



# SC Council for the Social Studies

Developing critical thinkers, problem solvers, and engaged citizens

## Legislative Priorities- Social Studies: Every Student, Every Day

### Background

Social Studies is the integrated study of civics/government, economics, geography, and history. Representative democracy depends on actively engaged members of communities. Effective study in these areas is where students are able to apply real-world application to learned skills from English/ Language Arts and mathematics. Social Studies is where students learn about their community and understand their place in the state, nation, and world. Critical thinking applied in the Social Studies helps students develop the habits of mind and dispositions to become competent and responsible citizens who are informed and thoughtful, who participate within their community, who engage in civic action, and who develop moral and civic virtues. The South Carolina Council for the Social Studies strongly supports the position that the survival of our democracy depends upon quality social studies instruction in grades K-12.

SCCSS believes that mandated state and national accountability has had the unintended consequence of transforming the focus of education from learning to test performance. It has also resulted in the narrowing of the curriculum, where social studies instructional time is greatly reduced as more time was given over to English/Language Arts and mathematics. Social Studies teachers are denied access to appropriate professional development. There is ample research to corroborate this. (Appendix A Literature Related to Marginalization of Social Studies Instruction as a result of High Stakes Accountability Measures)

### Legislative Action

1. SCCSS applauds the recognition by many legislators and policy makers who recognize that state and federal accountability measures have had the consequence of an proliferation of testing in schools. In addition to state-mandated testing, districts have added benchmark testing, diagnostic testing, and formative testing to predict how students will perform on state-mandated assessments. Teachers report the loss of instructional time as of result of the additional testing as well as increased student anxiety related to testing. SCCSS encourages the State Department of Education request districts to reduce the amount of extraneous formative and benchmark testing.
2. Pre-filed legislation in both the SC House ([H. 3142](#), [H. 3759](#)) and Senate ([S. 77](#), [S. 419](#)) would remove state-mandated social studies assessment in grades 5, 7, and 11. SCCSS does not believe that removing these three tests is a significant reduction in testing. If state-mandated testing is removed, SCCSS would prefer to see the 11th grade United States History and Constitution ended. Since students at the high school level are required to have three credits of social studies, there is no risk of the curriculum being narrowed.
3. If this legislation becomes law, social studies teachers want guaranteed instructional time in grades K-8 where narrowing of the curriculum will most likely occur. Specifically, beginning in the 2019-2020 school year, students in kindergarten through second grade must receive a minimum of thirty minutes of daily guaranteed standards-based social studies instruction; students in third grade through fifth grade must receive receive a minimum forty-five minutes of daily guaranteed standards-based social studies instruction; and students in sixth through eighth grade must receive receive a minimum sixty minutes of daily guaranteed standards-based social studies instruction. The student- teacher ratio in a social studies class may not exceed the average student- teacher ratio in that of English/Language Arts or Mathematics class.
4. To insure that classrooms have the most qualified social studies teacher, the General Assembly must direct the State Department of Education to draft guidelines directing schools and districts to ensure teachers of social studies have equitable access to all federal, state, and local funds to be used for appropriate professional development designated for social studies as any other content area teacher.