

Strategies for Social Studies

Integrating Social Studies

The purpose of social studies instruction is the promotion of civic competence. Having a true conceptual understanding within the different areas of social studies enables greater engagement in public life.

Understanding allows us to understand change, where we come from, and helps us to make decisions. History can be inspirational – showing us how a single individual, such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., can change the world. Economics enables us to understand the benefits and challenges of a free enterprise system. Understanding civics and government allows and encourages us to become active participants in our democracy. Geography helps us understand our place in the world and in this fast-paced and growing global economy helps us learn how to best compete.

Inclusion of instruction in the concepts and ideas of social studies is an essential component of a well-rounded education. However, beyond the teaching of concepts and ideas is also the opportunity to help students:

- become more effective readers
- develop critical thinking skills
- become more effective decision-makers
- enhance their problem-solving skills

Incorporating social studies instruction in the classroom helps students gain the skills they will need as they enter the workforce, participate in higher education and training, and become involved in their own communities.

Strategies for Social Studies

“Few will have the greatness to bend history, but each of us can work to change a small portion of events. And in the total of those acts will be written the history of a generation.”

Robert Kennedy

Overview of Social Studies Test

The 2014 GED® Social Studies test assessment targets focus on four content domains:

- Civics and Government – approximately 50%
- U.S. History – approximately 20%
- Economics – approximately 15%
- Geography and the World – approximately 15%

Civics and government assumes a large role in the Social Studies test. This content area includes topics such as:

- Types of modern and historical governments
- Principles that have contributed to the development of American constitutional democracy
- Structure and design of the United States government
- Individual rights and responsibilities
- Political parties, campaigns, and elections in American politics
- Contemporary public policy

The area of U.S. history includes content topics such as:

- Key historical documents that have shaped American constitutional government
- Revolutionary and early republic periods
- Civil War and Reconstruction
- Civil Rights
- European settlement and population of the Americas
- World Wars I & II
- The Cold War
- American foreign policy since 9/11

The area of economics focuses on key economic issues that have shaped American government and policies as well as fundamental economic concepts at the micro and macro levels. Included are topic areas such as:

- Relationships between political and economic freedoms
- Consumer economics
- Economic causes and impacts of wars
- Economic drivers of exploration and colonization
- Scientific and Industrial Revolutions

The area of geography includes content topics such as:

- Development of classical civilizations
- Relationships between the environment and societal development
- Borders between peoples and nations
- Human migration, including immigration, emigration, population trends and issues

The *Assessment Guide for Educators* includes subtopics to provide additional information on the types of content that can be assessed.

To provide an overall structure for the social studies test, the key concepts assessed in social studies focus on two major themes:

- Development of Modern Liberties and Democracy
- Dynamic Responses in Societal Systems

These two themes have application across all domains of social studies and provide a way of linking the difference content areas assessed. Each item on the Social Studies test is aligned to a social studies content area and a focusing theme, as well as a social studies practice.

An Overview of the Connection Between Content Topics and Focusing Themes

		Social Studies Topic Matrix			
		Civics and Government (50%)	U.S. History (20%)	Economics (20%)	Geography and the World (15%)
Focusing Themes	<i>Development of Modern Liberties and Democracy</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Types of modern and historical governments • Principles that have contributed to development of American constitutional democracy • Structure and design of U.S. government • Individual rights and civic responsibilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key historical documents that have shaped American constitutional government • Revolutionary and Early Republic Periods • Civil War and Reconstruction • Civil Rights Movement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key economic events that have shaped American government and policies • Relationship between political and economic freedoms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of classical civilizations
	<i>Dynamic Responses in Societal Systems</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political parties, campaigns, and elections in American politics • Contemporary public policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • European population of the Americas • World War I and II • The Cold War • American foreign policy since 9/11 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundamental economic concepts • Micro- and macro-economics • Consumer economics • Economic causes and impacts of wars • Economic drivers of exploration and colonization • Scientific and Industrial Revolutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships between the environment and societal development • Borders between peoples and nations • Human migration

Social studies practices are those skills that are necessary to reasoning in both textual and quantitative contexts. The practices describe skills that are essential for reasoning in a social science context and that correspond with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) for Literacy in History/Social Studies, the CCSS for Mathematics, the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (NCSS), and the National Standards for History.

