

# A Standards-Based Approach

This curriculum guide is standards-based and organized around big ideas (concepts, principles, and enduring understandings) that cut across and transfer to other subject areas. The term “enduring understandings” comes from the curriculum framework proposed by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe in the 1998 ASCD publication *Understanding by Design* and in the 1999 publication *The Understanding by Design Handbook*. Enduring understandings, as defined by Wiggins and McTighe, refer to important ideas or core processes that have lasting value beyond the classroom. To determine enduring understandings, teachers are encouraged to ask: What do we want students to understand and be able to use several years from now, after they have forgotten the details? For a brief overview of the *Understanding by Design* framework and a definition of terms, see pages 171–172. We have identified the following enduring understandings for this curriculum guide.

## Enduring Understandings

### Geography:

- Where you live influences how you live; yet all of us are connected with each other and the world.
- To gain a complete and accurate picture of a country, you need to draw on multiple sources of information and evaluate their quality and perspective.
- Natural disasters can be tragic; yet they can bring people together, reinforce interconnections, and reveal surprising traits of heroism.
- There are cultural universals (common needs that unite all people) that, despite our geographical and cultural differences, connect us with others in the world in a common bond of humanity.

### Culture:

- Everyone has a culture. Culture is dynamic and powerful. It shapes how we see the world, ourselves, and others.
- Culture is like an iceberg; some aspects are observable, others are beneath the surface. Invisible aspects influence/cause visible ones. To really understand another culture, you need to understand both the visible and invisible aspects of culture. To be effective in another culture, you must first understand your own.

Understanding someone from another culture can sometimes be hard, because people see the world, themselves, and others in fundamentally different ways. People behave as they do because of the things they believe in or value. People behave as they do for a reason. Beliefs vary from person to person and from culture to culture.

- Crossing cultures is a complex process in which the ability to “read the context” and respond appropriately is everything. The ability to cross cultures respectfully can bring greater harmony and understanding into your school, community, and the world.
- It’s possible to misinterpret things people do in a cross-cultural setting. To keep from misinterpreting the behavior of others, you have to try to see the world from their point of view as well as your own.
- Despite cultural differences, there are cultural universals that unite all people in a common bond of humanity.

### **Service:**

- There is such a thing as “the common good,” and individuals can strengthen the common good through various forms of citizen action.
- Service matters. People in many communities volunteer to make a difference.
- You can make a difference in your school or community in a number of ways.



## **Standards, Enduring Understandings, and Essential Questions**

Teachers everywhere are grappling with the realities of raising students' performance and helping them master state and local content standards. Thus, we have made a special effort to link our learning activities to key content standards, enduring understandings, and essential questions (see examples on the opposite page) in the areas of geography, social studies, and language arts. We've based the concepts and skills presented in this guide on the nationally recognized curriculum content standards developed by the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Geographic Society, the Corporation for National & Community Service, and the McREL (Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory) database of standards. Visit the Web site [www.mcrel.org](http://www.mcrel.org) to access the database and learn more on how these standards were developed. For a complete listing of the standards addressed in this curriculum guide, see pages 13 and 14.

Using the work of Wiggins and McTighe (1998, 1999), we related our selected content standards to "enduring understandings" (important concepts and big ideas that have lasting value beyond the classroom) and "essential questions" (questions designed to provoke student curiosity, focus lessons, and stimulate inquiry). The chart on page 11 illustrates the relationship of standards to the enduring understandings and essential questions that we focus on in this curriculum guide.



## **Structure and Organization of this Guide**

The units in *Insights From the Field* focus on geography, culture, and service, in that order. Each unit contains one or more modules designed to develop students' knowledge and skills in a specific curriculum area. In turn, the modules are divided into lessons with specific objectives that address the knowledge and skills related to the unit's enduring understandings and curriculum standards. The lessons contain engaging, real-world learning activities that prepare students to apply their knowledge in a culminating performance assessment task (see Appendix A, page 171) at the end of each unit. Each lesson also builds on and connects with the others within each module. The lessons can be adapted for use with students in grades 6–12.

Within the modules and lessons are worksheets, which include maps, primary source materials for student research (e.g., transcripts of interviews with Peace Corps Volunteers), data charts, activity guides, performance checklists, and graphic organizers that you can adapt or reproduce for each lesson. In Appendix A, we provide you with an overview of the *Understanding by Design* framework. In Appendix B, page 173, you can find a brief overview of the history, geography, and culture of the Dominican Republic so that you have the background knowledge to place the lesson in a broader context. (Keep in mind that we use the Dominican Republic only as a vehicle for exploring a culture different from our own and for examining issues developing countries face.) Finally, there is a bibliography of text and electronic learning resources.

