

LCAS APPENDIX B – SOCIAL STUDIES

Assessment Summaries, Strengths, and Limitations

The tables below offer information, observations, and recommendations regarding the purpose and implementation of specific Social Studies assessments utilized at the local level (provider, school, district, supervisory union/district). This resource is included to further support supervisory unions/districts (SU/SDs) in the provision of local comprehensive assessment systems (please see the AOE’s Strengthening and Streamlining Local Comprehensive Assessment Systems: Guidelines and Support for Leadership Teams for additional information) and to meet the goals of [Act 173 of 2018](#).

This document is intended to provide a high-level overview of a sampling of assessments, including assessments known to be in use by SU/SDs in Vermont, to support local systems and schools in making informed decisions and investment requests. This appendix is not an exhaustive list, does not represent the full breadth and depth of information about the included assessments, and is not an endorsement of the assessments reviewed. LEAs are encouraged to evaluate assessments before purchasing or utilizing an assessment. For guidance on how to evaluate assessments, please refer to the Agency’s [LCAS Defining Essential Components](#).

Assessment Name:	Inquiry Design Model (IDM)
Type/Purpose/Uses:	<p><i>Type:</i> Formative/Summative</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> C3 Inquiry Design Model (IDM) - The IDM allows students K-12 students to investigate compelling questions through formative, summative, and additional performance tasks (Extensions and Taking Action). Each inquiry allows students to build content expertise as well as strengthen disciplinary skills such as decision-making, spatial reasoning, source analysis, and deliberative processes.</p> <p><i>Uses:</i> The IDM can be used to assess students in the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards.</p>

Contact Information:

If you have questions about this document or would like additional information please contact: Martha Deiss, Student Pathways Division, at martha.deiss@vermont.gov.

Assessment Name:	Inquiry Design Model (IDM)
Summary of Tool/ Assessment:	IDM tasks, resources, and assessments are aligned with the Vermont State Board of Education-adopted College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards . Each IDM provides a template with a compelling question, 3-4 supporting questions, and a summative assessment, as a response to the compelling question. Multiple and varied resources are provided for each formative assessment which allow educators to differentiate and enables all students to demonstrate the knowledge and skills necessary to develop a successful response to a summative assessment. Additional opportunities for student extensions are also provided. Multiple states and organizations are continuously updating the K-12 bank of Inquiries that can be searched by grade level or topic/content.
Evidence and/or Research:	No evidence-base or research on the effectiveness, validity, or reliability of this assessment could be found at the time of this publication. However, multiple organizations affiliated with the C3 have conducted research on IDM methods of implementation.*
Technical Specifications:	All IDMs can be accessed as either a Word document, or as a PDF. A template is also provided for educators to create their own inquiries
Strengths:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDMs are designed with a compelling question to engage students in authentic learning. • The template can be manipulated by the educator to allow for differentiation, added resources, editing of formative assessments, etc. • A large bank of K-12 IDMs is available, covering broad content areas within civics, economics, geography, and history. <p>The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3) is aligned with Common Core ELA Standards. “The C3 Framework fully incorporates and extends the expectations for literacy learning put forward in the Common Core Standards for ELA/Literacy on three levels” (C3, p. 20): Foundational: All ELA/Literacy Common Core Standards; Supportive: Reading 1-10; Writing 1, 7-9; Speaking and Listening 1-6; Language 6; and, Vital: reading 1; Writing 7; Speaking and Listening 1.</p>
Limitations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rubrics are not included and will need to be developed. • While there is currently a large and growing bank of IDMs, if educators wanted to create their own IDM they are challenging to develop as multiple resources, from various perspectives, need to be located and utilized. • IDM development relies on educator knowledge/time in order to frame a compelling inquiry with balanced disciplinary sources in order to build student knowledge and skills through the performance tasks.

Assessment Name:	Inquiry Design Model (IDM)
Recommendation(s):	When using national performance assessment models such as the IDM, a standards-based rubric should be developed/reviewed, and a calibration process should take place.

