Social Studies Units in the Elementary Curriculum

Kindergarten

Myself and Others

Major Understandings:
1. My identity includes my gender, ethnicity, family, language and physical self
2. People are unique and important
3. People change over time
4. People have wants and needs
5. I live in a neighborhood
6. All people have rights and responsibilities at home, at school, and in the neighborhood
7. Rules are developed to protect people

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

History/ Culture:
1. What are some of our physical attributes?
2. How are people alike and different (Physically, ethnicity, language, gender, personal likes and dislikes)
3. What are our wants and needs (Shelter, food, protection, family, love, friendship)
4. What happens when I grow?
5. How do people depend on each other?
6. How do people teach values, ideas and traditions? (Holidays, celebration, stories, music etc.)
7. What is a family?
8. How are families alike and different?
9. What is a school? What is a community?

Geography:
1. What is the purpose of a map and how do they help us?
2. What are the features of a map? (Title, keys, labels, symbols, colors etc.)
3. What is a globe and what is its purpose?
4. How can we use a map and a globe to help us understand next to, in between, above, below, top, bottom and middle?
5. How do we identify the difference between water and land on a globe and a map?
6. How can we look at areas from different perspectives?
7. What is a neighborhood? Where is my school located in my neighborhood?

**Economics:**
1. What is a need? What is a want?
2. What are the wants and needs of people and families?
3. What is a job and why do people work?
4. Who are the workers in the school community that provide for the needs and wants of students and teachers?
5. What tools do people use to do their jobs?

**Civics:**
1. What is the United States of America?
2. What is a citizen?
3. What are symbols of our nation? (Flag, eagle, liberty bell, Statue of Liberty)
4. What are some holidays and celebrations of our nation?
5. What is a right? What is a responsibility? What rights and responsibilities do we have in our classroom? (Right to a safe environment, to have our basic needs met, respect, individuality, responsibility to help others, to put things away, recycle, etc.)
6. What is a rule? Why do we have rules? (Safety, protection, health)
Grade 1

My Family and Other Families

Major Understandings:
1. Different kinds of families exist in all communities and societies
2. Families change over time
3. Families have beliefs, customs, and traditions, roles and responsibilities
4. My family lives in a community
5. Places in my community can be located on a map
6. People have wants and needs
7. Families help us meet our wants and needs
8. We are citizens of our family and school communities and as citizens have rights and responsibilities
9. People make rules and laws to govern and protect themselves for the common good

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

History/Culture:
1. What is a family?
2. How are families alike and different? (Race, ethnicity, culture, family structure)
3. How do people in families depend on each other? (Roles, responsibilities)
4. How do diverse families transmit their beliefs, values, customs and traditions? (Celebrations, family stories, artifacts, skills, photographs)
5. How have families lived in other places at other times?
6. How do families change over time? (Within one family, structure of families, roles and responsibilities of family members)
7. What is a community?

Geography:
1. What is a map and what is a globe?
2. What is the purpose of a map and a globe?
3. What are the features of a map? (Title, key, labels, symbols, colors)
4. What are the four cardinal directions?
5. How are symbols used on a map?
6. Where is our country on a map of the world? Where is New York on a map of the United States? Where is my home located on a map of my community?

Economics:
1. What is a need? What is a want?
2. What are the basic needs?
3. How do families meet their wants and needs?
4. What is a job and why do people work?

Civics:
1. What are our rights and responsibilities as members of a family and school community?
2. What are the purposes of rules and laws in our families and school?
3. How can students participate in problem solving, decision-making and conflict resolution for the common good of the family and school?
4. What are some symbols of our country and what ideas and values do they represent? (The flag, eagle, Statue of Liberty etc.)
5. What is the Pledge of Allegiance and what does it mean?
Grade 2

My Community and Other United States Communities

Major Understandings:
1. A community is a group of people that live, work, and help each other to meet their wants and needs.
2. There are rural, urban and suburban communities in the United States and each type of community has similarities and differences.
3. I live in a suburban community.
4. Each type of community is influenced by geographic and environmental factors.
5. Each type of community provides facilities and services to help meet the wants and needs of its residents.
6. Citizens have roles and responsibilities in their communities.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
History and Culture:
1. What is a community?
2. What are the characteristics of suburban, urban and rural communities?
3. What type of community is Scarsdale? What is the history of Scarsdale?
4. How do communities change over time?
5. What events, people, traditions, values, beliefs and places make my a community?
6. How are these events, people, traditions and places different in suburban, urban and rural communities?

