

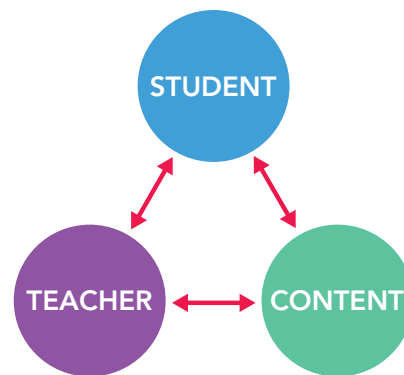
Why Discovery Education Social Studies Techbook is the Right Choice for Middle School Learners

Educators must consider numerous factors when selecting instructional resources to use with middle school learners. Some of these factors may be required by state or district policies that govern the selection of instructional resources. They must also consider recommendations from professional organizations and learn about the previous experiences of a community, in addition to the preferences of the educators who will use the materials. The list of factors goes on, but the bottom line for most middle school educators is student learning. Educators want to know that when the resources are well implemented, students will experience high levels of student learning.

Richard Elmore, Harvard University School of Education Anrig Research Professor of Educational Leadership, states,

There are only three ways to improve student learning at scale: You can raise the level of the content that students are taught. You can increase the skill and knowledge that teachers bring to the teaching of that content. And you can increase the level of the students' active learning of the content... That's it. Everything that's not in the instructional core can only affect student learning and performance by, in some way, influencing what goes on inside the core.¹

Elmore indicates, "The instructional core is composed of the teacher and the student in the presence of content...It is the relationship between the teacher, the student, and the content."²



The Instructional Core

Because it impacts both what content students experience and how students interact with content, the selection of instructional resources has a major impact on the instructional core. So what makes Discovery Education Techbook the right choice for middle school learners?

Social Studies Techbook

- Facilitates inquiry-based social studies instruction, and models for students the process of developing questions, planning inquiries, and determining helpful sources for addressing questions
- Is routinely updated so that students consistently have access to information and resources that are current and relevant
- Makes it more efficient for social studies teachers to plan and deliver engaging and differentiated instruction

How Social Studies Techbook Supports Inquiry-Based Instruction

Cognitive science has given us a wealth of best practices for teaching social studies. *The College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*³ uses this research and the best thinking of social studies educators from across the country to present guidance for enhancing social studies instruction.

The *C3 Framework* acknowledges that students learn best when they are actively engaged in figuring out the answers to questions that are of interest to them. Structuring one or more lessons around well-designed questions and providing students with access to resources that can be used to investigate the question is an instructional approach that engages students and that has the potential to promote deeper learning of challenging content.

In classrooms with Social Studies Techbook, teachers present a compelling essential question as the focal point students use to investigate a variety of content-rich resources. Examples of concept Essential Questions include: “Why did the colonists risk their lives to fight for independence from Great Britain?,” “Was the 1950s a decade of progress?,” and “How does Latin American culture reflect its mixed roots?”

The Techbook resources students can access during their investigation of the Essential Question are categorized by when students are most likely to use them and are available behind five different digital tabs: Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, and Evaluate. The Engage page poses the Essential Question and contains resources the student will use to develop and plan a social studies inquiry, which is Dimension One of the National Council for the Social Studies *C3 Framework*. Dimension Two of the *C3 Framework* is applying disciplinary concepts and tools. Resources students use to support their growth in mastery of disciplinary content and their use of disciplinary skills such as chronological thinking or cost/benefit analysis are behind the Explore and Explain tabs. While working on these components of the 5E lesson, students analyze and organize information to develop an initial response to the Essential Question. Resources linked to the Elaborate tab give students an opportunity to develop skills associated with Dimension Three of the *C3 Framework*, evaluating sources and using evidence. Finally, both the Elaborate and the Evaluate tabs are linked to resources that provide students with opportunities to communicate conclusions and take informed action, which compose the last dimension, Dimension Four, of the *C3 Framework*.

Providing Students with Access to Relevant and Engaging Content That is Current

Our world is changing rapidly. Once a traditional textbook is published, it is outdated. On the other hand, Techbook is routinely refined and updated. As situations in the world change, maps, charts, graphs, illustrations, and text are refined to reflect current realities. No longer does the teacher need to remind students that the book was published five years ago and does not reflect world changes that may have occurred in the interim. Contemporary students and educators expect instructional resources to keep pace with the rapid rate of change in the world in which we live. Techbook is an instructional resource that lives up to that expectation.

Learn how Discovery Education Social Studies Techbook can improve student outcomes in your school district.

DiscoveryEducation.com/
SocialStudies





Saving Teachers Time and Making Them More Efficient

Today's middle school social studies educators are working to be sure that students meet not only the requirements of state social studies standards, but they are also expected to assist students in developing the knowledge and skills identified in the Grades 6 to 8 Common Core State Standards. Social Studies Techbook presents materials that integrate the subdisciplines of social studies and that foster interdisciplinary skill development.

Techbook supports informational text comprehension through tools such as read aloud, highlighting, and the use of graphic organizers. Activities require students to use not only literacy skills, but also the mathematical practices. Students are routinely expected to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them. They have multiple opportunities to construct viable arguments and to critique the reasoning of others. Students use mathematical thinking to analyze data and to make sense of tables and graphs.

With Techbook, social studies teachers are able to go to one place and find a plethora of material to engage students in all of the skills they are expected to develop during the middle grade years. Instead of spending time searching the Internet for high-quality resources that can be connected to the content teachers are expected to teach, time and energy can be devoted to planning the best way to use the myriad of high-quality resources with the students.

Techbook features Core Interactive Text available in both English and Spanish, with the capability of switching between languages as needed. Techbook also includes other features that make it easy for teachers to meet the learning needs of **all** students. These include Core Interactive Text available at different reading levels, speech-to-text, and an interactive glossary that spans all available resources. Techbook is custom-designed to help all students meet the rigorous requirements of the Common Core and of individual state social studies standards.

Does Social Studies Techbook Make a Difference in Student Learning?

Rock Hill Schools is an urban school district in South Carolina with over 17,000 students. Students impacted by poverty account for 58 percent of the population, which reflects a 20-point increase in the past 10 years. Rock Hill began its digital journey with a strong vision and community support. The district started with devices and quickly realized it needed quality content. In the 2013–2014 school year, Rock Hill selected Social StudiesTechbook. . The district also ensured that teachers had access to comprehensive professional development to complement this new resource.

Discovery Education's analysis of the results of the 2015 South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards found that Social Studies Techbook is raising the bar for student achievement. Students in Grade 7 who were taught using Techbook scored, on average, 16 scale score points higher than students taught without Techbook. Techbook also made a significant difference in narrowing achievement gaps, with promising results among African American students and students impacted by poverty.

1 Elmore, R. (2008). Improving the instructional core. Draft manuscript. Retrieved April 19, 2016, from http://teacher.justinwells.net/Downloads/improving_the_instructional_core_elmore_2008.pdf

2 City, E. A., Elmore, R. F., Fiarman, S. E., & Teitel, L. (2009). Instructional rounds in education: A network approach to improving teaching and learning. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press. p. 22-23.

3 Swan, K., Barton, K. C., Buckles, S., Burke, F., Charkins, J., Grant, S. G., . . . Wiesner-Hanks, M. (2013). College, career, and civic life (C3) framework for social studies state standards: guidance for enhancing the rigor of K-12 civics, economics, geography, and history. Silver Spring, MD: National Council for the Social Studies.