

White Paper

How Inquiry Prepares Tennessee Students for Assessment



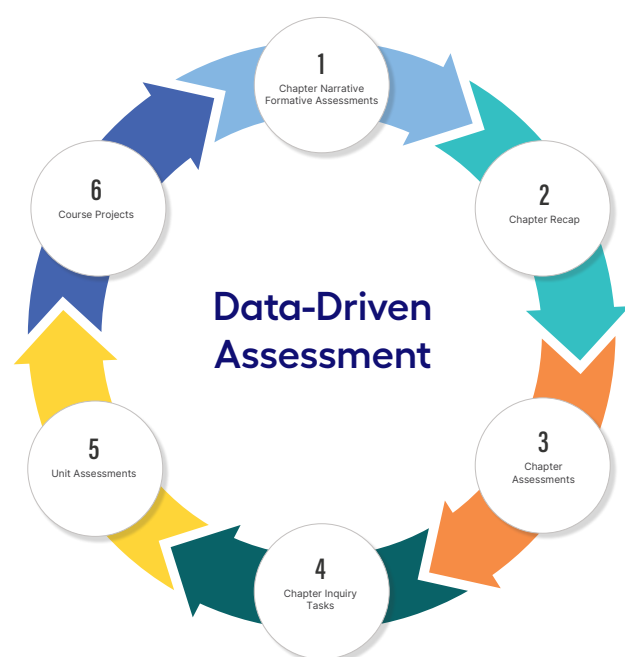
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Inquiry teaches students how to generate and explore questions; evaluate disciplinary sources to uncover facts and interpret those facts; and ultimately, construct evidentiary answers.¹ In social studies, inquiry takes on disciplinary hues.² Students demonstrate historical awareness, calculate economic costs and benefits, reason geographically about space and people, and deliberate civic issues and ideas.³

One of the biggest misconceptions about social studies inquiry is that skills supersede content.⁴ Social studies is a content-based field whereby the content *and* skills matter. In order to practice any of the inquiry skills within social studies (e.g., contextualize, corroborate, synthesize), students need to identify factual information, categorize the relationships between facts, and summarize those facts as explanations and descriptions. Knowing information is a pre-condition for more sophisticated skills like interpretation.⁵

The Traverse curriculum builds essential bridges between content and skills by:

- Articulating **meaningful historical content** in a strong, clear course scope and sequence that provides the foundation for inquiry.
- Reinforcing **key inquiry concepts and skills** by arranging the content around questions and supporting students' exploration with primary and secondary source analysis. In doing so, the content becomes part of a larger conceptual and skill framework that helps teachers and their students make meaning of the people, places, events, and ideas encountered in a social studies course.
- Providing a flexible toolkit of **formative and summative performance assessment types**. Each chapter features a discrete inquiry skill (e.g., gathering evidence, evaluating a secondary source), a set of 4–8 curated disciplinary sources, along with a formative performance task that allows students to construct arguments and explanations about the past. The question-task-source combinations assist in helping build students' capacity for more complex reasoning within the summative assessment tasks. Each course also includes a mid-point and end-of-course project-based experience allowing students to apply and extend their learning.
- Including a sequence of technology-enhanced **multiple-choice items** by chapter and unit. The items progress in complexity from DOK 1 to 3 and are organized into four categories: 1) Vocabulary and World History Knowledge; 2) Primary and Secondary Source Analysis; 3) Historical Reading and Thinking; and 4) Document-Based Questions. These assessments reinforce the content and skill equilibrium needed in social studies inquiry.



Curriculum is an investment of time, energy, and funding. Schools and districts need to ensure the curriculum is of the highest quality and aligned to their state standards and assessment requirements.⁶

For Tennessee, the social studies standards follow the Traverse course approach, which is organized around meaningful content (Ancient, World, and U.S. Histories), disciplinary strands (civics, geography, economics, and history), and key inquiry practices (collecting data from and critically examining historical sources, developing historical and geographical awareness).⁷ This approach enables students to know about the world as well as interpret the past and present. The Traverse multiple choice assessments provide an essential tool for practicing and reinforcing the range of content, concepts, and skills (recall, comprehension, and strategic thinking) that will set students up for success on the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP).⁸



Learn more about how Traverse prepares
Tennessee students for success at
info.imaginelearning.com/traverse-tennessee

References

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