Civics:
1. What are roles and responsibilities of the people that live in a community?
2. How and why do people in communities develop rules and laws to govern and protect community members?
3. How does our local community elect and appoint leaders who make, enforce and interpret rules and laws?
4. How can citizens in my community participate in decision-making and problem solving?
5. How is the flag of the United States a symbol of citizenship? What is the flag’s significance?

**Geography:**
1. What is a map and what is a globe? (Review)
2. What is the purpose of a map and a globe? (Review)
3. What are the features of a map? (Title, key, labels, symbols, colors - Review)
4. What are the four cardinal directions? (Review)
5. Where are the important services in Scarsdale located in relation to a point of origin? (Is the post office east or west of Chase Park?)
6. How are symbols used on a map? (Review)
7. Where is our country on a map of the world?
8. Where is New York on a map of the United States?
9. Where is Scarsdale on a map of Westchester? Where is my home located on a map of my community?
10. How are Scarsdale and the lives of its inhabitants influenced by its geography?
11. How are suburban, urban and rural communities influenced by geography?

**Economics:**
1. What are wants and needs? (Review)
2. What are goods and services?
3. What is a public service and what is a private businesses?
4. What are needs and services all communities have in common?
5. How do rural, urban and suburban communities provide for the wants and needs of the residents that live there?
6. How are rural, urban and suburban communities interdependent?
7. What are taxes and how do the taxes collected from residents provide for local services?
8. What are the goods and services the Scarsdale community provides for its residents?
9. People in rural, urban and suburban communities must make choices due to unlimited needs and limited resources (scarcity). For example, why do we recycle? Why do people live in apartment buildings in New York City? Why does the price of fruit increase in the winter?
Grade 3

Introduction to History

Major Understandings:
1. Students will understand the elements of culture
2. Cultures record their history in various ways and for different purposes
3. People learn about history by investigating a variety of sources
4. There are primary and secondary sources that tell us about life at a certain point in history

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
History and Culture
1. What is culture?
2. What elements exist in all cultures? (The Cultural Universals: Politics, Geography, Economics, Cultural Arts, Beliefs, Social Aspects)
3. What is history? (Near and distant past)
4. Why do cultures record their history?
5. How do cultures transmit their history?
6. What are primary and secondary sources? (Primary source material includes: original documents, speeches, cartoons, artifacts, photos, art, music, architecture, literature, drama, journals, folklore, historic places, and oral histories, all of which originated at the time of the event. A secondary source is a work that interprets or analyzes an historical event. It is one step removed from the event.)
7. How can people find out about past cultures/history?
8. What are the advantages and disadvantages of various primary and secondary sources? (Connect this to point of view and fact and opinion)
9. How can we analyze primary sources to discover how people lived in the past/present?
10. How can we use secondary sources to confirm or challenge inferences made by analyzing primary sources?

11. What connection/comparisons can we make between the present and past cultures/history based on primary and secondary evidence?

**Geography**

1. What relationship/connections can we make between primary and secondary sources and geography? (How can analyzing photographs, letters, etc. help us make inferences about the six elements of geography? (Refer to the Geography Standards handout in the resource section. Identify the six elements with the children. Have the children give examples for each category)

The six elements of geography are:
- The world in spatial terms
- Places and regions
- Physical systems
- Human systems
- Modification of the environment by humans and how the environment influences human behavior
- The uses of geography

2. What sources can we use to gather geographic information? (What do different types of maps look like, globes, charts etc.)

3. How does geography influence where and how people settle?

**Economics**

1. What are the economic aspects of a culture?
   - Transportation
   - Resources (human and natural)
   - Wants and needs
   - Production of goods and services
   - Scarcity (conflict between unlimited wants and needs and limited resource)
2. What economic aspects do we find in our personal culture/history today and those in the past and how have they changed? (As you are looking at documents, photographs etc. look for information about transportation, resources, wants and needs, production of goods.)

