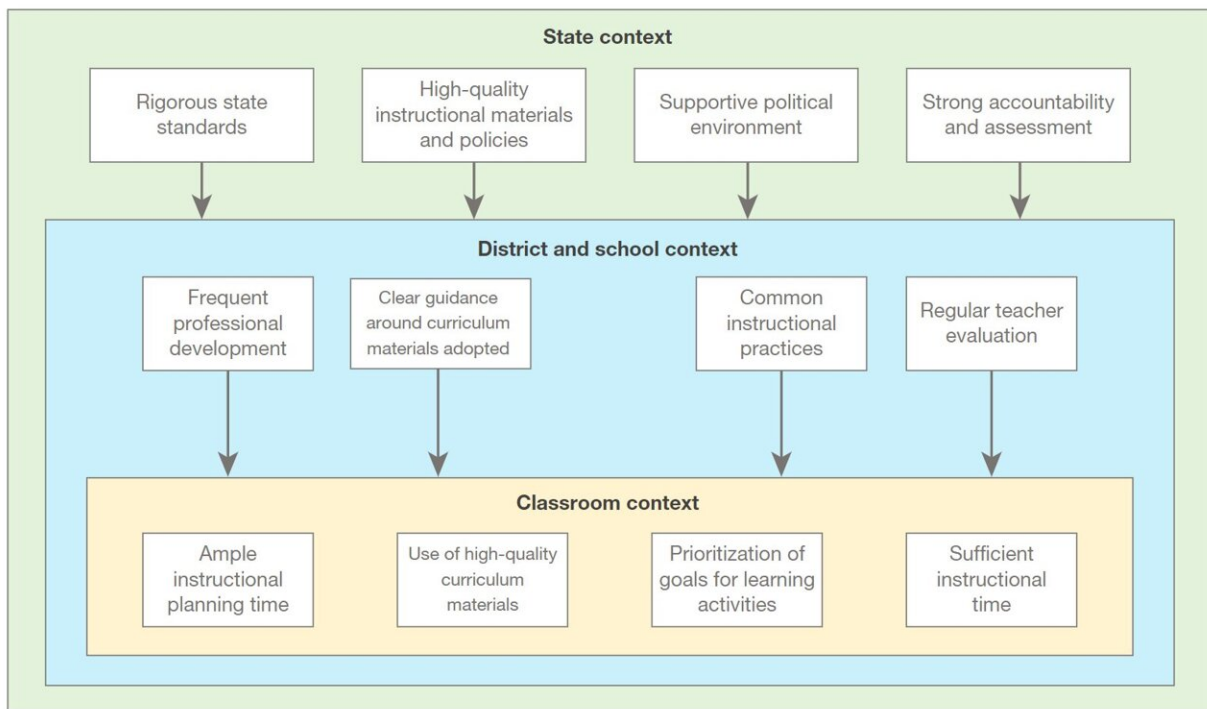


Teacher supports, guidance for elementary social studies education vary widely across US, report finds

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Hypothesized Infrastructure Leading to Student Learning. Credit: *RAND Corporation* (2023). DOI: 10.7249/RRA134-17

A new RAND Corporation report finds that the basic infrastructure to support elementary (grades K-5) social studies instruction—academic standards, accountability requirements, assessment programs—is

inadequate in many states. Even where state-level infrastructure to guide teachers' instruction is in place, its comprehensiveness and quality vary greatly.

Support and guidance at the district and school level to underpin social studies instruction are also lacking compared to other core academic subjects. For example, elementary principals report less [teacher](#) evaluation and professional learning focused on social studies instruction than on reading/language arts, math and—to a lesser extent—science instruction.

Researchers conducted a review of state policies for social studies and analyzed results from nationally representative surveys of elementary teachers and principals about social studies instruction during the 2021-2022 school year.

"Over the past few decades, [school systems](#) have invested less in students' civic development and more in academic and career preparation as educational priorities," said Melissa Kay Diliberti, lead author of the report and assistant [policy](#) researcher at RAND, a nonprofit, nonpartisan research organization. "Our findings suggest that inadequate state and local infrastructure focused on social studies instruction may have affected what elementary teachers did in their classrooms in 2021-2022."

For example, 29% of elementary principals surveyed said their schools had not adopted any recommended or required social studies curriculum materials, meaning that their schools or districts had not chosen any curricula to provide to teachers to support such instruction.

In turn, only 16% of elementary teachers surveyed reported using a required textbook for most of their social studies instructional time. More commonly, teachers cobbled together their instructional materials

or leaned on self-created materials.

The researchers suggest that, ideally, all elementary social studies policies and guidance—state standards, accountability policies, assessment programs, teacher evaluation, professional learning opportunities, and guidance around materials—would work together to build coherent and strong infrastructure to support teachers' instruction. This effort requires additional investments at all levels of the U.S. education system, from state policy to investments by [school](#) and district leaders themselves.

Other authors of "The Missing Infrastructure for Elementary (K-5) Social Studies Instruction: Findings from the 2022 American Instructional Resources Survey" are Ashley Woo and Julia H. Kaufman.

More information: The Missing Infrastructure for Elementary (K-5) Social Studies Instruction: Findings from the 2022 American Instructional Resources Survey, *RAND Corporation* (2023). [DOI: 10.7249/RRA134-17](#)

Provided by RAND Corporation

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