

# Rethinking and reshaping social studies instruction in Maine

On February 26, 2021, we convened a group of social studies supervisors across the state to discuss how we can include greater cultural responsiveness, civic engagement, and inquiry in instruction. Here are a few interesting insights shared during the virtual roundtable discussion.



1

## Reexamine and refresh existing materials to address problematic perspectives and lack of representation

During the session, attendees reported that some of their top challenges were feeling stuck with existing materials that can be tainted with bias and racism. One leader put it beautifully – "We must load up our classroom libraries with books that children can see themselves in," and another mentioned the importance of building background knowledge on complex topics so students get a holistic picture of issues.

2

## Ground civic engagement in shared purpose and the issues students care about

One leader shared that every year, their school rallies behind a service learning focus that shapes volunteer activities throughout the year and gets the entire school community invested in a common purpose. Another social studies supervisor has had success with student-led civic learning projects so that students can dive into issues that are most meaningful to them.

3

## Put students in the driver's seat to activate natural curiosity and inquiry

Let students lead their curiosity by searching for and finding articles on their own. Students will be more engaged in the inquiry process when they have the freedom to choose topics most interesting to them. One leader noted that sometimes, this means giving teachers permission to not talk too much, and letting students fill the time with discovery and peer-to-peer discussion.



Want to put these principles into action at your school or district? Newsela Social Studies, paired with the brand new Maine Social Studies collection, includes content and instructional supports that ground learning in local history, and help students draw connections on a national and global level. [Contact us to see a preview.](#)