3. What are the wants and needs of a culture based on an analysis of the primary and secondary evidence? (Basic needs are food, clothing, shelter. As you are looking at documents, photographs etc. look for information about wants and needs of the past and present.)

**Civics**

1. What is the role of the individuals in the primary source that you are analyzing? (Are the people leaders or community members? What are the gender roles and familial roles?)

2. What civic values (Ex. respect, justice, equality) are expressed in the primary source?
Native Americans of New York State

Major Understandings:

1. Students will understand the elements of culture
2. Native Americans were the first inhabitants of our local region and State
3. The topography, climate and resources of regions influenced the culture, lifestyles and how Native Americans of New York State met basic needs

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

History and Culture

1. What is a culture?
2. Who were the Native Americans of New York State?
3. (Iroquois nations: Onondaga, Cayuga, Oneida, Seneca, Mohawk, Tuscarora and Algonquin nations: Mohican, Delaware, Wappinger, etc.)
4. What were the essential elements – the cultural universals – of the Iroquois and Algonquin cultures? (Social Aspects food, clothing, shelter, education, family life, Economics: tools, weapons, transportation, trade, Beliefs: traditions, religion, stories, nature, Cultural Arts: art forms, recreation, story telling, history, Politics: clans, leaders, Iroquios Nation)
5. What was a day like in the life of a Native American child? Man? Woman?
6. How did the legends of the Native Americans reflect their beliefs? What is a wampum and how did it help preserve Iroquois history?
7. How did their respect for nature influence their daily life?
8. How did the lifestyles of Native Americans change after the arrival of the Europeans?
Civics
1. How did the Native Americans organize their community? (I.e. family, village, nation)
2. What is a stereotype?
3. What are some of the misunderstandings about Native Americans today?

Geography
1. Where did the Native Americans settle in New York State?
2. How did the Iroquois and Algonquin make use of their natural resources? (Ex. clothing, food, weapons, medicine, tools, etc.)

Economics
1. How did the members of the community divide up the work to provide for the needs of the community?
World Communities (New York City/Tokyo)

Major Understandings:
1. People of similar and different cultural groups often live together in world communities
2. World Communities share the universal elements of politics, economics, cultural arts, social aspects and beliefs to meet the wants and needs of its population
3. People in world communities exchange and transmit values, ideas, beliefs and traditions
4. World communities are influenced by environmental and geographic factors
5. People in world communities form governments to develop rules and laws to govern community members
6. World communities change over time

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

History and Culture:
1. What is culture?
2. What cultural universal elements make up a community? (Economic, social, political, beliefs and cultural arts)
3. What are the social, political, economic, religious and cultural similarities universal to all world communities? (Celebrations, beliefs, cultural exchange, system of government, goods and services provided, families and individuals, shelter, education, problems, historic events etc. See Cultural Universals Model in resource section)
4. What are the social, political, economic, religious and cultural differences in world communities? (Celebrations, beliefs, cultural exchange, system of government, goods and services provided, families and individuals, shelter, education, problems, historic events etc. (See Cultural Universals Model in resource section)}
5. How do people in world communities transmit values, beliefs and traditions? (Through legends, folktales, oral histories and celebrations)

6. How and why do world communities change over time?

7. How can historic events be viewed? (Through the eyes of people that were there, art, writing, artifacts, music etc.)

Civics:
1. What is the purpose of governments in world communities? (Develop and enforce rules and laws, plan, organize and make decisions, provide services to the population)

2. How do the governments of world communities provide for the services (functions) that people cannot provide as individuals? (Transportation, education, garbage removal, utilities, parks and recreation, roads, post office, libraries, police, fire etc.)

3. How do people in world communities celebrate and commemorate patriotic holidays? (Parades and monuments)

Geography:
1. Where do people settle and live and why? (Factors that influence human settlements differ in world communities. There are industrial, residential and commercial areas. There are cultural communities like Chinatown.)

2. How do we find world communities on a map? (Continents, oceans, regions, longitude and latitude, direction, distance and relation to each other)

3. What are the physical and human characteristics that unify a region? (Landforms, bodies of water, climate, vegetation, ethnicity, language)

4. How does geography and environment influence the development of the community and the lifestyles of the people living within that community? (Natural resources may determine transportation and the ability of people to commute to the city, foods, buildings etc.)
5. How have people in the community adapted to and modified their environment?