The social studies practices that are assessed on the 2014 GED® test include:

- Drawing conclusions and making inferences
- Determining central ideas, hypotheses, and conclusions
- Analyzing events and ideas
- Interpreting meaning of symbols, words, and phrases
- Analyzing purpose and point of view
- Integrating content presented in different ways
- Evaluating reasoning and evidence
- Analyzing relationships between text
- Writing analytic response to source texts
- Reading and interpreting graphs, charts, and other data representations
- Measuring the center of a statistical dataset

It's important to remember that the social studies content topics describe key concepts that are widely taught in a variety of high school-level courses and are relevant to the lives of GED® test-takers, while the social studies practices draw on reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making skills needed to use that content.

Integration of Skills

In real-world situations specific skills are rarely used in isolation. Reviewing a bar graph calls on a variety of skills: reading titles, recognizing the importance of the axes of the graph, interpreting the graph, determining the data that each bar represents, understanding the scale that is used, and drawing conclusions based on the information presented.

In the GED® Social Studies test, skills, concepts, and tools from other disciplines are integrated. Visuals, graphs, charts, and tables are not new to social studies. However, the level of interpretation requires that students have a greater depth of knowledge and understanding in these areas and may require the use of mathematical skills.

Another area of integration is the use of an extended response item in the social studies test. Strategies for teaching students how to respond to the extended response item is similar to the process taught for the extended response question in Reasoning through Language Arts.

2014 Extended Response(ER) and Scoring Rubric for Social Studies

The extended response item on the social studies test is similar to that which is found on the Reasoning through Language Arts test. The extended response in social studies is a 25-minute task that requires test-takers to analyze one or more source texts in order to produce a writing sample. However, students may also need to use their own understanding or background knowledge in completing an extended response question.

Extended responses are scored on three dimensions. These dimensions are adapted from the Common Core State Standards and include the following:

- Trait 1: Creation of arguments and use of evidence
- Trait 2: Development of ideas and organization structure
- Trait 3: Clarity and command of standard English conventions

On the Social Studies ER, Trait 1 is scored from 0 – 2; Trait 2 is scored 0 – 1; and Trait 3 is scored 0 – 1 with 4 raw score points possible for an extended response on the Social Studies test. The Social Studies ER item is also weighted in determining the final test score.

In Trait 1, three main qualities are assessed:

- How well the test-taker generates a text-based argument that demonstrates a clear understanding among the relationships among ideas, events, and figures presented in the source text(s) and historical context from which they were taken
- How effectively the test-taker cites relevant and specific evidence from source text(s) and uses that evidence to adequately support the argument
- How well the argument connects to the prompt and the source text(s)

In Trait 2, there are three items that must be considered together to determine the score of the written response. One item is not weighted more than any other. Three main qualities are assessed:

- How well the test-taker builds from one idea to the next using a sensible progression of ideas
- How effectively ideas are developed and elaborated upon
- How well the response demonstrates awareness of audience and purpose of the task

Trait 3 focuses on the test-taker's demonstration of clarity and command of standard English conventions. While test-takers are not expected to present "perfect" written responses, they are expected to provide a response that is relatively free of errors and demonstrates each of the following:

- An adequate application of conventions, including correct usage of frequently confused words and homonyms, subject-verb agreement, correct pronoun usage, appropriate placement of modifiers, capitalization and punctuation (e.g., apostrophes, commas, and end marks)

- An understanding of correct sentence structure that is varied and generally fluent, including correct subordination, coordination, and parallelism, avoidance of wordiness and awkwardness, use of transitional words and devices, avoidance of run-on sentences or fragments, standard usage at a level of formality appropriate for on-demand writing
- Limited errors in mechanics and conventions that do not interfere with readability and understanding of the response

It is important to remember that the extended response in social studies is considered a time-limited, on-demand draft, rather than a polished final edition that a student would be expected to complete in an instructional program.