**Table A**

	<b>Standards</b>	<b>Enduring Understandings</b>	<b>Essential Questions</b>
<b>Geography</b>	Human systems: The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth’s cultural mosaics.	Where we live influences how we live.	How does where we live influence how we live?
<b>Social Studies</b>	<p>Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people of diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.</p> <p>Identify and describe ways that regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence people’s daily lives.</p>	<p>People really do see the world in fundamentally different ways. People behave as they do because of the things they believe in and value. People behave as they do for a reason.</p> <p>Culture is dynamic and powerful. It shapes how we view the world, ourselves, and others.</p>	<p>What explains why people see the world in fundamentally different ways?</p> <p>How does culture shape the way we understand the world, ourselves, and others?</p>
<b>Service</b>	Recognize and interpret how “the common good” can be strengthened through various forms of citizen action.	<p>There is such a thing as “the common good.”</p> <p>Individuals can strengthen the common good through various forms of citizen action.</p>	What does the “common good” mean, and why does it matter?

**Flexible Use:** You can use this guide in a variety of ways to meet your own needs:

- As stand-alone curriculum units
- As a resource to enrich your content curriculum
- As individual units you can adapt to meet your students' needs
- As selected modules and lessons that you can use on an as-needed basis for the study of many cultures



**The Video:** The video that accompanies this curriculum guide, *Destination: Dominican Republic*, is one of 12 World Wise Schools videos on countries such as Senegal, Cameroon, Nepal, Lithuania, Poland, Krygystan, Honduras, and Paraguay. These videos bring the geography, culture, and Peace Corps Volunteers' service in another culture to life. Our World Wise Schools videos put a face on a place and can stimulate students' interests in thinking about similarities and differences across cultures. In this book, we have included pre-video and post-video viewing activities to be used with the video *Destination: Dominican Republic*. You can use these video-viewing activities with videos on other countries as well.



**Making  
Connections:  
Student Journals**

Reflection plays an important part in the exploration of concepts and ideas, especially when your goal is to deepen student understanding of the world. Journal writing provides an opportunity for students to think about their own lives, how they're connected with others, and questions that often don't have easy answers. Journaling is a two-way communication vehicle between teachers and students. It provides a living record of how student thinking is maturing over time. For these reasons, we have made journal prompts and student journal entries an important part of each lesson. We've used journal writing for a number of different purposes:

- To access students' prior knowledge
- To help students summarize what they've learned
- To provoke student thought
- To have students reflect on their learning

# Content Standards

## Addressed in This Guide

### **National Geography Standards**

#### *The World in Spatial Terms*

Geography is the study of the relationships between people, places, and environments by mapping information about them into a spatial context.

The geographically informed person knows and understands

- How to use maps and other geographic representations, tools (e.g., charts and graphs), and technologies to acquire, process, and report information from a spatial perspective.
- How to analyze the spatial organization of people, places, and environments on the Earth's surface.

#### *Human Systems*

People are central to geography in that human activities help shape Earth's surface, human settlements and structures are part of Earth's surface, and humans compete for control of Earth's surface.

The geographically informed person knows and understands

- The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics.

### **National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) Standards**

#### *Culture (NCSS Theme I)*

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity so that the learner can

- Compare similarities and differences in the ways groups, societies, and cultures meet human needs and concerns.
- Explain how information and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference.

#### *Individual Development and Identity (NCSS Theme IV)*

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of individual development and identity so that the learner can

- Identify and describe ways in which regional, ethnic, and national cultures influence individuals' daily lives.
- Identify and describe the influence of perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity.

#### *Civic Ideals and Practices (NCSS Theme X)*

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of the ideals, principles, and practices of citizenship in a democratic republic so that the learner can

- Recognize and interpret how the "common good" can be strengthened through various forms of citizen action.
- Examine strategies designed to strengthen the "common good," which consider a range of options for citizen action.
- Participate in activities to strengthen the "common good," based upon careful evaluation of possible options for citizen action.

## **Service-Learning Standards** *(Adapted from the Corporation for National & Community Service and the Alliance for Service-Learning Reform)*

The learner will be able to design an individual or group project that

- Meets actual community needs.
- Is coordinated in collaboration with a community.
- Is integrated into the academic curriculum.
- Facilitates active student reflection.
- Uses academic skills and knowledge in real-world settings.
- Helps develop a sense of caring for and about others.
- Improves the quality of life for those served.

## **Language Arts Standards**

*(Identified by the Mid-Continent Regional Education Laboratory)*

**Standard 1:** The learner will be able to demonstrate competence in the general skills and strategies of the writing process.

**Standard 4:** The learner will gather and use information for research purposes.

**Standard 5:** The learner will demonstrate competence in the general strategies of the reading process.

**Standard 6:** The learner will demonstrate competence in the general skills and strategies for reading a variety of informational and literary texts.

**Standard 8:** The learner will demonstrate competence in speaking and listening as tools for learning.