Economics:
1. How are human wants and needs similar and different in world communities?
2. How are these wants and needs provided for in world communities? (Choices must be made due to limited resources, interdependence of communities, locating, developing and making use of natural resources)
3. What factors influence how societies determine and provide for goods and services? (Geography, population, area, resources, businesses)
4. How are world communities interdependent?
Grade 4

Exploration

Major Understandings:
1. Throughout history, there have always been people who have explored places far from where they lived
2. Exploration enabled people to draw accurate maps of the land and sea areas on Earth
3. Exploration occurred for many reasons (For example: science, trade routes, silk, spices, gold, conquest of land).
4. The impact of exploration on native people and the land included social/ cultural, economic, political, and geographic factors

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
History and Culture
1. Who inhabited North America before the arrival of the Europeans?
2. What was life like for these first Americans before the arrival of the Europeans?
3. What was the Age of Exploration? Why did people/nations explore far away lands?
4. How did exploration allow people of the world to become aware of each other’s lives?
5. Who was Christopher Columbus, what were the reasons for his explorations, what were his discoveries and how did his explorations impact the lives of native people and their physical environment?
6. Who were the European explorers who claimed and settled New York State, what were the reasons for their explorations, what were their discoveries and how did their exploration impact the lives of native people and the physical environment?
Civics
1. What were the political reasons for exploration?
2. How were the native people treated by various explorers?

Geography
1. What did people think the world looked like during the time of Columbus and the Age of Exploration and why? (Ptolemy’s map of the world and the mistakes he made)
2. Why did Columbus rely on Ptolemy’s map? (No one had actually seen many of the lands in the world, limited exploration, and limited technology)
3. Where were the major European explorers from? Where and how did they travel?
4. How did the maps of the day affect the routes chosen by and the lands explored?
5. What does the world look like today? What are the hemispheres? What and where are the continents and oceans of the world?
6. What are cardinal directions and how do they help one locate places?
7. What are the equator and the prime meridian? How do longitude and latitude lines help pinpoint locations on Earth?

Economics
1. What were the economic reasons for exploration?
2. Why did people explore and sail as an occupation?
3. How and why did the explorers trade with native people? Was the trading fair? Why or why not?
Colonial America

Major Understandings:
1. A colony is a group of people who settle in a place far from their native land, but who remain under the control of the country they left
2. Dutch, English, Spanish and French colonization of North America shaped the United States
3. A study of Colonial America focuses on social, cultural, political, and economic factors. These factors helped shape our local community and connect us to New York State and the United States
4. The geography and natural resources of the three colonial regions greatly influenced the daily lives of the colonists

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
History and Culture:
1. Who were the colonists?
2. Where did the early colonists come from? When, why and where did they settle?
3. What was daily life like in the colonies and how did the colonists satisfy their basic needs? (i.e. natural resources, housing, clothing, transportation, food, traditions, religion, crafts, occupations etc.)
4. What were the cultural similarities and differences between the three colonial regions? (New England, Middle and Southern)
5. What were some of the social, economic and religious groups? (Pilgrims, Puritans, indentured servants, slaves, merchants, farmers, plantation owners, children)

Civics:
1. How did the colonists organize their communities in the three different regions?
2. How were the colonies governed? (King, royal governors, elected local leaders)
**Geography:**
1. Where were the thirteen colonies?
2. Which colonies were in the New England, Middle and Southern regions?
3. How did the geography and natural resources of each region influence the towns, homes, economies and lifestyles of the colonists?

