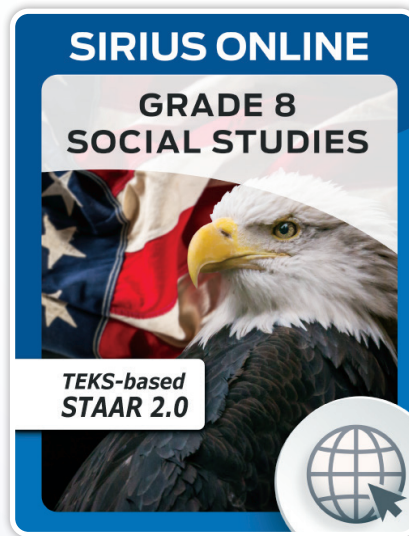


Sirius Online 2023–24

TEACHER'S GUIDE

How to Implement *Sirius Online* in Your Classroom

Grade 8 Social Studies



Welcome Educators

Welcome to the *Sirius Online* **Grade 8 Social Studies Teacher’s Guide**—a reference that helps you understand what resources you get and how you can best use them. We crafted it to save you time and help you avoid difficulties.

- *Sirius Online* is a supplement that **fills gaps** in adopted instructional materials by providing essential TEKS instruction and authentic STAAR 2.0 practice.
- Use *Sirius Online* **alongside your core curriculum** to ensure that your students learn exactly what they need to know and do on STAAR 2.0—its content (primary source quotes and other stimuli), context (online and new question types), and complexity (rigor).
- With *Sirius Online*, your students will focus on the essential TEKS, including how they are tested in STAAR. By helping students focus on the most important—and most tested—information on the STAAR test, Sirius **adds depth and rigor** to your curriculum.

We are honored to support you in helping your students succeed. Please contact us for assistance. **And thanks for all you do!**



Copyright © 2023 by Sirius Education Solutions LLC. All rights reserved. No part of this work may be reproduced or distributed in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, scanning, recording, or stored in a database or retrieval system, without the prior written permission of the publisher.

STAAR® is a registered trademark of the Texas Education Agency. The Texas Education Agency does not endorse this program or its content. Sirius Education Solutions LLC is not affiliated with the Texas Education Agency or the State of Texas.

Contents

QUICK START

Getting Started	2
A Comprehensive Supplement	3
Using Sirius for Different Contexts	3
<i>Sirius Online</i> Supports Differentiation	4
<i>Sirius Online</i> and the Rtl Framework	4
Assignment Planning and Pacing Guide	6
Three Assignment Types.....	8
Getting Help	9

GOING DEEPER

1 Introduction	10
1.1 Course Contents	10
1.2 Welcome Letter	10
1.3 Getting Familiar with STAAR Item Types	10
2 Assessments	11
2.1 Module STAAR 2.0 Assessments.....	12
2.2 Cumulative Review: STAAR 2.0 Assessments	12
2.3 Practice Test: STAAR 2.0 Assessment	12
3 Lesson Instruction and Practice	13
4 Additional Module Resources	14
4.1 Module Opener: Intro and Vocabulary Preview	14
4.2 Module Closer: DBQ and Study Guide and Review.....	14
5 Planning <i>Sirius Online</i> Implementations	15
6 Instructional Tips for Using <i>Sirius Online</i>	16
6.1 Make a Commitment to Use <i>Sirius Online</i>	16
6.2 Use Instruction and Practice for Ungraded Activities	16
6.3 Release Assignments for Student Review	16
6.4 Build Teacher-Student Relationships	16
6.5 Focus on Thinking.....	18
7 Concluding Questions.....	19
7.1 What Is Special About <i>Sirius Online</i> ?	19
7.2 How Do I Get Students and Parents to Support Use of Sirius?	19
Sirius Companion Workbooks.....	back cover
<i>Sirius Online</i> Is Research-Based.....	back cover

Getting Started

Start Here

Click [Introduction to Sirius Online](#) and work through this 20-minute video-based module. You can stop it and act on what you learn including:

- Adding courses
- Making classes
- Making assignments

Sirius Online System Tutorials

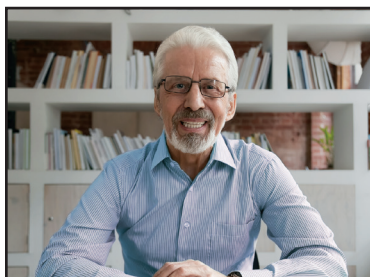
Tutorials provide information about the *Sirius Online* interface for students and for teachers. Add the **tutorials course** to each of your classes and begin with these introductions to become familiar with the platform.