Resources

For additional information on the Florida GED® Curriculum Frameworks access:

- Florida's GED® Curriculum Frameworks
http://www.fldoe.org/workforce/dwdframe/ad_frame.asp

For additional information on the Social Studies Test Assessment Targets, access the Assessment Guide for Educators, Chapter 2:

- GED Testing Service® website
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/assessment-guide-for-educators>

For additional information on the rubric for the extended response on the Social Studies Test, access the Assessment Guide for Educators, Chapter 3:

- GED Testing Service® website
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/assessment-guide-for-educators>

For additional information on the Common Core State Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, access:

- CCSS for Literacy in History/Social Studies
http://www.corestandards.org/assets/CCSSI_ELA%20Standards.pdf

For a review of the types of technology-enhanced items and an extended response prompt and text used within the social studies test, access the Social Studies Item Sampler at:

- GED Testing Service® website
<http://www.gedtestingservice.com/educators/itemsampler>

Strategies for the Classroom

Getting Started

As with the other modules of the 2014 GED® test, social studies requires that students must use reasoning and problem-solving skills. Helping students make a connection between social studies and real life is the key to engaging students in actively learning.

- Be *explicit* about how activities and content can be transferred to real-life situations
- Help students build “habits of mind” – strategies that they can use in a variety of situations and settings
- Integrate questions, such as: “How does history impact what I do?” “How do the concepts of civics and government or economics impact my life?” “What impact do the founding documents have on me?”
- Use photos, videos, maps, and other graphics to teach concepts
- Provide time for hands-on activities, group interaction, and class discussion

Adult educators are often limited in the time necessary to provide social studies instruction. It is important to identify the “Big Ideas” of social studies, including both content and practices. Start with the focusing themes of social studies. Make use of the World Wide Web as an engaging resource to provide students with background knowledge about specific concepts. Let students “hear” voices from the past to make history real by using the National Archives or the History Channel audio and video files. Make use of the technology that students have and consider having them use the GPS feature on their smartphones to learn the basics of geography. Whether electronic or print, incorporate newspapers and newsmagazines to show students how principles and concepts of economics impact their buying power as consumers.

Remember that much of the information consumed in daily-life is presented through the use of visuals – charts, tables, graphs, maps, photographs, and even editorial cartoons. Consider having a segment in your class entitled “Graphic of the Day.” During each class session, involve the entire class in reading and interpreting some type of graphic information. It’s a great way to get the brain going and also increases the energy and engagement of the students.

Integrate reading and writing through the use of social studies content. Make use of the resources provided through the GED Testing Service® website, including the Assessment guide and Social Studies Item Sampler. Develop questions for class discussion that challenge students – productive struggle is a good thing. More rigorous material and discussions that focus on “why” and “how” may be more challenging, but they also enable students to increase their reasoning, problem-solving, and decision-making skills.

Effective Reading Strategies

The Social Studies test requires that students be able to read strategically. In the chapter devoted to Reasoning through Language Arts, you had an opportunity to review a number of good practices designed to help students become more proficient readers. In addition to those practices, students must also have strategies that enable them to read and understand primary source text(s).

Reading Primary Source Text(s)

The Common Core State Standards have established ambitious goals for students, including the ability to cite textual evidence that supports arguments, consider authors' perspectives, corroborate among competing accounts, and develop written arguments. With the correlation of the 2014 GED® test to the CCSS, it is essential that instructors initiate new strategies to help students master these skills. One such strategy is the use of primary sources to help students build their reading and reasoning skills.

