

**NCSS Theme I: Culture and Cultural Diversity**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of culture and cultural diversity.*

**Description:** Human beings create, learn, apply, modify, and adapt to their culture. In a democratic and culturally diverse society, students need to understand multiple perspectives that emerge from their own culture and from the vantage point of diverse cultural groups within that society. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What are the common characteristics of different cultures? How do belief systems, such as religion or political ideals, influence other parts of culture? How does the culture change to accommodate different ideas and beliefs? What does language tell us about culture? How do societies preserve and transmit culture? How do cultural values and attitudes contribute to or pose obstacles to cross-cultural understanding?

This theme is most often addressed in Anthropology, Geography, and History classes, as well as Multicultural Topics across the curriculum.

**NCSS Theme II: Time, Continuity and Change**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of time, continuity and change.*

**Description:** The study of time, continuity and change allows students to understand their historical roots and to locate themselves in time. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What is a historical perspective? Who am I? What happened in the past? How has the world changed and how might it change in the future? How am I connected to those in the past? Why does our personal sense of relatedness to the past change?

This theme is most often explored in History classes.

**NCSS Theme III: People, Places and Environments**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of people, places, and environments.*

**Description:** The study of people, places and human-environment interactions assists students as they create spatial views and geographic perspectives of the world beyond their personal locations. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: Where are things located? Why are they located where they are? How do human beings interact with their physical environments? How do physical environments affect human beings? What do we mean by "region"? How do landforms, climate, and natural resources change? What implications do these changes have for people?

This theme is most commonly explored in Geography classes, but may also be addressed in History classes.

**NCSS Theme IV: Individual Human Development and Identity**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of ideas associated with individual human development and identity.*

**Description:** Personal identity is shaped by one's culture, by groups, and by institutional influences.

To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: How do people learn? Why do people behave as they do? What influences how people learn, perceive and grow? How do people meet their basic needs in a variety of contexts? How do individuals develop from youth to adulthood? In what ways do ethnic, national, or cultural influences interact in specific situations or events?

This theme is most commonly explored in Psychology classes, but may also be addressed in Anthropology and History classes.

**NCSS Theme V: Individuals, Groups and Institutions**

*Teachers of social studies at all levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of interactions among individuals, groups, and institutions.*

**Description:** Institutions such as schools, churches, families, government agencies, and the courts play an integral role in people's lives. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What is the role of institutions in this and other societies? How am I influenced by institutions? How do institutions change? What is my role in institutional change? How do traditions undergird social and political institutions?

This theme is most often explored in Sociology classes, but may also be addressed in Anthropology, History, Political Science, and Psychology.

**NCSS Theme VI: Power, Authority and Governance**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of power, authority, and governance.*

**Description:** Understanding the historical development of structures of power, authority, and governance and their evolving functions in contemporary U. S. society and other parts of the world is essential for developing civic competence. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What is power? What forms does it take? Who holds it? How is it gained, used, and justified? What is legitimate authority? How are governments created, structured, maintained, and changed? How can individuals' rights be protected within the context of majority rule? What contribute to conflict within and among nations? How can cooperation within and between nations be promoted?

This theme is most often explored in Civics and Government classes, but may also be addressed in History and Law classes.

**NCSS Theme VII: Production, Distribution, Consumption**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of how people organize for the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services.*

**Description:** Because people have wants that often exceed the resources available to them, a variety of ways have evolved to deal with that discrepancy. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What is to be produced? How is production to be organized? How are goods and services to be distributed? What is the most effective allocation of the factors of production (land, labor, capital, and management)? What are different ways of organizing production? How do economic institutions and policies affect me and those around me? How do values and belief influence economic decisions in different societies?

This theme is most often explored in Economics classes, but may also be addressed in History and Geography classes.

**NCSS Theme VIII: Science, Technology, Society**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of science and technology.*

**Description:** Both science and technology have had a profound effect in shaping human experience and the world around us. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: Is new technology always better than old? How have science and technology transformed the physical world and human society? What can we learn from the past about how new technologies result in broader social change, some of which is unanticipated? How can we cope with the ever-increasing pace of change? How can we manage technology so that the greatest number of people benefit from it? How can we preserve our fundamental values and beliefs in the midst of technological change?

This theme is most often explored in History, Geography, Economics, Civics, and Government classes.

**NCSS Theme IX: Global Connections and Interdependence**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of global connections and interdependence.*

**Description:** The realities of global interdependence require understanding the increasingly important and diverse global connections among world societies and the frequent tension between national interests and global priorities. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: How do issues as health care, the environment, human rights, economic competition and interdependence, age-old ethnic enmities, and political and military alliances affect the international community? How does what is happening in some other part of the world affect my life and my community and vice versa? How do conflicts between groups affect the world?

This theme is most often explored in Economics, Geography, Government, and History courses, but may also be explored in Sociology courses.

**NCSS Theme X: Civic Ideals and Practices**

*Teachers of social studies at all school levels should provide developmentally appropriate experiences as they guide learners in the study of civic ideals and practices.*

**Description:** An understanding of civic ideals and practices of citizenship is critical to full participation in society and is a central purpose of the social studies. To assist learners in the study of this theme, social studies teachers guide students to address the following questions: What is civic participation and how can I be involved? How has the meaning of citizenship evolved? What is the balance between rights and responsibilities? What is the role of the citizen in the community and the nation, and as a member of the world community? How can I make a positive difference?

This theme is most often explored in Civics and Government classes, but may also be addressed in History classes.

***Adapted from Peabody College, Vanderbilt University NCSS Social Studies Teacher Education Standards and NCSS, National Standards for Social Studies Teachers***