

Georgia Performance Standards for Social Studies

Using the GPS Curriculum Maps

The sample curriculum maps posted to the Social Studies page at georgiastandards.org are provided to give teachers a suggested outline for their particular course. Each map organizes the standards for the course around unit focuses. Under each unit focus there are connecting themes that are used to tie units together. It is very important that units are connected with large, enduring themes like those found in the curriculum maps.

For each course, the first unit is designed to teach the themes to the students. Before you can use the themes as an organizational tool you must get students to understand the themes individually. To this end, the first unit gives teachers the ability to relate the themes to ideas and experiences that are familiar to the students. These themes are connected to larger enduring understandings that transcend units and courses. Ultimately, the enduring understandings are what students will take from a course that applies to life on a daily basis. A suggested enduring understanding can be found for each theme on the front page of each curriculum map.

The idea is that the teacher spends time at the beginning of the course making personal connections between the students and the themes. In order to do this, take an enduring understanding and connect it to a current event or experience that is familiar to the student. For example, the enduring understanding: *“location affects a society’s economy, culture, and development”* can be connected to situations where students have moved. Did they do the same things for entertainment in their new location? Were their living costs the same? If a student has never moved, they can still understand that church is different than a movie theatre, school is different than a mall, the beach is different than Six Flags, etc. Items cost different amounts in these locations, people act differently and the structure of the buildings are different. Once they understand these ideas then it is easy to extend them to comparing locations of foreign cities and countries to explain where goods are produced or why cultures are different.

After introducing the themes at the beginning of the course, the teacher simply reviews the themes before teaching a lesson. The way the curriculum maps are structured, every element is attached to a theme. Everyday students should see, hear, and use the themes. Used in this way, the factual content in the GPS becomes the supporting evidence to prove the enduring understandings are indeed true.