In history, students often have to read primary sources. Primary sources are sources that were created during the historical period which is being studied and that provide a first-hand account of what life was like during that timeframe. Primary sources provide a window into the past. Allowing students to come into contact with primary sources gives them a real sense of what it was like to be alive in an earlier era.

Primary sources can help students:

- engage with and relate in a personal way with events of the past;
- develop critical thinking skills; and
- construct knowledge through informed, reasonable conclusions based on evidence.

Primary sources include:

- Official documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, etc.
- Letters, diaries, journals, and other items written by individuals
- Photographs from that time period
- Newspapers, magazines, and other news sources of the time period

Reading primary sources is different than reading a textbook or a secondary source. The author of a primary source was not thinking about people in the future who would read his/her text. Thus, there may not be the clear road map presented to the reader that is often found in a textbook. As a result, the reader may have some difficulty extracting from the text what is important.

Dr. Anita Gelburd, lecturer in history and collaborator with the Office of Learning Resources at the University of Pennsylvania has identified three steps students should use to approach reading primary sources:

Preparation

Explain to students that learning is a process of hanging new information on a framework of their existing background knowledge. Before reading primary sources, students need to ask the following questions to connect what they are going to read with their personal background knowledge:

- What do I already know about this subject?
- What do I know about the historical context of this source?
- When was the source produced and how does the timeframe impact the historical perspective that will be given?
- What do I want to get out of this reading?

While Reading

It is important that students think critically while they are reading a primary source. To do this, students need to ask themselves the following questions:

- What is the author saying?
- What does the author imply?
- What does the author assume?
- Is the argument valid?
- How does the author support the argument?

After Reading

After students have read the material, they need to reflect on what they have read. As part of the reflection process, students need to ask themselves the following questions:

- Can I repeat in a concise statement the author's main argument and the evidence used to support that argument?
- Could the author's argument be extended to other circumstances?
- Has my understanding changed based on the author's argument or does my original opinion remain the same based on my background knowledge?
- What other questions could I explore based on the primary source?
- What questions would I ask, if I participated in a group discussion about the primary source?
- What do I not understand after a close reading of the text?

Currently there are limited resources, especially those focusing on primary sources, available to instructors in GED® programs. However, the Library of Congress has a wide range of materials available for instructors to help students build their social studies content knowledge and their reasoning skills.

Building Social Studies Vocabulary

Understanding the diverse vocabulary of social studies is important to the comprehension of social studies text. Activate students' knowledge of social studies terms by having them brainstorm words they know about each subject area or have them use the words in a narrative chain. Some basic activities to get you started in teaching social studies vocabulary are provided.

Building Word Lists

An excellent list of social studies vocabulary words may be found in *The Reading Teachers' Book of Lists, 4th Edition* by Edward Fry. The book is published by Jossey-Bass and may be purchased online or in local bookstores. However, you may also want to locate lists of words from each of the areas of social studies that you will be teaching, including: government, history, geography, and economics. Have students build their own word lists by writing unfamiliar terms on a chart that is posted in the room.

Find the Words

Provide students with specific letters of the alphabet. Tell them that their task is to create as many words as possible from the letters in the area in which they are studying. They cannot use other letters, but they can repeat letters from the list as often as necessary to create a vocabulary word. If challenged, students should be prepared to state how the word is related to the selected topic.

Example:

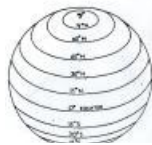
Provide a group of students with the letters: a, c, d, e, g, h, j, i, l, m, n, o, p, r, s, t, u. Have them come up with as many vocabulary words in the area of the geography as possible from the list of letters provided. Remember, they cannot use other letters, but they can repeat letters within words as often as necessary. If challenged, they should be prepared to state how the word is related to the map skills in geography.

Sample words: map, compass rose, hemisphere, latitude, longitude

K. I. M. (Key Idea – Information - Memory Clue)

K. I. M. is a great strategy for new words or concepts. Write the term or key idea (K) in the left column, the information (I) that goes along with it in the center column, and draw a picture of the idea, a memory clue, (M) in the right column.

