

Social Studies Learning Activity Types^{1,2}

Of the forty-two social studies learning activity types that have been identified to date, thirteen are focused upon helping students build their knowledge of social studies content, concepts, and processes. Twenty-nine provide students with opportunities to express their understanding in a variety of ways. Six of these knowledge expression activity types emphasize *convergent* learning and twenty-three of these activity types offer students opportunities to express their understanding in *divergent* ways. The three sets of activity types (knowledge building, convergent knowledge expression, and divergent knowledge expression) are presented in the tables that follow, including compatible technologies that may be used to support each type of learning activity.

Knowledge Building Activity Types

As the table of activity types below shows, teachers have a variety of options available to assist students in building social studies content and process knowledge.

Table 1: Knowledge Building Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Read Text	Students extract information from textbooks, historical documents, census data, etc.; both print-based and digital formats	Web sites, electronic books
View Presentation	Students gain information from teachers, guest speakers, and peers; synchronous/asynchronous, oral or multimedia	PowerPoint, Photostory, iMovie, MovieMaker, Inspiration, videoconferencing
View Images	Students examine both still and moving (video, animations) images; print-based or digital format	PowerPoint, Word, Photostory, Bubbleshare, Tabblo, Flickr
Listen to Audio	Students listen to recordings of speeches, music, radio broadcasts, oral histories, and lectures; digital or non-digital	Podcasts (“Great Speeches in History,” etc.), Audacity, Garageband, Odeo, Evoca, Podcast People
Group Discussion	In small to large groups, students engage in dialogue with their peers; synchronous/asynchronous	BlackBoard, discussion in Wikispaces, eboards
Field Trip	Students travel to physical or virtual sites; synchronous/asynchronous	Virtual fieldtrips, Photostory to develop their own virtual

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		tours
Simulation	Students engage in paper-based or digital experiences which mirror the complexity of the real world	<i>Civilization, Revolution!</i> , Fantasy Congress
Debate	Students discuss opposing viewpoints; formal/informal; structured/unstructured; synchronous/asynchronous	BlackBoard, discussion in Wikispaces, e-boards
Research	Students gather, analyze, and synthesize information using print-based and digital sources	Digital archives, Google Notebook, <i>Inspiration</i> to structure
Conduct an Interview	Face to face, on the telephone, or via email students question someone on a chosen topic; may be digitally recorded and shared	Audacity, MovieMaker, iMovie, digital camera
Artifact-Based Inquiry	Students explore a topic using physical or virtual artifacts	Digital archives
Data-Based Inquiry	Using print-based and digital data available online students pursue original lines of inquiry	CIA World Factbook, Thomas, census data, Excel, Inspire Data
Historical Chain	Students sequence print and digital documents in chronological order	Bubbleshare, Photostory, Moviemaker
Historical Weaving	Students piece together print and digital documents to develop a story	Word, Scrapblog, Google Pages, Historical Scene Investigation (HSI)
Historical Prism	Students explore print-based and digital documents to understand multiple perspectives on a topic	Wikispaces, Google Pages, Inspiration using links

Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Teachers are able to determine what students have learned by reviewing their “performances of understanding” (Wiske, 1998) -- students’ expressions of knowledge related to the learning goals targeted. Opportunities for students to express their knowledge can be incorporated during a unit of study (as part of formative assessment) or at the conclusion of a unit (as a summative assessment). At times, social studies teachers deem it appropriate for all students to come to a similar understanding of a course topic. This kind of understanding is expressed by engaging in *convergent knowledge expression activities*, as detailed in the table below.