FOR TEACHERS



Introduction to *Sirius Online*

To become familiar with *Sirius Online*, work through this teacher eLearning Module. It only takes about 20 minutes, and you can print a certificate to show completion.



Introduction to *Sirius Online* for Education Leaders

This eLearning Module is directed primarily at administrators and focuses on Reports. Review this at your leisure to understand what Admins see in their dashboards.

FOR STUDENTS



Sirius Tools Tutorial

This is an introductory tutorial about the *Sirius Online* tools. Sirius has the same tools found in the online STAAR tests. However, Sirius tools are slightly different in that they are easier to find and use with just one click—students don't have to use submenus. Use this tutorial with your students to familiarize them with the tools.

A Comprehensive Supplement

Sirius Online supplements existing instructional materials by providing essential TEKS instruction and authentic STAAR 2.0 practice.

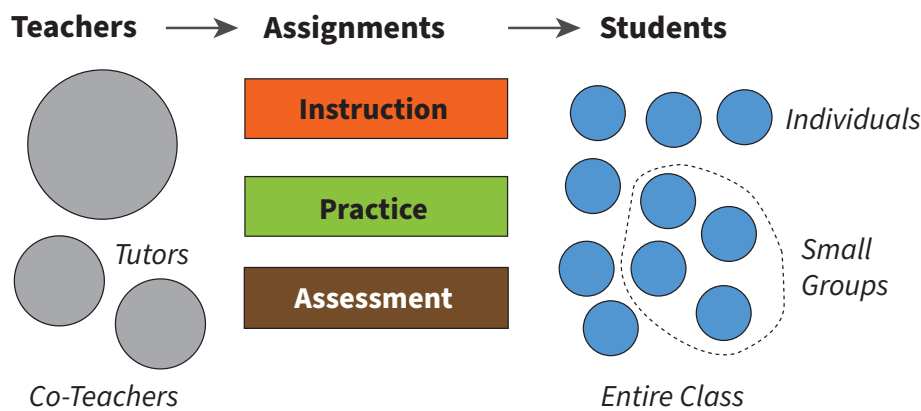
Sirius Online is a comprehensive supplement with three distinct assignments:

Instruction Explicit TEKS instruction uses the Gradual Release of Responsibility model.

Practice Authentic STAAR 2.0 practice empowers students with scaffolds and feedback.

Assessment Authentic STAAR 2.0 test items delivered with similar STAAR tools / features.

Teachers and co-teachers can easily customize assignments for individual students, small groups, or the entire class.



Using Sirius for Different Contexts

Sirius Online supplements a core curriculum with easy-to-use and adaptable resources for multiple implementation models, including different:

- **Time frames**

- **Fall Semester**

- Beginning of the Year
 - After First 9-week Benchmark

- **Spring Semester**

- After Mid-Year Benchmark
 - After Spring Break



- **Ability levels**

- Does Not Meet, Approaches, Meets, and Masters Grade Level

- **Groups**

- Whole Class, Small Groups, Partners, and Individuals



- **Instructional approaches**

- Teacher-led, Student-centered, Asynchronous, etc.



Sirius Online Supports Differentiation

Sirius Online supports differentiation by empowering teachers to curate:

- **What** content to assign based on topic, TEKS, or student needs.
- **Who** to assign content: whole class, small groups, individuals.
- **Pacing** of how many assignments and how fast they get completed.
- **How** assignments are conducted: from teacher-led to student-centered.

Sirius Online and the RtI Framework

A practical approach to organizing the implementation of *Sirius Online* is using the Response to Intervention (RtI) model with Tier 1, 2, and 3 pathways.