The key idea may be a new vocabulary word or a new concept. The information may be a definition or it may be a more technical explanation of the concept. The memory clue is a way for students to integrate the meaning of the key idea into their memories. By making a simple sketch that explains the key idea, students synthesize and interpret the new information, making it their own. Then, students can reference their drawings to easily remember new key ideas.

K (Key Idea)	I (Information)	M (Memory Clue)
latitude	measurement on a globe or map of location north or south of the Equator	

Vocabulary Word Maps

A vocabulary word map is a visual organizer that helps students engage with and think about new terms or concepts in several ways. The new term goes in the middle of the map. Students fill in the rest of the map with a definition, synonyms, antonyms, and a picture to help illustrate the new concept. The following are examples of vocabulary word map.

Definition <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/> <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	Synonym <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>
Antonym <hr style="border: 0; border-top: 1px solid black; margin: 5px 0;"/>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 0 auto; width: 80%;"> Vocabulary Word </div> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 10px; margin: 10px auto; width: 80%;"> Draw a Picture or Use in a Sentence </div>

Summarizing Text

Summarizing text is an essential skill for students. The “While the Somebody-Wanted-But-So” strategy (MacOn, Bewell & Vogt, 1991) is most often used during and after reading to help students understand conflicts and resolutions in literary text, it is also a great summarization technique for social studies. In U.S. history and civics and government much of what is learned is based on the wants and needs of humans. Students complete the strategy on a chart or on a folded piece of paper.

Students use the graphic organizer to identify each of the following:

- Who wanted something
- What they wanted
- What conflict arose
- How was it the conflict resolved

The following is a sample completed Somebody-Wanted-But-So graphic organizer using a variety of historical situations.²⁰

Somebody	Wanted	But	So
Christopher Columbus	To sail to India to buy spices	He ran into the Caribbean Islands	He claimed the area for Spain.
Anne Frank	To hide from the Nazis	Someone turned her in	She died in a concentration camp.
Adolf Hitler	To control all of Europe	The Allies fought against him	He killed himself when Germany was defeated.
Thomas Edison	To invent the incandescent light bulb	His light bulb blackened (the Edison effect)	It later led to the electron tube, the basis of the electronics industry
British	To raise money by taxing the colonists	The colonists revolted against the tax	The tax was repealed

²⁰ West Virginia Department of Education's Strategy Bank. Retrieved from the World Wide Web at: <http://wvde.state.wv.us/strategybank/Somebody-Wanted-But-So.html>

Guided Reading and Summarizing Procedure

The Guided Reading and Summarizing Procedures (GRASP) helps students to summarize independently as they learn to recall, organize, and self-correct information before composing a summary. To make the process more concrete for students, Ryder and Graves (2003) suggest that the instructor revise his/her own summary of an excerpt based on suggestions from students. This provides a visible record for students. This process is especially helpful for students as they read more complex excerpts from social studies that may include concepts or even vocabulary that is not known to them.

Use the following graphic organizer to take students through multiple readings of a given excerpt. The graphic organizer can be developed as a table.

- Have students do an initial reading of the excerpt and write down what they remember. (Remember to have students cover up or turn over the excerpt, so they do not try to look back at this point for information.)
- Have students re-read the excerpt. This time they should look for any information that they missed, need to elaborate on, or should be deleted because it is inaccurate.
- Have students list the additions or corrections in the second column
- Have students organize the ideas into main ideas and details
- Write a summary passage based on the information obtained, and then edit and revise as needed

Guided Reading and Summarizing Procedure

Details Remembered from Reading	Additions/Correction
Main Ideas from Reading	

The Reading/Writing/Discussion Connection

Students need content literacy, not just the literacy of decoding words and understanding sentences. Content literacy supports the view that students construct knowledge through activities that include reading, writing, and discussion. Students need the opportunity to think about, read about, talk about, and write about information in order to synthesize it and retain it.

