



Social Studies at American Curriculum Schools in Abu Dhabi

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Executive Summary

Schools in the United Arab Emirates are implementing Social Studies standards. American curriculum schools in Abu Dhabi are among those using the learning outcomes from the Ministry of Education.

This brief provides progress made in social studies at American curriculum schools in Abu Dhabi schools and highlights key **resources** and **recommendations** for education stakeholders.

All schools in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) implement Social Studies standards as part of the national priorities. These standards cover economic, civics, geographic, historical periods in UAE's history and require schools and teachers to introduce and teach these topics at a deep level. In the UAE's National Education and Social Studies document, published by the Ministry of Education, it states:

"The rationale for this is to provide students with in-depth knowledge, skills and understanding in history, geographic and civics, which emphasize the links and relationships between diverse groups, people, science and society."

What progress have American curriculum schools inspected during 2016-2017 in Abu Dhabi made towards implementing these Social Studies standards?

What resources exist to enhance these standards?

This paper examines progress towards implementation, offers key recommendations with actionable steps for schools in the UAE and cites resources that policymakers, school administrators, and teachers can use to raise awareness and help others successfully deploy these standards.

American Curriculum

The American curriculum is based on standards of achievement in all subject areas, supported by a broad range of co-curricular activities that ensure students have the opportunity to develop fully as individuals. It includes inquiry-based, hands-on teaching methods and learning strategies geared to individualized instruction.

The American curriculum represents a broad and balanced K-12 program commencing with Kindergarten at age 5 and concludes with the award of the American high school diploma on successful completion of grade 12 at age 17. The curriculum prepares the student for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) and the Advanced Placement (AP) program is an option offered in many American curriculum schools. The American diploma is accepted for entrance by all US universities and colleges and recognized by international higher education institutions.



School Inspections in Abu Dhabi 2016-2017

During 2016-2017, Abu Dhabi Emirate had around 192 private schools operating in Abu Dhabi, Al Ain, and the Western Region with approximately 241,916 students from a variety of nationalities. In 2017, American curriculum school reports were shared in Abu Dhabi as part of the Irtiqa'a Program. Generated by a team of international experts who utilize the UAE school inspection framework, the Irtiqa'a reports provide performance information to be used in further developing school improvement plans.

Final school results, published by the inspection team, are grouped into three bands as seen below. Band A in green is Outstanding, Very Good and Good. Band B in orange is Acceptable. Band C in red is Weak and Very Weak.

Band A High Performing	Outstanding	Quality of performance substantially exceeds the expectation of the UAE
	Very Good	Quality of performance exceeds the expectation of the UAE
	Good	Quality of performance meets the expectation of the UAE (This is the expected level for every school in the UAE)
Band B Satisfactory	Acceptable	Quality of performance meets the minimum level of quality required in the UAE (This is the minimum level for every school in the UAE)
Band C In need of significant improvement	Weak	Quality of performance is below the expectation of the UAE
	Very Weak	Quality of performance is significantly below the expectation of the UAE

As of September 2017, the Abu Dhabi Education Council has been made a government department and is now named the Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). In addition, the inspection rating above has changed. Schools will now be rated on the quality levels from Outstanding to Very Weak.



Social Studies at American Curriculum Schools in Abu Dhabi

What progress have the American curriculum schools in Abu Dhabi made in social studies? Below we have identified samples of progress in social studies according to the feedback given to schools in their 2017 inspection reports.

Kindergarten

- “From KG upwards, majority of the students show a good understanding and a lively interest in the subject.”
- “In KG, social studies is integrated with Islamic Education and languages. Most children have a very good understanding of the UAE culture and heritage, which is evident in displays and activities.”
- “By the end of KG, children recognize UAE leaders and traditional costumes and sing the national anthem with enthusiasm. In the primary phase, the majority of students can, for example, compare UAE prosperity in the past and the present and make links to real-life contexts.”

Elementary School

- “In the primary phase, most students, Arab and non-Arab, have a very good understanding of UAE history and culture.”
- “In social studies, students’ attainment and progress are acceptable. Most students are attaining in line with curriculum expectations. For example, in Grade 3, most students can explain what civilization means and how this links to their own lives.”
- “In social studies, attainment and progress are acceptable in the primary phase. In Grade 2, for example, most students can explain what being united means and how the union made the UAE stronger. By Grade 5, most students can talk about some of the accomplishments of the founder of the UAE, the late Sheikh Zayed, and make links to UAE society.”

Middle School

- “In the middle phase, most students have good environmental awareness, with a good knowledge of different types of pollution.”
- “In the middle phase, the school does not meet its requirement to provide specific lessons for UAE social studies. The school integrates UAE social studies within its main curriculum. As a result, progress and attainment are weak.”
- “By the time they reach Grade 8, students can confidently discuss population distribution and global communications technology.”