Sirius Online Provides Consistent Instructional Routines

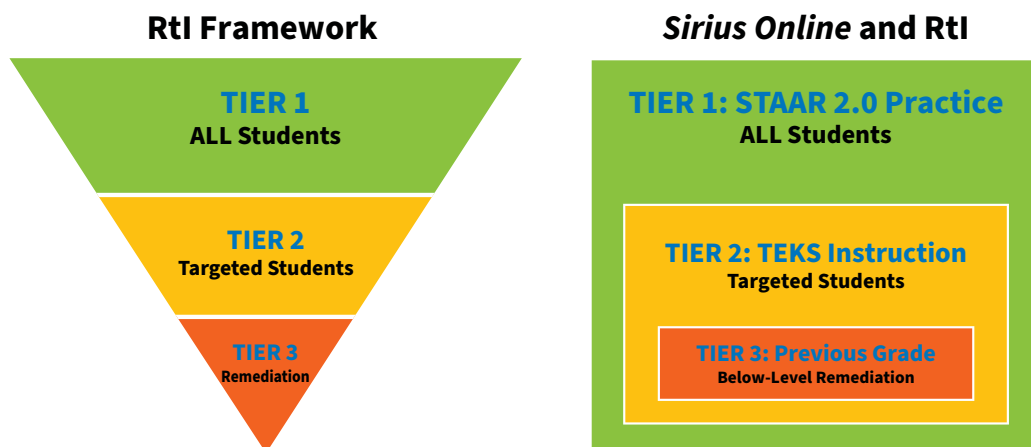
Research shows strong support for the RtI framework in improving learning for all students. With *Sirius Online*, you can create consistent instructional routines that support both Tier 1 and 2 students.

The Need for High Quality Tier 1 Instruction

All students benefit from instruction that is aligned with exactly what students need to *know* and *do* on the STAAR tests. Students should get regular exposure all year long to learn the STAAR-tested thinking. This includes developing fluency with online testing tools and features.

Aligning Tier 2 Support with Classroom Instruction

Tier 2 and Accelerated Instruction students often receive instruction that is unrelated to classroom instruction. *Sirius Online* empowers class teachers to guide group and individual interventions for struggling Tier 2 students. With *Sirius Online*, targeted students get explicit and systematic instruction in the essential TEKS.



TIER 1 STAAR 2.0 Practice to Show Progress for ALL Students

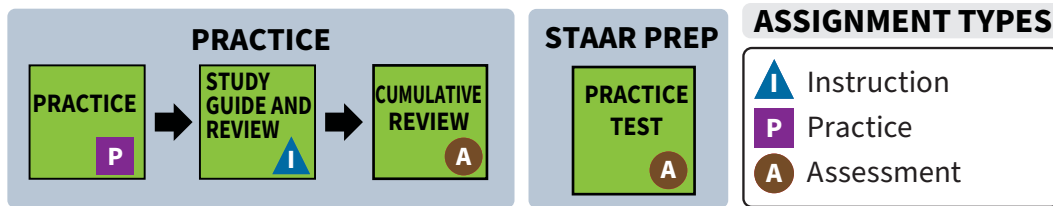
The new Texas accountability system emphasizes progress for all students, and rewards moving students to the Meets and Masters Grade Level. So throughout the year, all students should receive regular authentic STAAR 2.0 practice in answering questions with a variety of stimuli, as well as mixed and spaced review (Cumulative Review). This helps students transfer what they learn in class to the content and format of the online STAAR test.

Scaffolded Practice Supports: Empowerment with Choice

Sirius Online empowers students to become more active thinkers by giving students choices in how they navigate each **Practice** question. Choice helps students feel more “in control” of their learning and encourages them to take greater ownership.

Below are the scaffolded supports that students can choose with rich feedback.

- Show Hint** Gives a helpful tip before answering a question.
- Sample Answer** Gives a complete response to a short-constructed response question.
- Submit Answer** Gives immediate feedback on the answer selected.
- Try Again** Gives another try after students receive actionable feedback.
- Show Correct Answer** Gives the correct answer and its feedback.