Table 2: Convergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Answer Questions	Students respond to questions using traditional question sets or worksheets, or through the use of an electronic discussion board, email or chat	Inspiration, Word, BlackBoard, e-boards
Create a Timeline	Students sequence events on a printed or	Timeliner, Photostory,

	electronic timeline or through a Web page or multimedia presentation	Word, Bubbleshare
Create a Map	Students label existing maps or produce their own; print-based materials or digitally	PowerPoint, Google Earth
Complete Charts/Tables	Students fill in teacher-created charts and tables or create their own in traditional ways or using digital tools	Word, Inspiration, PowerPoint
Complete a Review Activity	Students engage in some form of question and answer to review content; paper-based to game-show format using multimedia presentation tools	PRS systems, Jeopardy (or other games) on PowerPoint, survey tools like SurveyMonkey
Take a Test	Students demonstrate their knowledge through paper-based, traditional format to computer-generated and scored assessments	scantron forms

While in many cases teachers may want their students to express similar understandings of course content, at other times they will want to encourage students to develop and express their own understandings of a given topic. The following 21 *divergent knowledge expression activity types* afford students opportunities to each share their unique understanding of a topic or concept. They are subdivided into learning activities that are written, visual, conceptual, product-oriented, and participatory.

Table 3: Written Divergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Write an Essay	Students compose a structured written response to a prompt; paper and pencil or word processed; text-based or multimedia	Word, Inspiration, Wikispaces (to track contributions from multiple authors)
Write a Report	Students author a report on a topic in traditional or more creative format using text or multimedia elements	Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Google Pages
Generate an Historical Narrative	Using historical documents and secondary source information, students develop their own story of the past	Word, Wikispaces or Google Docs (to track contributions from multiple authors), blogs
Craft a Poem	Students create poetry, paper and pencil or word processed; text-based or multimedia	Photostory, Moviemaker, iMovie, PowerPoint, VoiceThread
Create a Diary	Students write from a first-hand perspective about an event from the past; paper and pencil or digital format	Blogs, Word, Google Docs, Google Pages

Table 4: Visual Divergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Create an Illustrated Map	Students use pictures, symbols, graphics to highlight key features in creating an illustrated map	Google Earth, PowerPoint
Create a Picture/Mural	Students create a physical or virtual image or mural	Paint, Photoshop
Draw a Cartoon	Students create a drawing or caricature using a paper and pencil or digital format	Comic Creator, DFILM video, digital cameras

Table 5: Conceptual Divergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Develop a Knowledge Web	Using teacher or student created webs, students organize information in a visual/spatial manner; written or digital format	Inspiration, PowerPoint, Word, Imagination Cubed
Generate Questions	Students develop questions related to course material/concepts	Word, Wikispaces or Google Docs (to track contributions from multiple authors)
Develop a Metaphor	Students devise a metaphorical representation of a course topic/idea	Wikispaces (to track contributions), Inspiration

Table 6: Product-Oriented Divergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Produce an Artifact	Students create a 3D or virtual artifact	Imaging tools
Build a Model	Students develop a written or digital mental model of a course concept/process	Inspiration, PowerPoint, InspireData
Design an Exhibit	Students synthesize key elements of a topic in a physical or virtual exhibit	Wikispaces, PowerPoint, Scrapblog, Bubbleshare
Create a Newspaper/News Magazine	Students synthesize course information in the form of a periodical; print-based or electronic	Word, Letterpop, Scrapblog
Create a Game	Students develop a game, in paper or digital form, to help other students learn content	Word, Puzzlemaker, imaging tools, Web design software
Create a Film	Using some combination of still images, motion video, music and narration students produce their own movies	Photostory, Moviemaker, iMovie

Table 7: Participatory Divergent Knowledge Expression Activity Types

Activity Type	Brief Description	Possible Technologies
Do a Presentation	Students share their understanding with others; oral or multimedia approach; synchronous or asynchronous	PowerPoint, Photostory, Moviemaker, iMovie, Audacity
Engage in Historical Role Play	Students impersonate an historical figure; live, video-taped, or recorded	Moviemaker, iMovie, Audacity, digital camera
Do a Performance	Students develop a live or recorded performance (oral, music, drama, etc.)	Photostory, Moviemaker, iMovie, Audacity
Engage in Civic Action	Students write government representatives or engage in some other form of civic action	Web, email, videoconferencing