version of the old "field trip." It mirrors the kind of field work conducted by anthropologists, sociologists, geographers, and historians. A research question (or questions) is (are) identified. Students go to the site, collect data, take careful notes of their observations, systematically record information,

take pictures, sample in a scientific way to gather evidence and so on. Field studies offer a perfect opportunity to hone graphic and sketching skills, to stimulate discussion, and for critical thinking.

- **Mentoring/Apprenticeship**

Mentoring matches students with a person in the community who can offer them advice and serve as a role model. An apprenticeship matches students with community people who offer professional skill and knowledge to students through collaborative work projects.

- **Service Learning**

Service can mean different things to different people. As a strategy for social studies teaching, it should mean an opportunity to learn through reflection on the experience of serving the community. Students are involved in short or long term projects which provide many situations in which to learn and apply skills.

13) Role Play and Simulations

Students love playing roles. They enjoy taking on the identity of others. In the process they learn valuable social studies skills such as developing empathy and seeing situations from multiple perspectives. Simulations are also effective at helping students engage in problem solving in real world contexts. Games, computer software, and reenactments of situations, for example, a simulation of a Congressional hearing are examples of simulations. Simulations and role plays are wonderful ways to make events from the past or present come alive. But they are difficult to do well.

Role playing takes place in five stages:

Stage 1: Initiation and Direction

At this stage the teacher identifies a topic which requires students to look at many sides of a difficult issue, requires the development of an opinion, or includes key players with interesting personalities. A role play is not the way to teach a procedure or process; it is an excellent way to explore an event, situation, or narrative with a crucial, decision making component.

Stage 2: Describing the Context

The teacher sets the context and makes sure students do not fall into the trap of presentism-role playing with hindsight. The situation must be set up and all perspectives explained clearly.

Step 3: Roles

In a successful role playing activity everyone must have a role. There may only be five or six key roles, but the entire class should be engaged in the role playing in some way, albeit as jurors, or interested citizens, or newspaper reporters. Everyone has an assignment, something they do in the role play. Once everyone is assigned a role, time is needed for students to understand their role, to practice, to “try on” their new identity. They must try to think like Thomas Jefferson or a land developer or whomever they have been assigned to become.

Stage 4: Enactment

Make sure students stay in role, and proceed.

Stage 5: Debriefing

Depending upon the structure of the role playing activity, students complete the action with a written reflection followed by an oral debriefing. The debriefing is the most important part of a role play; it is the teacher’s chance to ask students to discuss, to reason, to draw conclusions, and to pull everything together.

Simulations run in a very similar fashion, After the simulation problem or issue is carefully explained, the rules for the simulation or simulation “game” are carefully discussed. Roles must be specified and the resources or constraints of the simulation outlined. Again, the debriefing is important. Students tend to focus on “who won,” not what the process or procedure was.

14) Discussion Formats

Every social studies teacher includes discussion in his or her teaching repertoire. But too often discussion degenerates into unreasoned debate, where opinions are more important than viewpoints based on thought and research. There are several discussion models which can help make this strategy more effective, especially as a way to model thinking and critical problem solving.

- Educators for Social Responsibility (ESR) Model

This describes a process for dialogue. The steps are:

Step 1: Present positions.

Step 2: Each group asks questions, then restates the other group’s position as accurately as possible.

Step 3: Each group presents a list of the agreements between the two positions.

Step 4: Each group presents the questions that both can explore to resolve some of their differences.

- Socratic Discussion Model

This is also called “the seminar.” It is a discussion in which students dissect a text, problem, or event in order to better understand it. Students ask questions and probe each other’s answers from different perspectives. This method works well to understand complex issues, e.g., Supreme Court decisions.

Students are given roles to help them be productive in the seminar. Some students are speakers, some are listeners. This device allows teachers to give a voice to all students and to let talkative students develop their listening skills. Roles can rotate within a seminar or from seminar to seminar. The goal is for students to become proficient in a variety of roles.