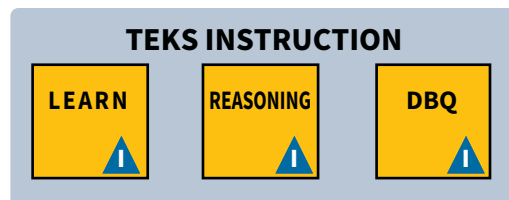


A Practice Test Build Confidence

In the weeks before the STAAR test, use the Practice Test as a full-length “dress rehearsal.” This builds test-taking confidence and provides high-quality data.

TIER 2 TEKS Instruction for Targeted On-Level Support

Sirius Online supports targeted TEKS-based instruction with on-level resources teachers can use to support struggling and Accelerated Instruction students.



In *Sirius Online* Reports, teachers can easily make individual or group assignments by TEKS to target specific needs.




Students will benefit from DBQ lessons that involve analyzing primary sources. These lessons engage students’ critical-thinking skills, challenge students to interpret stimuli, and provide extended practice in answering SCR-style questions.

Assignment Planning and Pacing Guide




Sirius Online can be used over different time frames and for different needs. The table below shows two use cases: all students (Tier 1) and targeted students (Tier 2). Both uses can be combined by assigning additional resources for Tier 2 students.

<i>Sirius Online</i> Assignments		ALL Students TIER 1	Targeted Students TIER 2
		(0.5 h / wk)	(1 h / wk)
READINESS ASSESSMENT			
DIAGNOSTIC TESTS	A	+	✓
INSTRUCTION & PRACTICE			
MODULE OPENER	I	⌚	+
LEARN	I	+	✓
PRACTICE	P	✓	✓
REASONING	I	+	✓
STUDY GUIDE AND REVIEW	I	✓	✓
DBQ	I	+	✓
POST ASSESSMENT & PREP			
POST TESTS	A	+	✓
CUMULATIVE REVIEWS	A	✓	✓
PRACTICE TEST	A	✓	✓

ASSIGNMENT TYPES

-  Instruction
-  Practice
-  Assessment

PRIORITY KEY

-  Recommended: the suggested minimum
-  Encouraged: helpful in certain contexts
-  Optional: when time permits

INSTRUCTION & PRACTICE DESCRIPTIONS

MODULE OPENER has an analyzing visuals activity and vocabulary activities.

LEARN gives concise instruction that reviews and reinforces each TEKS.

PRACTICE provides authentic STAAR practice with robust feedback.

REASONING gives scaffolded instruction and practice in answering STAAR items.

DBQ provides instruction in reading primary and secondary sources with scaffolded writing practice.

STUDY GUIDE AND REVIEW has vocabulary activities on key people, places, and events.

CUMULATIVE REVIEW provides mixed STAAR practice for spaced review.

TIER 1 ON-LEVEL FOR ALL STUDENTS

Authentic and rigorous STAAR 2.0 practice and assessment so ALL students learn how to read and reason through STAAR questions (many with a stimulus).

