

Guiding Principle 2 Quick Reference Guide: Planning Through an Inclusive, Critical, and Responsive Lens

An effective history and social science education incorporates diverse perspectives and acknowledges that perceptions of events are affected by race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and personal experience.

The traditional motto of the United States is “E pluribus unum” – out of many, one. A history and social science education that does justice to the remarkable diversity of our country must tell the histories of individuals and groups, and honor a plurality of life stories while acknowledging our ongoing struggle to achieve a more perfect union. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced United States and world history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, and other characteristics. Effective instruction challenges students to value their own heritage while embracing our common ideals and shared experiences as they develop their own rigorous thinking about accounts of events. Effective instruction celebrates the progress the United States has made in embracing diversity, while at the same time encouraging honest and informed academic discussions about prejudice, racism, and bigotry in the past and present.

--Guiding Principle 2 of the [2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework](#)

How does the Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework support instruction that recognizes the role of individuals’ identities and social positions?

The [2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework](#) lays out ten guiding principles for effective history and social science instruction. **Guiding Principle 2** emphasizes that history and social science instruction should be:

Inclusive: It should incorporate and center a diversity of historical perspectives, voices, and narratives.

Critical: It should challenge students to consider how identity and social position shape people’s perceptions of events, and encourage honest and informed discussions about power, prejudice, and oppression.

Responsive: It should offer all students opportunities to connect their multiple identities and experiences to their study of the past.

Why is Guiding Principle 2 important in planning and instruction?

Guiding Principle 2 supports more accurate, rigorous instruction. Teaching how the concepts of freedom, equality, the rule of law, and human rights have influenced history necessarily involves discussions of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, education, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability, and other characteristics. Considering multiple perspectives on the past challenges students to avoid an oversimplified “single story.”¹ It “demands a level of cognitive dexterity”² as students are challenged to think critically and navigate conflicting narratives about the past.

Additionally, a central goal of history and social science education is preparing students to be active, engaged citizens in a diverse and pluralistic society. To do this, students need to learn about how and why others’ perspectives might differ from their own.³ Further, to be empowered to challenge injustices in the present, students must learn truthfully about instances of injustice in the past.⁴

Finally, Guiding Principle 2 helps avoid the silencing that can result when certain groups’ experiences are consistently “ignored, dismissed, or devalued” in the curriculum.⁵ While a more inclusive approach to history instruction benefits all students, research also suggests positive effects on both academics and self-efficacy for students of non-dominant identities when they see their cultures and experiences centered in their coursework.^{6,7}

How does Guiding Principle 2 relate to the three pillars of the History and Social Science Framework?

As teachers make decisions about how to teach the content, practice, and literacy standards in the [Framework](#), Guiding Principle 2 can help them make these decisions in a way that leads to more inclusive, critical, and responsive instruction.

Guiding Principle 2 is supported by many of the practice standards that characterize high-quality historical thinking, found on pp. 23–25 of the Framework. For example, to understand how identity impacts individuals’ perspectives about the past, students can **analyze sources’ purpose and point of view** (Practice Standards 4 and 5). Similarly, inquiry-based lessons that prompt students to **ask their own questions and gather sources independently** (Practice Standards 2 and 3) can prompt students to construct a complex historical narrative that includes multiple voices and experiences.

How can this resource support the use of Guiding Principle 2 to plan instruction?

The planning questions on page 3 can be applied to any Topic (set of related content standards) in the Framework, helping educators approach instruction in a way that is inclusive, critical, and responsive to student identities. Along with their existing unit planning and backwards design process, educators can work through these questions individually or, ideally, in collaboration with others. The questions support reflection on how existing biases and experiences affect teaching, encourage deep dives into less commonly explored historical narratives, and facilitate thoughtful decision making about instructional practice. They aim to prompt meaningful reflection and help educators identify where seeking out additional research and resources might be appropriate to continue building their expertise (*see inset*).

Additionally, DESE has created examples illustrating how these questions might be answered about selected Topics from a variety of grade levels within the Framework. Created in consultation with content experts, these Topic-specific examples include suggested resources and historical developments tied to each question.

What resources can help teachers apply these planning questions to Topics in their own course?

The [Supplement to the 2018 History and Social Studies Framework](#) links to further resources about the history of specific groups often marginalized in historical narratives. It has sections on African/African American history, the history of native peoples of the Americas, women’s history, Latinx history, Asian American/Pacific Islander history, and LGBTQ+ history. The Supplement also includes a list of resources to support classroom discussions of difficult topics.

What additional work can support planning and instruction that is inclusive, critical, and responsive to student identities?