In the social studies classroom, students need to write to learn and also write to apply. Writing to learn encourages students to write about what they are thinking and learning. This type of writing includes:

- Journal entries
- Reflections
- Reading responses
- Question-answering
- Personal notations

Write to learn activities need not be graded. However feedback and comments should be made. The purpose of writing to learn is to promote active learning, encourage discussion, engage students, and most of all encourage thinking

Writing to apply activities are more formal. In this type of activity, students are expected to:

- analyze and synthesize information, and then
- communicate their thoughts in a coherent and organized manner.

These activities are meant to be assessed at multiple levels, including the student's ability to identify the issues and respond appropriately as well as produce a formal written response that is free of structural, organizational, and grammatical errors. This type of writing includes: constructed responses based on evidence presented in the writing, business letters, micro-themes, and even short research reports.

The process outlined in the chapter on Reasoning through Language Arts provides the instructor with the elements essential for writing to apply activities. Instructors should reference the Social Studies Constructed Response Rubric to ensure that they are checking students' work to ensure that all elements of an effective constructed response are covered in the classroom.

The missing element in the Reading/Writing/Discussion Connection in many adult education classrooms is discussion. Instructors should incorporate time each day for students to talk about what they are reading, what questions they have, what they do and do not understand, and how what they have learned will impact them on a daily basis.

Incorporating the World Wide Web in Social Studies Instruction

The Internet provides incredible opportunities to engage students in learning about the “big ideas” in social studies.

Using the Internet meets two purposes:

- the ability to access a wide range of information (historical and current) that can be used in the classroom and
- an opportunity to enhance students’ technology skills – something they can take and use in many aspects of their lives.

The following is an example of an internet-based lesson.

Comparing and Contrasting U.S. Presidential Campaign Ads from the Cold War Lesson Overview

This lesson is adapted from the National Council of Social Studies and enables students to:

- learn more about time, continuity, and change;
- understand civic ideas and practices, including the complexity of campaigns and their historical context; and
- understand a complex concept – the Cold War.

For this lesson, students will need to access *EASE History* an online learning environment that supports the teaching and learning of U.S. History. *EASE History* has three entry points: Campaign Ads, Historical Events, and Core Democratic Values. This lesson helps students acquire conceptual understanding by:

- Looking at multiple cases related to the Cold War
- Placing events in context
- Reviewing events from multiple perspectives

Instructional Steps

Students should work in teams of two. Each team will need access to a computer, high-speed Internet, and two sets of headphones. If computer access is not available for individual teams, conduct the session as a group activity, using an LCD projector and computer to project the ads.

1. Go to the EASE History website at <http://www.easehistory.org/> and review the key features.
2. Provide each team with a compare and contrast worksheet.
3. Have teams examine at least twelve Cold War ads from the 1960s.
4. Assign each team two ads.
5. Have students view the ads and compare and contrast using the worksheet.
6. Have students come back together as a whole group and discuss how they compared and contrasted the ads and how their understanding of the Cold War has changed.

Comparing and Contrasting Campaign Ads Worksheet

Ad #1	Ad #2
Title	Title
Candidate	Candidate
Year	Year
Party	Party
Do you think that this source is reliable?	Do you think that this source is reliable?
Rate from 1 2 3 4 5 (circle one)	Rate from 1 2 3 4 5 (circle one)
Why did you give the source this rating?	Why did you give the source this rating?
First Impressions What is the first ad about? What is the second ad about? 	
Looking Back (Review the two ads again.) After looking back, what did you notice that you didn't notice the first time? Ad #1 Ad #2 	

Multiple Goals

How does each ad highlight the candidate's strengths and compensate for the candidate's weaknesses? EASE History candidate profiles include information on the candidate's strengths and weaknesses.

	Case 1	Case 2
How are the candidate's strengths highlighted?		
How does the ad compensate for the candidate's weaknesses?		

Multiple Perspectives

Think about the campaign ads from different perspectives. With your partner discuss how each ad could be viewed based on each of the following perspectives.