TIER 2 ON-LEVEL FOR TARGETED STUDENTS INSTRUCTION

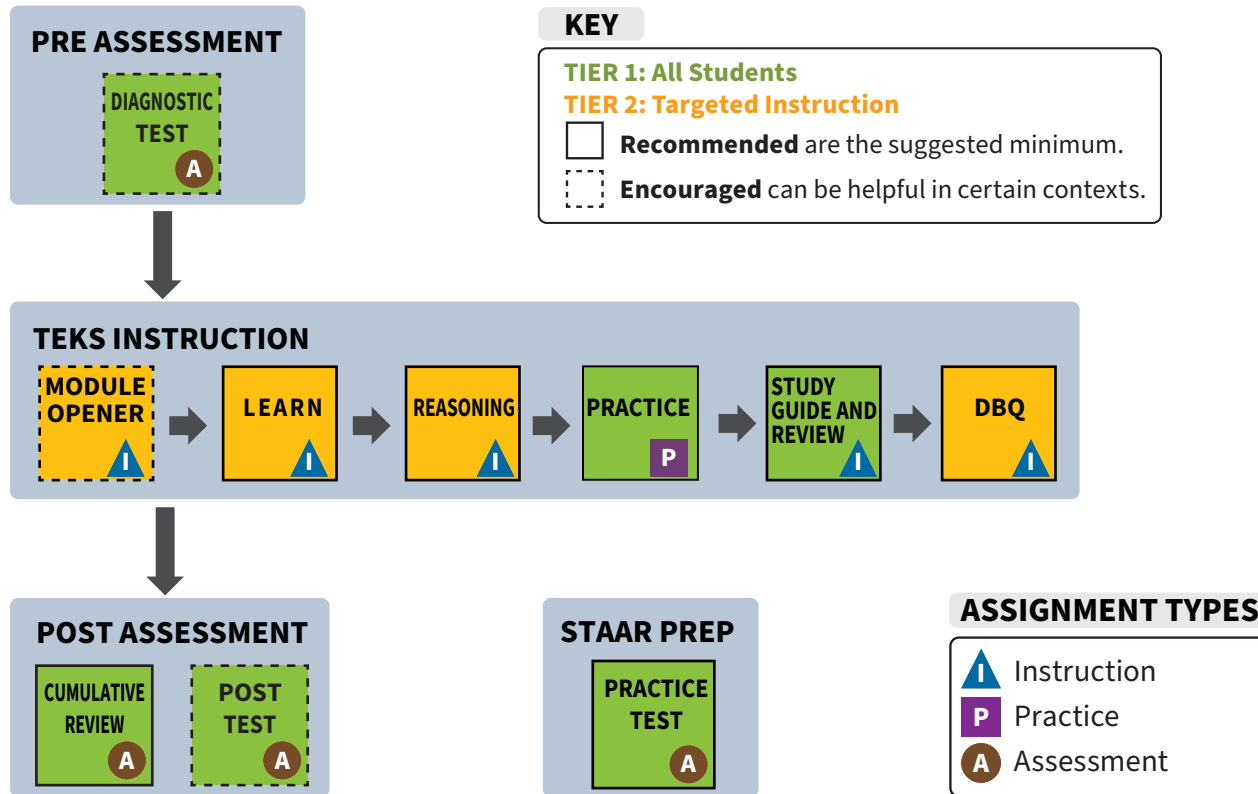
Scaffolded TEKS instruction gives Accelerated Instruction and struggling students an alternative approach for the most-tested TEKS.

Visualizing How *Sirius Online* Assignments Interrelate

Sirius Online is a comprehensive resource that supports many distinct student needs. Below is a visualization to show how the social studies assignments can be coordinated for **on-level instruction** for both Tier 1 and Tier 2 students.




TIER 1 — All students get rigorous authentic STAAR 2.0 practice.

TIER 2 — Some students get essential TEKS instruction.



Three Assignment Types

Sirius Online is a comprehensive supplement with **Instruction**, **Practice**, and **Assessment**. All *Sirius Online* assignments fit into one of these three categories, and each serves different instructional purposes.

Assignment Type	Question Types	Student Feedback	Delivery Mode	TEKS Alignment
Instruction  Explicit TEKS instruction in Grade 8 Social Studies using the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) model	STAAR and non-STAAR format items	Immediate correct or incorrect	Practice mode	Lesson level
Practice  Authentic STAAR 2.0 questions and stimuli with instructional scaffolds	STAAR 2.0 items only	Immediate with support scaffolds	Practice mode	Each item
Assessment  Authentic STAAR 2.0 questions and stimuli with all online STAAR tools	STAAR 2.0 items only	No immediate feedback	Test mode	Each item

Question Formats

The focus of *Sirius Online* **Instruction** is on learning the TEKS content. Therefore, individual questions may not be STAAR 2.0 items or even use STAAR item formats. In contrast, all *Sirius Online* **Practice** and **Assessments** are authentic STAAR 2.0 items in content, format, and rigor.

TEKS Alignments

Instruction assignments are TEKS aligned as a whole, and cover the TEKS chronologically so that students gain an understanding of each era as well as experiencing how the TEKS are tested in STAAR. **Practice** and **Assessments** always use authentic STAAR 2.0 items, and each item is TEKS aligned.