Speaker	Listener
Explorer: Let’s try a new path or perspective...	Journalist: Summarizes the important points briefly.
Gadfly: Everyone seems to be too easily content with saying...	Map-maker: Makes a visual chart of paths and terrain covered in the conversation,, noting major “landmarks” and “twists and turns.”
Sherlock Holmes: I think we have overlooked an important...	Shadow: Listens to and observes one person for a fixed period of time, noting their comments and behavior (effective in large classes and for listening skill practice)
Librarian: Here’s a passage in the text that supports your point...	Referee: Judges which “moves” in the discussion seem warranted or unwarranted (in terms of content) and exemplary or outside the “rules” of good seminar behavior (in terms of process).
Matchmaker: What you are saying is a lot like what Sue said earlier...	Coach: Diagnoses the overall “play” and proposes some new ones, improvements in performance, strategies, etc.
Judge: Let’s see what the argument is between you two and try to settle it...	
Will Rogers: Let’s find a way to make this seemingly odd/unpleasant/incorrect comment more plausible or helpful...	

Harvard Social Studies Project Model

This is a complex model but helpful in that it suggests a way to assess a student discussion of public issues using these performance criteria:

Substantive Criteria	Procedural Criteria
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stating and identifying issues • Using foundational knowledge • Elaborating statements with explanations, reasons, or evidence • Stipulating claims or definitions • Recognizing values or value conflict • Arguing by analogy 	<p>Positive (+)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inviting contributions from others • Acknowledging the statements of others • Challenging the accuracy, logic, relevance, or clarity of statements • Summarizing points of agreement and disagreement <p>Negative (-)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Irrelevant distracting statements • Obstructive interruption • Monopolizing • Personal attack

Adapted from Harris 1997

Students are rated on each of these criteria on a scale from 1 (unsatisfactory) to 5 (exemplary). The goals are for students to:

- present accurate knowledge related to the issue;
- use skills for stating and pursuing related issues; and
- engage others in meaningful dialogue.

15) Using Graphic Organizers

You can lead a horse to water, but you can't make it drink. You can also set up wonderful learning activities, but you can't make students think. This frustrating fact perplexes teachers. It sometimes leads us to think that some students are uncaring because they don't participate in classroom experiences in the ways we want them to.

This may be because these students have poor thinking skills. They simply do not have the strategies to help them process information and construct knowledge that we take for granted. It is up to us to provide students with these strategies.

One very fruitful strategy is the use of graphic organizers. Known by a variety of names (concept maps, webs, thinking maps, mind maps), these are simply tools to help students organize their thinking. Here are a few generic examples with some suggestions concerning how you can use them with students. The goal is for teachers to use these tools frequently enough so

that students use them automatically. The use of graphic organizers is a helpful addition to any student's repertoire of thinking/learning strategies.

Decision-Making

The two diagrams, Figures 1 and 2, are examples of decision making graphic organizers. Four steps are used in the first organizer, Figure 1.

Step 1: State the need for a decision at the bottom of the organizer.

Step 2: Select four possible alternatives in the next step up the organizer.

Step 3: Next, consider and jot down the positive and negative consequences of each alternative on the next organizer level. You may wish to share your organizer with others to add or delete items.

Step 4: Given the possible consequences, develop a decision. This can be a personal decision or a decision developed through group consensus. Write the decision at the top of the organizer.

Near the roots of the Decision Tree (Figure 2), students write the occasion for the decision, such as resolving a conflict. On the main trunk and branches of the tree, students identify one or more alternative decisions. In the leaves and stems above, they list the positive and negative consequences of each alternative. Finally, after weighing the consequences, they write the decision in the box of the tree. This diagram models and reinforces a thoughtful process of decision making.