**Economics:**
1. How did the members of a community (i.e. New England towns, Pennsylvania farms and Southern plantations) divide up the work to provide for the needs of the community?
2. What goods and services did the colonial societies produce? How and for whom were they produced?
3. How did the natural resources affect each region’s economy?
The American Revolution

Major Understandings:
1. Colonial governments included elected assemblies and rule by the English Parliament
2. The main causes of the American Revolution include: the French and Indian War, taxes levied on the colonists by the King and Parliament, the Boston Massacre, the Boston Tea Party, the Intolerable Acts, and the battle of Lexington and Concord
3. There were important leaders of the American Revolution
4. There were loyalists and patriots in New York and the other colonies
5. Colonists protested the taxes and Acts in non-violent and violent ways
6. The Declaration of Independence laid the foundation for a new government and expressed the ideals of American democracy
7. There were significant battles in New York State
8. Soldiers and civilians faced many hardships during the war
9. The effects of the American Revolution included a new nation

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:
History and Culture:
1. How did the French and Indian war and Britain’s need to raise money, contribute to the causes of the Revolution? (Taxes: Stamp Act, tea tax; British troops stationed in the colonies, the Quartering Act)
2. How did colonists protest the taxes and how did taxation without representation contribute to the Revolution? (Boycotts, Sons of Liberty, the meetings of the Congresses, tarring and feathering tax collectors)
3. What was the Boston Massacre and how did it contribute to the Revolution? (Paul Revere’s engraving, propaganda)
4. What was the Boston Tea Party, was this a violent or non-violent protest, and how did this incident contribute to the Revolution? (The closing of Boston Harbor, First Continental Congress)
5. What was the battle of Lexington and Concord and how did the battle contribute to the Revolution?
6. What were the First and Second Continental Congresses, and how did their decisions contribute to the American Revolution? (Each colony formed a militia, George Washington appointed general, boycott of all British goods, Declaration of Independence)
7. What is the Declaration of Independence, how did it form a new nation and what ideals of American democracy are stated in the Declaration?
8. Who were the important leaders of the Revolution and how did they contribute to the Revolution? (Sam Adams, John Adams, Washington, Franklin, Jefferson, Patrick Henry, Tom Paine, John Hancock, Paul Revere)
9. What were the opposing sides in the war and what were their positions? (Patriots, Loyalists, neutralists)
10. How were the everyday lives of people affected by the war? (African Americans, Native Americans, women and children’s contributions to the war, split loyalties, scarce goods and services, hardships the Continental army faced at Valley Forge)
11. What were some major battles of the Revolution and how did New York play an important role in the war? (The Battles of Long Island and Trenton, Crossing the Delaware on Christmas day, Saratoga, Yorktown)
12. What were the results of the Revolution?

**Civics:**
1. How were the colonies governed prior to the Revolution? (Elected assemblies, parliament)
2. What rights did the colonists expect as Englishmen?
3. What is Taxation without Representation?
4. What were some non-violent and violent protests conducted by the colonists?
5. What are the fundamental rights named in the Declaration of Independence and how do those rights apply to American citizens today?

**Geography:**
1. What was the significance of New York State’s location during the war?
2. What were some geographic features that influenced the war? (Battle of Long Island, the Delaware River and the Battle of Trenton, winter at Valley Forge, Battle of Yorktown)

**Economics:**
What is a boycott and how did boycotts affect trade, English and colonial merchants and manufacturers?
2. How were the everyday lives of colonists affected by the war? (Scarce goods and services)
Constitution and Government

Major Understandings:
1. A government is the organization people set up to protect their community and enforce its rules. There are constitutional governments, monarchies and dictatorial governments.
2. A constitution is a written plan for organizing the functions of government and safeguarding individual liberties.
3. Citizens have rights and responsibilities in a democracy.
4. Compromise played an important role in the formation of our government.
5. There are basic fundamental values of American democracy including: individual rights to life, liberty, property, and the pursuit of happiness, the common good, justice, equality of opportunity, diversity, truth and patriotism.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

History and Culture
1. What were the Articles of Confederation and why were they unsuccessful?
2. What was the purpose of the Constitutional convention?
3. Who were some of the most important people involved at the Constitutional convention? (i.e. Washington, Franklin, Madison, Adams, Hamilton)
4. What were some of the issues facing the delegates that required compromise (i.e. representation, slavery, trade, election of the President)
5. What were the components of the New Jersey and Virginia plans and of the Great Compromise?
6. What is the Bill of Rights and what are and why do we have amendments?
7. What are the fundamental values of American democracy that unite all Americans? (I.e. songs, speeches, stories, traditions, celebrations, respect for other cultures)

Civics
1. Why are laws/rules necessary for a society?
2. How do our local, state and federal governments function and who are the leaders? (I.e. branches of government, Bill of Rights, Constitution)
3. How do citizens participate in decision making and service within the classroom, school, home and at all levels of government? (I.e. jury duty, voting and service projects in your school)

Geography
1. Where was the original capital of the United States, why was it relocated and where is it today?
2. Where is the capital of New York State?
3. Where did the Constitutional convention take place?
4. What was the impact of state population on the creation of the Constitution?