Assessments Use Test Mode

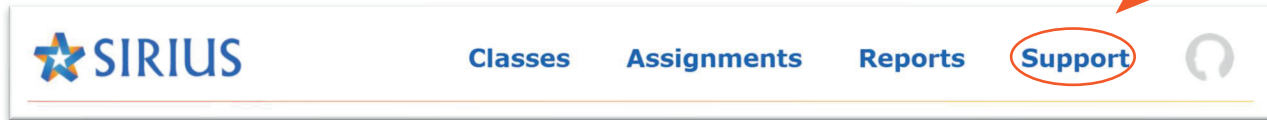
Unlike **Instruction** and **Practice**, all *Sirius Online* assessments are **delivered in Test mode**—students do not receive any immediate feedback or Hints, and the final answer for each question is scored when the final Submit button is pressed. Assessments are **auto-scored**, except for Short Constructed Response items.

Getting Help



FIND

Sirius Online Support is available directly inside the platform through the Support tab to the left of your profile image.



Our comprehensive, searchable knowledge base provides detailed step-by-step support instructions, including videos, and is available 24/7 [here](#).



READ

[Going Deeper](#) is a document with more in-depth information about *Sirius Online*, and recommendations in this Teacher's Guide in your classroom.



CONNECT

You can quickly connect with Technical and Customer Support in multiple ways:

Phone: (800) 942-1379, Option 2
Monday-Friday 7 am–6 pm CT

Chat: www.SiriusEducationSolutions.com
Available all hours.
Use to locate your sales representative and get order or product info.

Email: Support@SiriusEducationSolutions.com

Online Tickets: <https://Sirius4Learning.zohodesk.com/portal/en/home>
Create, view, and manage support tickets online.

GOING DEEPER

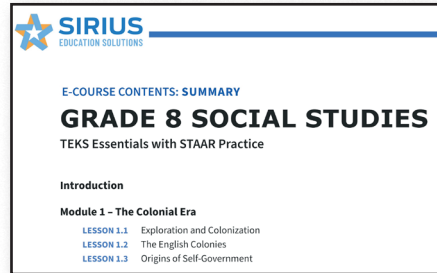
Explore in-depth information about *Sirius Online*, and recommendations for ways to implement *Sirius Online* in your classroom.

1 Introduction

1.1 Course Contents

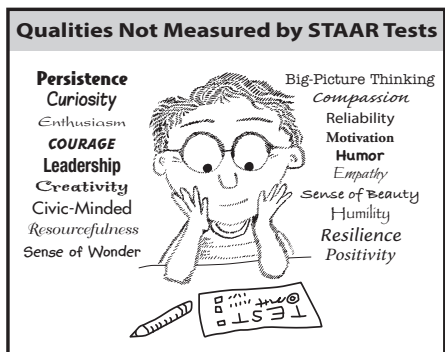
A Summary that shows the course organization, and a Detailed View that lists every assignment in the course.

The TEKS for each assignment are included unless it has multiple TEKS. Use the contents to help you plan when to use *Sirius Online* assignments.



1.2 Welcome Letter

The Welcome Letter introduces the *Sirius Online* Grade 8 Social Studies course to students and seeks to provide context and motivation to students.



The Welcome Letter is available to students through the *Sirius Online* Grade 8 Social Studies course. You will need to assign the Welcome Letter as an assignment for your students.

We encourage use of this activity to help students process their feelings about STAAR tests. STAAR tests measure a limited range of capacities, as shown by this comic.

We sincerely believe that students who learn exactly what is tested will indeed succeed and show progress.

1.3 Getting Familiar with STAAR Item Types **P**



DRAG AND DROP

INLINE CHOICE

HOT SPOT

ASSIGNMENT TYPES

- I** Instruction
- P** Practice
- A** Assessment

Getting Familiar with STAAR Item Types are introductory lessons about the new STAAR 2.0 questions. Students will practice these items throughout the course, so familiarity will become fluency, which then leads to confidence.

MOST STAAR questions are multiple choice. A multiple choice question has **information**, followed by four **answer choices**.

Here is an example.

Who was the first president of the United States? **Information**

(A) John Adams

(B) King George III

(C) Thomas Jefferson

Answer Choices

These lessons explain the different components of the STAAR questions, including information, directions, and actions.

The lessons also explain strategies students can use to answer the STAAR item types.