High School

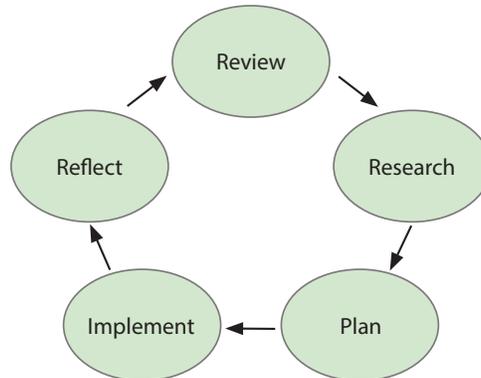
- “In the high phase, most students have a wide understanding of World History and Culture. For example, Grade 10 students identified the role of Korea in the battleground in Silla and the culture bridge between China and Japan.”
- “In UAE social studies, attainment and progress are good. For example, by Grade 9 the majority of students can explain confidently the accomplishment of the founder of UAE the late Sheikh Zayed in raising awareness of environmental issues locally and internationally and how he used the different resources to achieve sustainability. They can give examples of sustainable use of resources from their own context and the world.”
- “By Grade 9, the majority demonstrate good knowledge of international economic systems and make links to the UAE, and they can explain with great understanding the importance of environmental conservation programmes in the UAE.”

Recommendations

“Curriculum should not only focus on the tools necessary to develop reasoned and logical construction of new knowledge in our various fields of study, but also should aggressively cultivate a culture that nurtures creativity in all of our learners.”

- Heidi Hayes Jacobs, *Curriculum 21*, 2010

Curriculum Review Cycle



Schools and curriculum are a constant work in progress. Below are our recommendations for schools who are looking to focus on improving their social studies program of study.

Recommendation One: Review

Review existing curriculum to ensure it aligns with the standards. Identify gaps and points of alignment. Celebrate success and consider what needs to be accomplished to move the school’s social studies program forward.

Recommendation Two: Research

The majority of the standards cover historical events and accounts that have yet to be taught. This means that it is likely teachers and curriculum coordinators will need to do some research in order to effectively teach the material. Teachers can build lesson plans from their research and information gathering. This step takes a considerable amount of time and should be ongoing. Consider creating a list of options at your disposal to sufficiently conduct the research and allow time for teacher learning.

Recommendation Three: Plan

Analyze feedback from student achievement data, current inspection findings, classroom observations and instructional walkthroughs. Use that analysis to map out a step-by-step timeline to move teaching and learning in the required direction. Use formal planning documents and time- oriented sequenced scheduling to determine steps that can be executed within the immediate school year, within one school year, within two schools years, and beyond. Engage all faculty and staff in ongoing high quality professional learning focused on teaching social studies.

Recommendation Four: Implement

Execute and implement steps to meet year one targets in the immediate school year. Consider building in opportunities to check in with teachers, students, and parents to gather feedback. Ongoing support should be provided as changes are being implemented. Student achievement in social studies should be examined on a regular basis.

Recommendation Five: Reflect

Reflect to learn and learn to reflect. Reflection will allow schools to process, analyze, synthesize and evaluate their social studies program. In order to gain meaningful feedback, reflection should be built in and used to monitor learning outcomes, measure the impact of materials, assess student achievement, and serve as a resource in determining professional learning needs.



Social Studies Resources

UAE National Education and Social Studies

Learning outcomes for all domains and subjects (from K1 to 12th grade)

The aim is to provide students with in-depth knowledge, skills and understanding in history, geography and civics, emphasizing the links and relationships between diverse groups, people, science and society. Below you will find link to the standards in English and Arabic.

<https://globalsleepover.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/UAE-National-Education-and-Social-Studies-Standards.pdf>

https://www.moe.gov.ae/Arabic/Docs/Curriculum/Learning%20Standard/Social_Studies.pdf

National Council for the Social Studies



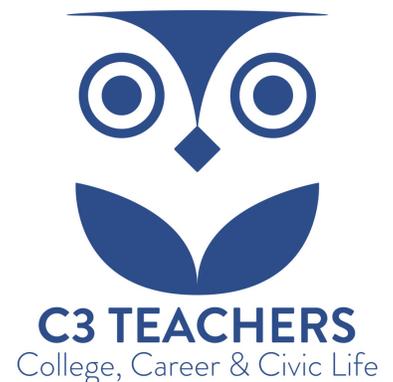
Founded in 1921, the National Council for the Social Studies is the largest professional association devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 69 foreign countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, civics, geography, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. The NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute social studies.

<https://www.socialstudies.org>

C3

Published in 2013 as a result of a three-year, state-led collaborative effort, the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards, known as the C3 Framework, is an inquiry-based framework developed for states to upgrade social studies standards and for teachers and practitioners to strengthen social studies programs. It emphasizes disciplinary concepts and practices that support students as they develop the capacity to know, analyze, explain, and argue about interdisciplinary challenges in the social world. Guidance includes the application of knowledge within the disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history as students develop questions and plan inquiries, apply disciplinary concepts and tools, evaluate and use evidence, and communicate conclusions and take informed action.