Assessment Name:	Center for Civic Education
Type/Purpose/Uses:	<p><i>Type:</i> Formative/Summative</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Through the culminating assessment of the We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution Program students engage with, learn about, and are assessed on the history and principles of the United States constitutional democratic republic.</p> <p><i>Uses:</i> This program and assessment can be incorporated into U.S. History, U.S. Government, or Civics curriculum in elementary, middle, or high school classrooms. Content and skills assessed are aligned with Vermont-adopted College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the Common Core ELA Standards.</p>
Summary of Tool/ Assessment:	The We the People program’s culminating summative performance assessment is a simulated congressional hearing in which students “testify” before a panel of judges acting as members of Congress. Throughout the inquiry process, formative assessments are utilized to assess analytic, evaluative, expository, and presentational skills. Students demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of constitutional principles and have opportunities to evaluate, take, and defend positions on relevant historical and contemporary issues.
Evidence and/or Research:	The Program Effectiveness Panel of the U.S. Department of Education's National Diffusion Network examined the reports of numerous research studies on the We the People program. The panel validated the results of those studies and confirmed the program's powerful educational effects on students' civic knowledge and attitudes. This formal validation recognizes the We the People program's "contributions to excellence in education." What Works Clearinghouse stated “that We the People students scored significantly higher on tests of both civic knowledge and civic dispositions than their peers. These dispositions include (1) respect for the rule of law, (2) political attentiveness, (3) civic duty, (4) community involvement, (5) commitment to government service, and (6) the norms of political efficacy and political tolerance.”
Technical Specifications:	EBooks can be purchased for elementary, middle, and high school level texts. Texts are available in Spanish.

Assessment Name:	Center for Civic Education
Strengths:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The formative and culminating assessments can be used to assess content knowledge, on topics from the Enlightenment to current U.S. Supreme Court cases, as well as transferable skills and executive functioning skills. • Students work as a team during testimony preparation and during hearing responses, allowing for assessment and instruction around collaborative work. • Students can be assessed on communication skills as they develop a written prepared statement and respond to spontaneous questioning. • A Resource Center provides lessons, media, vocabulary, and additional resources for all Units.
Limitations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cost incurred for purchase of resources (books).
Recommendation(s):	The We the People program has been shown to effectively instruct and assess students' knowledge of Civics and US History. For a robust Social Studies program, this should be used in conjunction with learning and assessments within other Social Studies disciplines (economics, geography).

Assessment Name:	Thinking Nation
Type/Purpose/Uses:	<p><i>Type:</i> Formative/Summative</p> <p><i>Purpose:</i> Thinking Nation utilizes multiple tiers of instruction and assessment to build and assess disciplinary thinking in Social Studies in grades 6-12. Through this program, educators can use resources and assessments to embed historical thinking strategies into their classrooms, use data on student historical thinking to drive instruction, foster interdisciplinary instruction, and vertically-align social studies curriculum.</p> <p><i>Uses:</i> Thinking Nation can be used to assess historical thinking and writing in 6-12 ethnic studies, U.S. and world history, and U.S. government. Content and skills assessed are aligned with Vermont-adopted College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards and the Common Core ELA Standards.</p>

Assessment Name:	Thinking Nation
Summary of Tool/ Assessment:	<p>Thinking Nation utilizes a Document Based Questions (DBQs) approach to assess student’s use of both textual and outside evidence, demonstration of disciplinary thinking, and writing mechanics in written analysis and response. Thinking Nation scores each student’s essay/writing and provides educators an easy-to-read data report to address the individual needs of each student. Each assessment component (i.e., textual and outside evidence analysis, contextualization and causation knowledge, writing mechanics) also comes with a standards-aligned rubric.</p> <p>Tier 1 of the program teaches students how to analyze information. Tier 2 is comprised of formative assessments on disciplinary thinking (contextualization, causation, evaluating evidence) that provide feedback on a particular thinking skill and allow students to expand on reasoning and practice argumentation. Tier 3 allows students to engage with an inquiry question, historical context, and primary and secondary sources to write a Curated Research Paper, which is then followed up with a Socratic Seminar.</p>
Evidence and/or Research:	No evidence-base or research on the effectiveness, validity, or reliability of this assessment could be found at the time of this publication.*
Technical Specifications:	Thinking Nation hosts an online platform where students’ data can be accessed by the teacher to support instruction. All of the curriculum is also available in PDF format.
Strengths:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The web-based platform has built in translation for multiple languages. • The curriculum and assessments cover U.S. History, Ethnic Studies, American Government, World History and Economics. • Aligned with College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3) and Common Core ELA Standards, as identified on page 20 of the C3. “The C3 Framework fully incorporates and extends the expectations for literacy learning put forward in the Common Core Standards for ELA/Literacy on three levels” (C3, p. 20): Foundational: All ELA/Literacy Common Core Standards; Supportive: Reading 1-10; Writing 1, 7-9; Speaking and Listening 1-6; Language 6; and, Vital: reading 1; Writing 7; Speaking and Listening 1. • Having the ability to receive student data to inform instruction within the Social Studies is a unique attribute to this assessment.
Limitations:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While there are some materials available for free on Thinking Nation’s website, the bulk of the curriculum, assessments, and ensuing data is available by a student-based subscription. • Limited student choice in summative assessment evidence (written paper and Socratic Seminar).
Recommendation(s):	This platform/assessment should be evaluated in terms of its cost/benefits; please refer to the Agency’s LCAS Defining Essential Components .