You can assign all Getting Familiar assignments at one time, but we suggest spreading them out and using them with teacher-led instruction.

2 Assessments

Sirius Online includes several Grade 8 Social Studies assessments for different purposes. Below is a description of each type of assessment with an explanation for when they can be used and the information they can provide to both teachers and students.

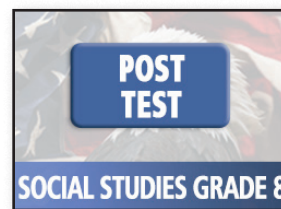
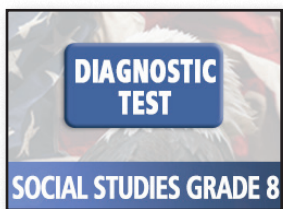
The majority of *Sirius Online* Grade 8 Social Studies assessments are **auto-scored** and **delivered in Test mode**—students do not receive any immediate feedback or Hints, and the final answer for each question is scored when the final Submit button is pressed. Most of the test items are **auto-scored**; however, **SCR** (Short Constructed Response) questions require a human grader, similar to the actual STAAR test.

NOTE: If students **Exit** out of an assessment before pressing **Submit**, their work is saved. Students can return to a saved assessment and change any answers before pressing Submit. To limit cheating, we recommend that all assessments be given in class, and ideally under simulated STAAR **testing conditions**. When students experience similar *feelings* to when taking the actual STAAR test, they get to rehearse this stressful context. This also results in more accurate performance data.

2.1 Module STAAR 2.0 Assessments

Each Module includes mini STAAR 2.0 Assessments that are useful tools for teachers to check and monitor students' progress towards mastery of the Grade 8 Social Studies TEKS.

DIAGNOSTIC TEST A	POST TEST A
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Efficiently assesses TEKS with authentic STAAR 2.0 items.• Diagnostic questions are reviewed in lessons for deeper instruction and support.• Use as a quick pretest or baseline for each Module era.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A parallel form to the Diagnostic Test• Matches the Grade 8 Social Studies STAAR test• Can monitor progress and identify TEKS for additional review



2.2 Cumulative Review: STAAR 2.0 Assessments **A**

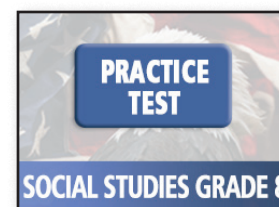
Provides *mixed* and *spaced review* of TEKS with authentic STAAR 2.0 items. Items covering different TEKS are interleaved in an unpredictable sequence, in order to help students move from the individual era focused learning to becoming flexible STAAR thinkers.



There are five Cumulative Review assessments, each covering the content covered chronologically up to the current place in the program.

2.3 Practice Test: STAAR 2.0 Assessment **A**

One full-length authentic STAAR test matches the STAAR redesign blueprint closely in all details. This test does not include additional field test items. It can provide insights into your students' likely STAAR test performance.



3 Lesson Instruction and Practice

The lessons provide concise coverage of the TEKS content in each era covered in Reporting Category 1. The TEKS content for Reporting Categories 2, 3, and 4 are covered in the relevant chronological lessons.

LEARN

9.1.1 How did geography and slavery lead to sectionalism?

Check Your Understanding

With which region were these items **MOST** associated?
Move the correct answers to each box.

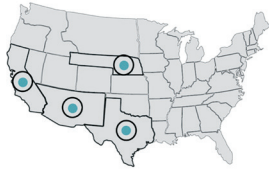
manufacturing	cotton	agricultural economy	wheat	slave labor	diverse economy
North			South		

Systematic era-based TEKS instruction in the content and skills that students apply in PRACTICE.

- Full era-based review and reinforcement of TEKS
- Analyzing Visuals promote critical thinking
- Check Your Understanding activities for engagement

PRACTICE

In which area was slavery banned according to the terms of the Compromise of 1850?
Select the correct answer.



[Submit Answer](#) [Show Hint](#)

Ample authentic STAAR 2.0 practice of the TEKS in the corresponding LEARN as applied to STAAR items.

- 60%+ include a stimuli like STAAR 2.0 items
- Includes 25% new question types
- Hints and actionable feedback help students build reasoning capacities

REASONING

THINK Use reasoning to eliminate wrong answer choices.

