

Social Studies in ESD’s Lower School

In order to teach substantive history to young people with success, the study cannot be focused solely on dates and battles or become a dry recitation of facts. Instead, we teach the narrative history of a group of people. The child who said, “I love history because it's just a big story,” understood the beauty of the discipline. G.W.H. Hegel called this reflective history, concerned with the effort of shaping materials into a coherent narrative and interpreting their significance. Children begin to make connections between what occurred and what people have become. They extrapolate and rationalize historic events to understand the ideas that moved people to extraordinary acts of bravery, honor and compassion, as well as acts of treachery, dishonesty and cruelty. Social studies discussions, at every grade level, demonstrate an investigation of the living picture of human development whereby we discover where we stand today.

Inseparably linked to history is the study of geography, defined in the broad sense: the description of land, sea and university; the interrelationship of people with the flora and fauna of earth; and the historical, cultural, scientific, governmental and social backgrounds of people. Beginning with a tactile exploration of the world around them extending to interpretation of maps and creation of maps, students learn latitude and longitude, as well as other lines of demarcation, land forms, location of the continents, major rivers, mountains, deserts and islands. Students make connections that allow them to see the environmental constraints as catalysts to social evolution, affecting a culture's mythology, religious beliefs, political structure and economy. They also learn how geological forces produce various land forms.

At each grade level six strands underlie exploration in developmentally appropriate ways:

	Learning Objective	Guiding Questions
Establish historical significance	Students will understand how to locate a historical person or event in a pattern or connect the person/event to themselves (their family, city, state, etc.)	What does this have to do with me? How does this person/event fit into a pattern? How did this person/event impact the people who lived at the time it happened?
Use primary source evidence	Students will understand that they gather clues about history from letters, diaries, drawings, photographs, etc, (i.e. primary sources) that can be used to make a claim about the past.	What story does the object (photograph, letter, map, diary entry, etc.) tell about the past?
Identify continuity and change	Students understand that historical events/time periods/characters have characteristics that are the same and some that demonstrate a change.	How is that different from my life? How is this different from the lives of people in my city?
Analyze cause and consequence	Students understand that a "how" and "why" leads to events in history especially when they are associated with changes. They will understand	Why were people treated differently? Why did events happen as they did?

	that there are many causes that contribute to a change and try to analyze these in several different ways.	
Take historical perspective	Students understand how to step into the shoes of a character in a particular time in history.	How do the concrete differences between your life and the life of the person/time period being researched influence how someone from that time thinks or acts? How many different stories can you tell about a specific event/person?
Understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations	Students understand that as we learn about injustices in the past, we need to use that knowledge to make wise decisions ourselves.	What have I learned from history that helps me make good decisions in my life?

Guiding questions frame the topics at each grade level:

Beginners	How do I get to know myself and my family?
PreK	How is the world outside my window changing and why?
Kindergarten/Primer	How is my world like your world?
1st Grade	How do individuals make the world better?
2nd Grade	Why do organisms migrate?
3rd Grade	How does geography impact culture?
4th Grade	How do history and geography impact identity? How do our resources impact our influence?

Topics include:

Beginners	Me and my family
PreK	Family/community traditions and holidays
Kindergarten/Primer	Texas and the World: The symbols and traditions of Dallas compared and connected to those of France, Brazil, Italy, England, China, India, Japan, Kenya and Australia.
1st Grade	Dr. Seuss, Martin Luther King, Jr., Ruby Bridges, Rosa Parks, Abraham Lincoln
2nd Grade	Ice Age, the Maya, Age of Exploration,
3rd Grade	World and US geography, A Growing America, The Oregon Trail
4th Grade	Texas History