

Office of Social Science and Service-Learning
Asking Challenging Questions; Seeking the Common Good

Vision

Students will learn and apply social science and service learning content and skills to excel in the classroom and become engaged citizens in an ever-changing world.

Purpose and Source of the Social Science Learning Targets

Social science learning targets articulate what the essential social science proficiencies are, and provide guidance on how they should be developed. The skills and knowledge addressed in these proficiencies have been culled from the Illinois Learning Standards, the College Readiness Standards, the standards from the National Council for Social Studies, and other national standards.

Student Skills and Knowledge: The “What” of Social Science Teaching and Learning

CPS graduates will have a firm grasp of the five major content areas of the social sciences -- political systems, economics, history, geography, and social systems. They engage in inquiry-based social science investigation that surfaces challenging questions and leads to deeper understandings, and are able to apply content knowledge outside of the classroom as engaged citizens seeking the common good.

Classroom Practices: The “How” of Social Science Teaching and Learning

Teaching and Learning in the social science disciplines offers four ways of learning:

Communication - students must have the opportunity to articulate their understanding of social science content. In so doing, students must analyze text, assess and offer evidence, and draw reasonable conclusions through oral and written presentations for a variety of audiences.

Action - as emerging, thoughtful citizens, students must have opportunities to act in their communities in positive ways that demonstrate their understanding of the social sciences and builds the common good.

Inquiry and Investigation - students should seek, find, assess and synthesize information. This requires experience working under the specific norms of each social science discipline. Training students in social science research builds skills to seek out evidence, find appropriate primary and secondary sources, judge their validity, and connect these sources in meaningful ways.

Interpretation and Analysis - after processing information, students must use higher order thinking skills to organize information in a structured manner and formulate cogent arguments based on evidence.

Teaching and Learning in the social sciences is enhanced when students have opportunities to learn about and practice their civic roles and explore local cultural, social, and political resources.

Community Exploration - students explore local cultural and social resources that support learning in the social sciences. Resources include traditional formal institutions such as libraries and museums but also neighborhood organizations, public institutions and the first-hand knowledge of elders. Students learn what resources their communities contain, how to access these resources, and how communities, students included, benefit from these resources.

Civic Action - Students define and exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens and understand how to access and use the tools of democracy. Service-learning projects provide opportunities for civic participation and are integrated into the curriculum to further hone the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required within a democracy.