Perspective #1 National Security	Perspective #2: Patriotism
Perspective #3: Common Good	Perspective #4: Freedom

And the Best Supported Argument Is . . .

After completing the analysis of the two ads, determine which argument is best supported by the evidence provided in the ad. Incorporate relevant and specific evidence from each ad to support your argument. Your response should take about 25 minutes to complete.

The following are Campaign Ad pairs that you may wish to use in the lesson:

Pair 1. Richard Nixon's 1960 "Important" ad and John F. Kennedy's 1960 "Issue" ad

Pair 2. John F. Kennedy's 1960 "Issue" ad and Richard Nixon's 1968 "Leadership" ad

Pair 3 Lyndon Johnson's 1964 "Daisy" ad and Richard Nixon's 1968 "Chicago" ad

Pair 4 Barry Goldwater's 1964 "March" ad and Barry Goldwater's 1964 "Reagan" ad

Pair 5 Hubert Humphrey's 1968 "Bomb" ad and Lyndon Johnson's 1964 "Cone" ad

Pair 6 Richard Nixon's 1968 "Percy" ad and Lyndon Johnson's 1964 "Poverty" ad²¹

Using Podcasts in the Social Studies Classroom

Podcasts are another technological tool that can be used in and out of the classroom. Podcasts are available from many different sources and rarely require any fees. A podcatcher is an application that can be used to subscribe to podcasts and automatically download them. iTunes is the most widely-used podcatcher. However, there are other podcatchers available, such as Juice, jPodder, and Doppler. All are free and downloadable.

Podcasts are widely available from the news media. The *Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, the *BBC*, and *NPR* all provide podcasts on current events. Most of these sites involve news stories that can also be found in text format. However, these sites also provide background information and interviews in audio form. Podcasts are also available from both the legislative and executive branches of the federal government.

Podcasts can be used in the classroom to initiate discussion or students can listen to podcasts on their own as a follow-up to a lesson conducted in the classroom.

Summing It Up

To get started integrating social studies into the GED® preparatory classroom,

- Incorporate small and large group session, focusing on social studies concepts that will help students gain core knowledge they will need on the test and for life.
- Use the local newspaper or *USA Today* to provide students with an opportunity to interpret graphic-based material, including graphs, charts, maps, editorial cartoons, and photographs. The newspaper is an excellent resource for information related to civics and government, economics, and geography. Use articles to connect concepts with real-life, current events.

²¹ Adapted from *Comparing and Contrasting U.S. Presidential Campaign Ads from the Cold War* developed by Brian P. Collins, Rand J. Spiro, and Aparna R. Ramchandran, *Digital Age: Technology-Based K-12 Lessons Plans for Social Studies*, National Council for the Social Studies, 2007

- Integrate reading and writing. Use the local newspaper or *USA Today* to identify letters to the editor on similar themes or topics. Have students read the letters and determine which is best supported by the evidence presented. Have students construct evidence-based responses.
- Use Internet resources such as the Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy from the U.S. Department of State. This resource includes short excerpts from U.S. history that can be used in the classroom to build conceptual understanding.
- Use the GPS feature on smart phones to teach the basics of map reading.
- Make use of technology available in your program or through your students' smartphones.
- Provide students with increasingly more complex reading materials. High expectations lead to high achievement.



Resources

Although there are numerous resources to assist the classroom instructor, the following are a few websites with which to begin:

- The Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/>
- Teaching with the Library of Congress - Blog
<http://blogs.loc.gov/teachers/>
- Classroom Materials – Primary Source Sets from the Library of Congress
<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/>
- Four Reads: Learning to Read Primary Documents
<http://teachinghistory.org/teaching-materials/teaching-guides/25690>
- National Public Radio (NPR) Podcast Directory
http://www.npr.org/rss/podcast/podcast_directory.php
- Basic Readings in U.S. Democracy
<http://usinfo.org/enus/government/overview/demo.html>