Planning and adjusting instruction to be more inclusive, critical, and responsive to student identities is ongoing and iterative work—and it is work that is essential to effective history and social science education. These planning questions are one place to start. To further their efforts towards inclusive, critical, and responsive practice, educators can also:

- Ensure that instruction is inclusive and responsive to learners with a variety of academic and language needs through providing appropriate supports for students with disabilities and English Language Learners.
- Continue to learn about culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy^{8,9} through resources like [DESE’s e-learning module](#) in order to better invite student identity and experience into the classroom without perpetuating curricular harm, particularly to students of marginalized identities.
- Seek out strategies to create a safe, respectful classroom culture that encourages productive discomfort to facilitate deeper, more meaningful engagement with challenging topics. Resources like [Teaching Tolerance’s Let’s Talk! guide](#) or [Facing History and Ourselves’ Fostering Civil Discourse](#) can support this work.

Guiding Principle 2 Planning Questions: Planning Through an Inclusive, Critical, and Responsive Lens

STEP BACK: *Where am I starting, and where do I want to go?*

- What **content** is included in this Topic? What **prior knowledge and beliefs** do students have about this Topic? What narratives was I taught about this topic, and what **biases** might I have about it?
- How might this Topic present the possibility for **problematic messages or curricular violence**? How and when will I **partner with students** to learn about their experiences of the curriculum?
- What is my **goal** in teaching this Topic? What do I want students to learn about themselves, the past, and the world? What essential questions, skills, knowledge, and enduring understandings are at the heart of this Topic?

REFLECT, RECONSIDER, AND PLAN: *What is my current practice, and what would I like to do differently to be more inclusive, critical, and responsive?*

INCLUSIVE	
<i>My instruction should incorporate and center a diversity of historical perspectives, voices, and narratives.</i>	
<i>Reflect:</i>	What is the dominant narrative about this Topic? Whose voices and experiences are typically centered?
<i>Reconsider:</i>	What and who is marginalized or missing in that narrative? Whose voices should be included to tell a more holistic and complete story?
<i>Plan:</i>	What instructional approaches can I use to foster student engagement with these voices and experiences? How will I ensure these voices and perspectives are included equitably, not marginalized?
CRITICAL	
<i>My instruction should challenge students to consider how identity and social position shape people’s perceptions of events, and encourage honest and informed discussions about power, prejudice, and oppression.</i>	
<i>Reflect:</i>	Where and how is the role of identity and social position (race, gender, sexual orientation, class, etc.) typically addressed in this Topic, if at all?
<i>Reconsider:</i>	How else did people’s intersecting identities and social position shape their experiences within this Topic? Where was prejudice and oppression present, and how was it reinforced or challenged?
<i>Plan:</i>	What instructional approaches will empower students to engage in meaningful and brave conversations about identity, power, oppression, and resistance within this Topic?
RESPONSIVE	
<i>My instruction should offer all students opportunities to connect their multiple identities and experiences to their study of the past.</i>	
<i>Reflect:</i>	Do my students typically see their identities reflected in this Topic? If so, which students and how?
<i>Reconsider:</i>	What other opportunities does this Topic present for my students to see their multiple identities reflected in the Topic, or explore aspects of their identities more deeply?
<i>Plan:</i>	What instructional approaches can I use while teaching this Topic to provide students with opportunities to make connections to their own identities and experiences?

LEARN AND PLAN FORWARD: *What was the impact of my planning and instructional choices?*

Based on student feedback, patterns of participation and engagement, student performance on formative and summative assessments, personal reflection, colleagues’ observations, etc.:

- What were the **effects** of the decisions I made? How did they shape students’ experiences learning about this Topic?
- What would I like to **continue doing** when I teach this topic again, and what **changes** would I make next time?

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John Thornton, Boston University

References:

- ¹ Chimamanda Adichie, “The Danger of a Single Story,” filmed July 2009, video, 18:34, https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_ngozi_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story.
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- ³ Meira Levinson, “‘You Have the Right to Struggle’: Constructing Historical Counternarrative,” in *No Citizen Left Behind* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2012), 99–137.
- ⁴ LaGarrett J. King and Prentice T. Chandler, “From Non-Racism to Anti-Racism in Social Studies Teacher Education: Social Studies and Racial Pedagogical Content Knowledge,” in *Rethinking Social Studies Teacher Education in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Alicia R. Crowe and Alexander Cuenca (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2016), 3–21.
- ⁵ Christopher Burke, Martha A. Adler, and Maureen Linker, “Resisting Erasure: Cultivating Opportunities for a Humanizing Curriculum,” *Multicultural Perspectives* 10, no. 2 (2008): 65–72.
- ⁶ Worokya Duncan, “The Effects of Afrocentric United States History Curriculum on Black Student Achievement,” *Contemporary Issues in Education Research* 5, no. 2 (2012): 91–96.
- ⁷ Thomas S. Dee and Emily K. Penner, “The Causal Effects of Cultural Relevance: Evidence from an Ethnic Studies Curriculum,” *American Educational Research Journal* 54, no. 1 (2017): 127–66.
- ⁸ Geneva Gay, *Culturally Responsive Teaching: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 3rd ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 2018).
- ⁹ Django Paris, “Culturally Sustaining Pedagogy: A Needed Change in Stance, Terminology, and Practice,” *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 3 (April 2012): 93–97.