

Social Studies

Standards for teachers of social studies are maintained by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS, 2000). These standards do not explicitly reference English language learners, but they do charge social studies teachers with a responsibility to diverse learners:

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS)

Social studies teachers should possess the knowledge, capabilities, and dispositions to create at the appropriate school levels learning experiences that fit the different approaches to learning of diverse learners (NCSS, 2000, p. 51).

Vocabulary

Since Social Studies involves a lot of reading and writing, teachers should pay particular attention to pre-teaching vocabulary words with ELLs in mind. The selected words should be a combination of content words (the words typically bolded in a textbook) and other “access” words essential to grasping the meaning. For example, Calderón (2007) describes a lesson on trading and bartering skits in which the following vocabulary is pre-taught:

Access Words

coin	tool
societies	dye
ancient	worth
bronze	merchant
statue	doubtfulness

Content Words

barter	diffusion
economy	Lydians
trade	Phoenicians
colony	goods
cultural	

Accessing Content

Teachers can provide a pre-reading handout with key words, events, and dates that are extracted from the textbook. At right is an example timeline on the life of the Mexican American activist and leader of the United Farm Workers, César Chávez.

Often, the Internet is a resource for integrated graphic organizers, multi-media and content. For an example with animated maps, see the multimedia tutorial “European Voyages of Exploration” from the Applied History Group in the resources section that follows.

Another strategy that is particularly helpful for students with diverse cultural and education backgrounds is the Know-Want to Know-Learn (K-W-L) chart. This allows

César Chávez (1927-1993) Timeline

1927	Born in Arizona
1937	Family became migrant farm workers
1946	Joined the US Navy
1952	Joined the Community Service Organization, a Latino civil rights group
1968	Fasted for 25 days
1972	Fasted for 25 days
1975	The California Agricultural Labor Relations Act was passed to protect farm workers
1988	Fasted for 36 days ("Fast for Life")
1993	Died in Arizona
1994	Awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom

Adapted from César E. Chávez Foundation (2008).

teachers to informally assess what background knowledge students have on a particular topic, and then adapt their instruction to fill in the gaps. The following is an example that could be used in conjunction with studying César Chávez:

K	W	L
What do you know about farm workers' rights?	What do you want to know about farm workers' rights?	What did you learn about farm workers' rights?

Once the students have completed the pre-reading activities, they need instruction in the metacognitive skills of reading. To teach these, the teacher can do a think-aloud to model asking questions, making judgments, and noting new words while reading.

Inquiry-based Projects

Another option besides scaffolding the text is to lead an inquiry-based project in which students act as historians or social scientists. If ELLs are literate in their native languages, they can complete Internet research in those languages. To encourage active participation, students should be able to choose their own topics within a common category. Choice enables students to draw on their own background knowledge and sociocultural identity, and familiarity with common themes or information will assist in understanding the material in English. In this way, ELLs are viewed as cultural resources that enrich the classroom experience for other students.

To learn more about teaching Social Studies to ELLs:

Web Resources

- Anstrom, K. (August 1998). *Preparing secondary education teachers to work with English language learners: Social Studies*. NCBE Resource Collection Series, 10. Retrieved December 17, 2007 from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/pubs/resource/ells/language.htm>
- Irvin, J. (2002). *Reading strategies for the social studies classroom*. Austin, TX: Holt, Rinehart and Winston. Retrieved December 30, 2007 from http://go.hrw.com/hrw.nd/gohrw_rls1/pKeywordResults?ST2Strategies
- National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition. (2002). *In the classroom: A toolkit for effective instruction of English language learners*. Retrieved May 5, 2008 from <http://www.ncela.gwu.edu/practice/itc/lessons/sinquiryss.html>
- The Applied History Research Group. (1997). *The European Voyages of Exploration*. Retrieved May 7, 2008 from http://www.ucalgary.ca/applied_history/tutor/eurvoya/vasco.html
- The César E. Chávez Foundation. (2008). *American Hero*. Retrieved May 13, 2008 from http://www.chavezfoundation.org/_page.php?code=0010010000000000&page_ttl=American+Hero&kind=1

Print Resources

- Calderón, M. (2007). *Teaching reading to English language learners grades 6-12: A framework for improving achievement in the content areas*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Faltis, C.J. & Coulter, C.A. (2008). *Teaching English learners and immigrant students in secondary schools*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.
- Irwin-DeVitis, L, Bromley, K., and Modlo, M. (1999). *50 graphic organizers for reading, writing, and more*. (1999). Scholastic Professional Books.
- King, M., Fagan, B., Bratt, T. & Baer, R. (1992). Social Studies instruction. In P.A. Richard-Amato & M.A. Snow (Eds.) *The multicultural classroom: Readings for content-area teachers* (pp 287-299). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- McKeown & Beck (1994). Making sense of accounts in history: Why young students don't and how they might. In G. Leinhardt, I. Beck & C. Stainton (Eds.) *Teaching and learning in history*.
- Verplaetse, L.S. & Migliacci, N. (2008). Making mainstream content comprehensible through sheltered instruction in L.S. Verplaetse & N. Migliacci (Eds.) *Inclusive pedagogy for English language learners*. New York: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.