



Social Studies

How Do Preschool Children Learn About Their Social World?

Children’s social understanding about the world begins with self and family, extends to the classroom, and reaches beyond to the neighborhood, greater community, and world. Social Studies learning develops as preschoolers engage in meaningful relationships with adults and peers, participate in decision-making, learn to share, take turns, and appreciate differences. Early care and education providers support the development of social learning and greater connection to the world by encouraging play-based experiences that foster creativity, collaboration, problem-solving, and communication. By encouraging these skills, early care and education providers promote a sense of community and guide children to care for themselves, others, and the environment.

Social Studies

Self and Others: understand needs and wants; cultural awareness; sense of belonging; family traditions; and communication

Communities: rights and responsibilities; routines and procedures; follow rules; promote common good; and social conventions

Environment: care for materials; responsibility and respect; and care of environment and resources



Books for Learning About People and Communities

People

- Everyone* by Christopher Silas Neal
- Eyes That Kiss the Corners* by Joanna Ho
- Families, Families, Families*
by Suzanne and Max Lang
- Happy in Our Skin* by Fran Manushkin
- Harold Finds a Voice* by Courtney Dicmas
- It’s Okay to Be Different* by Todd Parr
- Julian is a Mermaid* by Jessica Love
- Love Grows Everywhere* by Barry Timms
- Love Makes a Family* by Sophie Beer
- Mommy’s Khimar*
by Jamilah Thompson-Bigelow
- Red: A Crayon’s Story* by Michael Hall
- The Colors of Us* by Karen Katz
- The Heart of Mi Familia* by Carrie Lara
- The Skin You Live In* by Michael Tyler
- We Are Together* by Britta Treckentrup

Community and Culture

- All Are Welcome* by Alexandra Penfold
- Alphabet City* by Stephen Johnson
- Back to School: A Global Journey*
by Maya Ajmera
- City Shapes* by Diana Murraro
- City Signs* by Zoran Milich
- Everybody Cooks Rice* by Norah Dooley
- Fry Bread: A Native American Family Story*
by Kevin Noble
- Last Stop on Market Street* by Matt de la Peña
- Milo Imagines the World* by Matt de la Peña
- One World One Day* by Barbara Kerley
- Our Class is a Family* by Shannon Olsen
- Saturday* by Oge Mora
- Say Hello* by Rachael Isadora
- The World is Waiting for You* by Barbara Kerley

Examples of Integrated Learning

How children may exhibit these skills	How early care and education providers can encourage these skills
<p>Join a group of friends to explore framed family photos, photo albums, or cultural keepsakes (jewelry, clothing, utensils, etc.).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Invite families to share objects, visuals, traditions, and customs that reflect their heritage. Make items accessible to children. Learn about family cultures, foods, customs, and special events. ▪ Read books that describe a variety of family structures, cultures and traditions represented in the learning community. ▪ Create personal portfolios of children’s work samples, photos, and other documentation to illustrate change over time. Encourage children to interact with portfolios frequently and share with families.
<p>Participate as classroom “helper” and assist with a variety of classroom jobs. (such as water plants, carry library books, gather toys on the playground, etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish clear, organized classroom routines, procedures, and rules with active input from children. Focus on a positive, growth mindset and frame classroom rules around desired rather than undesired behavior. For example, “Safe and steady walking feet” instead of “No running.” ▪ Explore a variety of roles and responsibilities within the classroom community. Encourage children to develop a sense of personal responsibility by allowing them to help. ▪ Celebrate ways to be good stewards of the school and classroom environment. <i>Example:</i> “I wonder who can help me organize our classroom library today?” “Kenneth, I saw you pick up that paper bag and put it in the recycling bin. Thank you for being so helpful.”
<p>Take a walk with classmates and teachers around the neighborhood and notice neighbors, families, community workers, etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Observe and interact with surroundings by exploring school grounds or taking frequent walks through the neighborhood or nearby community with children. ▪ Invite special visitors to the classroom to share stories about their jobs or cultural heritage (such as parent or grandparent, police officer, nurse, artist, veterinarian, etc.) Make meaningful connections with community members. ▪ Encourage children to draw and write about their experiences. Invite them to label their picture or dictate a story. Take photos of visitors or special outings and create a class book together.

Tools and Resources

[HighScope: Going From Me to We: Social Studies in Preschool](#)

[NAEYC: Valuing Diversity: Developing a Deeper Understanding of All Young Children's Behavior](#)

[National Council for the Social Studies: Early Childhood in the Social Studies Context](#)

[Scholastic: Preparing for Preschool: Social Studies](#)

[Young Children: Social Studies in Today’s Early Childhood Curricula](#)