

Part 5: Concepts of Disciplinary Thinking

This session will focus on using the Grade overview pages as a tool for planning as well as discussing and participating in some activities related to the concepts of disciplinary thinking.

This figure found on page 8 of document illustrates the interrelationship between the tools and strategies and the achievement of expectations in the Social Studies, History and Geography curriculum these items have been incorporated into the curriculum as a necessary part of the learning to help students achieve the vision for learning in Social Studies, History and Geography. The three items that are found in the funnel come together to help form the expectations of the curriculum and were the focus of another session. In this session we will take you through some learning activities that focus on the aspects outside of the funnel.

During the consultation phase for this document we heard repeatedly that teachers wanted a more user friendly document, that they would like to see an overview for each grade or course in the curriculum that provided them with a big picture for that grade and/or course. In light of that feedback overview pages are included in the curriculum document. For each grade in Social Studies there's an overview page that outlines how both strands work together. In History and Geography there is an overview page for each subject in each grade. These pages enable users to see the big picture of what the content and the intent of the Social Studies, History and Geography program is for that grade. They provide teachers with a usable framework and demonstrate possible paths for integration. An overview page may be used for a communication tool for teachers to use with a child's family. Each course in the Canadian World Studies document will also have its own overview page. Please refer to the sample overview page for Grade 4 on page 96 of the document or you can download it from this site.

These charts are meant to present an overview of the Grade specific curriculum and is meant to provide a starting point for planning and instruction. For each overall expectation which are listed in the first column it identifies a related concept or concepts of thinking. We have included Big Ideas on the overview page. These big ideas provide context for the overall

expectations and the concepts of disciplinary thinking that are related to them. The Big Ideas reflect the enduring understandings that students retain from their learning transfer to other subjects and draw upon throughout their lives.

There are also framing questions that are overarching questions related to the overall expectations and big ideas. They are intended to stimulate student's critical thinking and to encourage them to consider the broader relevance of what they are studying. The last column is on sample spatial skills. Students use spatial skills and tools to analyze and construct various types of maps and graphs. By developing these skills students will be able to understand and analyze visual data and information contributing to their ability to solve problems. This highlights the shift from a skill based learning to focus the learning on helping student acquire and practice the skills needed to be spatially literate student. There is also a map globe and graphing continuum in Appendix C and it covers the learning of these skills from Grades 1 to Grade 12. Please take the time to read through your divisional overview pages which can be found in the document or downloaded from this site. In order to do this please press pause and then press play when you are ready to continue.

During the consultation phase of the review for Social Studies, History and Geography and Canadian and World Studies we repeatedly heard the request for more thinking skills within the document. Some people asked for higher order thinking while others asked for critical thinking. The questions that we were left with were what would a document look like that incorporated thinking into its expectations. How would it tie into assessment and evaluation and what academic research was being done on the processes of thinking within the disciplines of Social Studies, History and Geography, Economics, Politics and Law?

Research and benchmarking was completed to inform the structures for what thinking looks like in the different disciplines. Many specialists within each discipline; teachers, professors and professionals who work within careers related to the disciplines were consulted. Through this research, benchmarking and consultations and understanding that each discipline has a unique way of processing information came to light. It became evident that the same issue or event may be looked at and analyzed by people within all of these disciplines. But how they process the information related to that issue or event is different.

It was important to honor the integrity of the specific disciplines and not try to come up with a generic set of concepts. The variations in wording of the concepts is there to honour the integrity of the discipline. The wording reflects the terminology that is specific to each subject. In all of the disciplines it is crucial that students simply not learn various facts but they acquire the ability to think and to process content in ways best suited to each subject. The concepts of disciplinary thinking underpin all thinking and learning in these subjects.

The revised curriculum focuses on developing student's ability to apply concepts of disciplinary thinking which are inherent in the doing of each subject. Students are asked not simply be learning the material but be engaged in doing of Social Studies, the doing of History and the doing of Geography. Social Studies inherently dual disciplinary and it is the foundation of the other disciplines and for those reasons there are 6 concepts of social Studies thinking. Full descriptions for each of the concepts of disciplinary thinking are included in the curriculum document. These descriptions highlight the process of thinking that students will be developing and applying as they are doing Social Studies, History and Geography.

They're also provided are sample questions taken directly from the expectations that demonstrate how a teacher may choose to model the connection between the thinking and the expectation. Please take the time to read the explanations for the concepts of disciplinary thinking which are found in the subject openers of the document and can be downloaded from this site. In order to do this please pause the session and then press play when you ready to continue. In grades 1 to 8 at least one concept of disciplinary thinking is identified as a focus for each overall expectation. Teachers can use the specified concepts to deepen student's investigations. Take a moment to read the example from Grade 4 Strand A - Heritage and Identity – Early Society 3000 BC to 1500 CE to see how the concepts of Social Studies thinking are connected to the overall expectation. Please pause the session and then press play when you are ready to continue.

So what does this look like in a classroom? How do I tie the concept of thinking to the overall expectation in the related big idea? How do I develop activity that incorporates the concept of thinking and the expectations? In order to better understand how to do this and to begin to

plan for your own students the next activity which can be done by yourself or with a learning team will begin to answer those exact questions.

For this activity please download a copy of Doing and Saying – An Example and copy of the Social Studies, History or Geography Doing and Saying template. This activity is designed to help you begin to work with the concepts of disciplinary thinking. The question is? What does the Doing and Saying look like when students are engaged in learning and using the concepts of thinking?

Let us look at the Grade 4 examples; you will notice that in this activity it is important to focus on one concept of thinking and the related big idea. This is the Grade 4 strand Early Societies 3000 BC to 1500 CE Interrelations is the concept of Social Studies, thinking that I want to focus on. This is related to the A2 - Overall Expectation and the Big Idea that the environment had a major impact on daily life in early societies. This Big Idea and Expectation allow students to focus their inquiry on the societies that are of interest to them. It is also a Big Idea that they can transfer to their understanding of communities today. These are just 2 possible examples that will allow for students to do Social Studies.

The Matrix can be setup on the wall of the classroom and as student's analyze information from their own inquiry they can place key points on sticky notes and attach them to the matrix. This allows for students to begin seeing the interrelationship between the environment and their chosen society but it also allows them to participate in discussions with other students about the societies that they have chosen to learn about. This becomes an active situation where the students are doing Social Studies and using Interrelationships. This also allows for students to compare the different societies and be able to understand the Big Idea and how it relates to many societies.

As students are doing Social Studies and using the matrix they will be discussing findings with each other or with the teacher. They may be up at the matrix and having a conversation with another student about the different societies they have been investigating. These discussions are excellent opportunities for anecdotal evaluation. If students are identifying and describing the ways the environment had an impact on a society or describing the connection between a societies beliefs and the environment or describing how the environment is related to a specific

piece of art or just identifying and describing the connection of where a society was located and the natural environment surrounding it. Then they are actively speaking Social Studies and speaking interrelationships. Use those discussions as times for descriptive feedback and for evaluation you do not have to wait for the end to evaluate a student.

Now it is your turn you can do this activity by yourself or with a partner. Take the time to think about and fill in the template for the discipline you chose to focus on. If you have chosen a Big Idea that is two related concepts of thinking focus on one for this activity. Remember to use the subject openers that have the explanations of the concepts of thinking and the specific expectations to help you with this task. This is the first step. Share out your ideas with colleagues and try them with your own students. Use these ideas as the first step as you begin to build your own understanding of the concepts of disciplinary thinking.