Economics
1. How did the major economic systems in the Northern and Southern states influence the compromises at the convention? (I.e. agricultural vs. manufacturing, slavery)
2. What economic conditions weakened the Articles of Confederation? (I.e. no central currency, no federal power to tax)
Immigration

Major Understandings:
1. America is an immigrant nation.
2. People emigrate for various reasons such as war, overpopulation, hunger, poverty, religious persecution or tyrannical government.
3. People immigrate to the United States of America because of land, jobs, and opportunity for social advancement, democratic government, and religious freedom.
4. Immigrants, past and present, need to make decisions prior to emigrating and some of these decisions are based on misinformation from immigrant letters, advertisements and hearsay.
5. Ellis Island and Angel Island were two of the major ports of entry for most immigrants.
6. There were dangers, anxieties and difficulties facing immigrants on the voyage to Ellis Island and when trying to enter the United States.
7. Immigrants past and present are compelled to make decisions regarding the extent to which they should and could assimilate and/or preserve their culture and traditions.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

History and Culture:
1. What is emigration and immigration?
2. What are factors that “push” people to emigrate?
3. What are factors that “pull” immigrant groups into America?
4. How did immigrants learn about America?
5. What dangers and difficulties did immigrants face on the voyage to the United States?
6. What role did Ellis Island and Angel Island play in immigration to America?
7. What was the experience of people that immigrated through Ellis Island?
8. What difficulties did newly arrived immigrants (past and present) face? (Stereotypes, prejudice, assimilation, cultural differences, losing part of one’s culture, language, jobs, housing, American attitudes toward immigration)

**Civics:**
1. What is the connection between immigration and the founding of our country? (Pilgrims, religious freedom, opportunity for jobs, land etc.)
2. What freedoms and rights do American citizens have under the Constitution and the Bill of rights?
3. Why do these rights “pull” immigrants into America?
4. What is the process, as described in the Constitution, of becoming a citizen of the United States?
5. What laws were created to restrict or prohibit immigration? Did these laws infringe on the rights guaranteed in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights?

**Geography:**
1. How did geography influence an immigrant’s journey to America? (The hardships encountered on the voyage to America, time of voyage)
2. How does geography influence an immigrant’s journey to America today? (Ex: Illegal Chinese immigration in ship containers, Cuban immigrants’ boat experiences)
3. How did environmental factors (famine) influence Irish immigration?
4. How did the geography of New York and San Francisco influence immigration? (Metropolitan cities on the east and west coasts, Ellis Island, Angel Island)

**Economics:**
1. How did immigrants (past and present) prepare to settle in America?
2. How did immigrants decide which wants and needs to bring to America?
3. What economic problems did newly arrives immigrants (past and present) face? (Jobs, housing, skills)
Capstone Inquiry Research

The capstone experience is an inquiry research project based upon the students’ interests and curiosity. It is an independent research project whereby children demonstrate the research process, technology, reading and writing skills that they have learned during their elementary school experience, K-5.

During this project, the children choose a topic to investigate, ask meaningful questions, conduct all the steps of the research process, synthesize the information, and create a product for an audience. The students reflect on the question, research process and conclusions he/she has made. The teacher facilitates and guides the students’ research and product.

Objectives for students:

• To focus on the process used to accomplish research
• To feel comfortable doing research
• To demonstrate the ability to formulate meaningful questions
• To demonstrate the ability to choose a topic, focus and narrow that topic or abandon the topic when appropriate
• To take ownership of one’s learning and demonstrate independence
• To be self-motivated and engaged in learning
• To understand the long term effect of research skills and to appreciate and value these skills as authentic tools for the real world
• To learn how to reflect, assess and evaluate the research process and product
• To demonstrate perseverance
• To become more connected to the community
• To learn project management, time management and planning for long term projects
• To utilize their critical and multi-literacy skills
• To learn about different presentation mediums and discover multiple intelligences