<http://www.c3teachers.org>





The Global Sleepover Curriculum

An online interactive K-5 Social Studies Curriculum covering geography, culture, history and civics through storytelling and project-based learning.



Aligning with UAE Ministry of Education National Social Studies Standards, the curriculum emphasizes links and relationships between groups of people through change, communications, diversity, science and society. Encourages students to be responsible citizens and residents of the UAE and the world. Stories, characters and learning outcomes preserve UAE culture, heritage and traditions and profiles UAE's leaders and iconic figures.

Lesson plans and activities are research-based and come with assessment techniques. Teacher planning documents, teacher manuals, teacher professional development available. Curriculum is customized to meet individual language and learning needs. Available in English and Arabic.

Stories are interactive with music, vocabulary words, images and graphics. Stories accessible via web browser such as Google Chrome, Internet Explore, Safari on desktop, laptop, tablet or phone. Offers the option for schools, teachers and student to receive online log-ins.

<https://globalsleepover.com/uae-social-studies-curriculum>

Learning Forward

Learning Forward believes that every educator should engage in effective professional learning every day so every student achieves. They show you how to plan, implement, and measure high-quality professional learning so you and your team can achieve success with your system, your school, and your students.



They are the only professional association devoted exclusively to those who work in educator professional development. They help their members leverage the power of professional learning to affect positive and lasting change.

<https://learningforward.org/standards>



Summary

Social studies helps explain the world we live in. Students learn about the past and present, become aware of what it means to be a global citizen, discover new places around the world, and find out about economic choices, trends and more. The workplace calls for employees who can collaborate, communicate, and solve problems. In addition, the World Economic Forum calls for students to have cultural and civic literacy as part of their foundational skills. The NCSS Position Statement on a Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies states that, "A powerful and rigorous social studies curriculum provides strategies and activities that engage students with significant ideas, and encourages them to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and to current issues, to think critically and creatively about what they are learning, and to apply that learning to authentic situations." The UAE's Vision 2021 focuses on moving education to a first-rate system. In order to make this shift it is necessary to ensure that students are exposed to this kind of a high quality social studies teaching.

About KDSL Global

KDSL Global is a USA and UAE-based leading learning organization focused on empowering educators and education businesses globally.

About the Global Sleepover

The Global Sleepover utilizes curriculum and research-based interactive storytelling to teach social studies and improve literacy. Working inside and outside the classroom, programs include storytelling workshops; summer camps and birthday parties; activity boxes; and online interactive stories. The Three E Methodology - ensuring all we do educates, engages and entertains - is our driving principle. The Global Sleepover currently works in the UAE, South Africa, South Sudan, Egypt, Colombia, Kosovo and USA.



Authors

Kevin Simpson, Founder, KDSL Global

KDSL Global is an education consulting company launched by Kevin Simpson in 2016 in the USA and in the United Arab Emirates. Simpson has served 500+ schools and thousands of educators worldwide in 20 countries. The majority of his work in education has centered on American curriculum schools. Since 2008, he has been focused on education in the MENA region, assisted numerous schools with accreditation, training, and development, and served as a thought partner on school start-up projects. Simpson is co-founder of the UAE Learning Network (one of the largest online network of educators in the UAE) and has participated in numerous education panels and radio shows discussing American curriculum. In addition, he has authored two white papers on American curriculum schools in Dubai, co-authored one white paper on science at MENA American curriculum schools, and co-wrote a bilingual document on American Education in the UAE. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in Education and a Master of Education degree in Curriculum and Teaching from Michigan State University (USA). Currently, he is a member of the Association for the Advancement of International Education (AAIE) and studying at their Institute for International School Leadership.

Geeta Raj, President & Founder

Geeta brings over 15 years of experience in international development and humanitarian assistance to The Global Sleepover, including over 9 years as a Senior Program Analyst with the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). Geeta's experiences working and living in Afghanistan, South Sudan, South Africa, Colombia, the U.K., Albania, Serbia, Kosovo, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova influenced her as an entrepreneur to found and grow The Global Sleepover.

Geeta's experience ranges from: entrepreneurship, creative direction and design, interactive and multi-media technology, creative writing, international development project implementation and management, and cultural, global and literacy education. A 2003 graduate of the Presidential Management Fellowship program in Washington, DC and a 2011-2012 Innovation Fellow with ConvergeUS, Geeta is a two-time recipient of the Washington, DC Commission on the Arts Folk and Traditional Arts Grant and speaks Hindi, Urdu, and basic Spanish and Serbian. Geeta holds a BA in Creative Writing from University of Houston and a MA in International Peace and Conflict Resolution from American University in Washington, DC.

Geeta learned about the unequivocal power of education through her father. A refugee from an ethnic partition in India in 1947, he overcame economic and social adversity through earning five higher education degrees – truly transformative education. This is Geeta's motivation behind founding Global Sleepover – harnessing the power of technology to make education and literacy more accessible to children who have the least access.



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For more information about KDSL Global on how its services can help you learn about education in the MENA region, please contact Kevin Simpson at kevin@kdslobal.com.

www.kdslobal.com