Figure 1. Decision-making Model ([next page](#))

Decision-Making Model

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Decision

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+	-
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+	-
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+	-
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Consequences

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Alternatives

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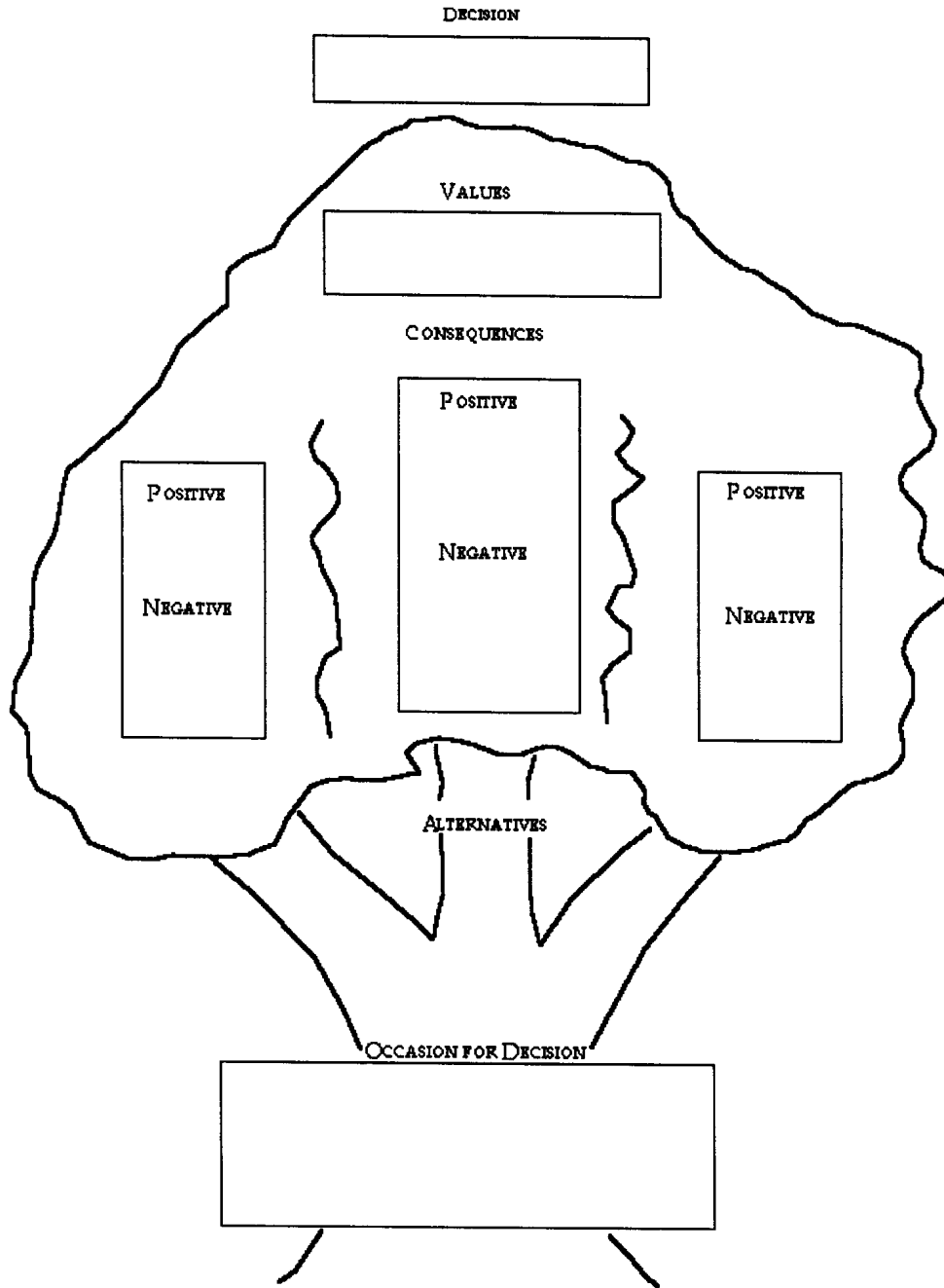


Figure 2. Decision Tree ([previous page](#))

Step 9: Students come to a final solution.

Step 10: Students outline the action that needs to be taken to solve the problem.

Figure 3. Problem Solving

1. Statement of problem.	4. What are the facts?	5. Why is this a problem?	6. What other information could be used to solve this problem? How could it be used?
2. Restate problem.			
3. Restate problem.			
7. What methods seem appropriate to find a solution?	8. How can this problem be solved? Sketch a plan.	9. Suggest a tentative solution. Is it feasible? Why? Why Not?	10. Final solution.
			11. Acceptance plan.

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