Choice A The importance of the Underground Railroad to runaway slaves grew.

- Do you see a clear connection between southern troops capturing a fort and the Underground Railroad?
- Should you eliminate an answer choice just because you can't clearly see a reason for it to be correct?
- Does it make more sense to keep choice **A** for now or to eliminate it?

[Submit Answer](#)

Scaffolded instruction and practice in how to understand and answer STAAR questions.

- Builds reasoning skills and confidence
- Engages both struggling and strong students
- Shows errors in student thinking with corrections

Teachers can group-assign all components of **Lesson Instruction and Practice** to all classes in one step.

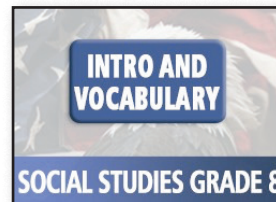
Alternatively, teachers can customize by selecting some components and/or adjusting for different classes. Assignments can be made to groups of students within a class.

All assignments are auto-scored and provide students with immediate feedback.

4 Additional Module Resources

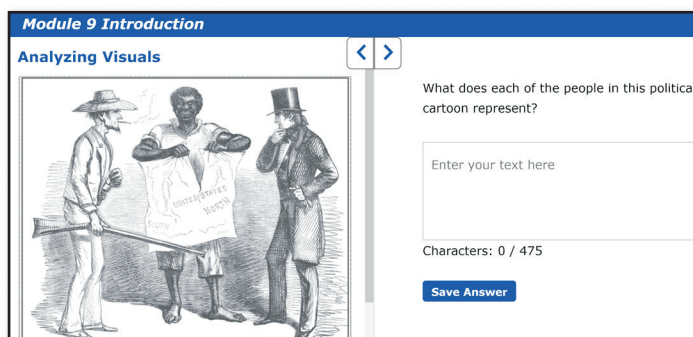
4.1 Module Opener: Intro and Vocabulary Preview

Each era-based Module Opener includes the following components in a single assignment.



Analyzing Visuals

These activities promote key **critical thinking skills** with short written responses to help students connect with previous knowledge and deepen content understanding based on a visual from the Module's era. Each activity extends students' analysis skills and builds **visual literacy** in ways that apply to the STAAR test.



Getting Ready

These vocabulary preview activities help students connect to the **key people, places, and events** for each era Module with activities that help them prepare for the more in-depth learning that follows in the lessons and practice.

Teacher Supports

Analyzing Visuals includes additional support for teachers with questions to help extend students' analysis. With this support, teachers can help students **analyze** primary sources and **synthesize** them like a historian.

4.2 Module Closer: DBQ and Study Guide and Review

Each era-based Module Closer includes at least two assignments.

Document-Based Questions (DBQs)

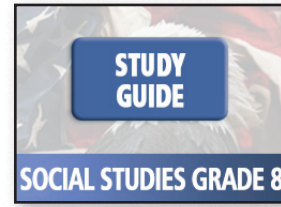
DBQ activities help students analyze primary and secondary sources, and synthesize them like a historian. Each DBQ activity is organized to break down the complexity of this process. Students write short responses to questions on each source, and then synthesize information from all the sources and answer a short response question. This gives students a deeper understanding of a specified era in the Grade 8 Social Studies curriculum.



Each DBQ concludes with a related STAAR-format item so students can transfer their learning to the context of STAAR. The advantages that DBQ activities provide can extend beyond STAAR to have students become historians themselves. This engages students while also building essential critical-thinking skills.

Study Guide and Review

This assignment reviews the vocabulary and main ideas of the Module. It begins with a review of the key terms previewed in the Module Opener. Then, it provides critical thinking activities that focus on social studies skills and include stimuli such as maps, tables, time lines, graphic organizers, etc.



5 Planning *Sirius Online* Implementations

Sirius Online was designed to help ALL students learn the tested TEKS in the context of how they are tested in STAAR. And *Sirius Online* is a comprehensive supplement that is easily adapted for a wide range of use cases and student needs.

For support in creating a unique implementation for your particular needs, you may want to consider the following questions to guide your planning.

Questions to Guide Planning

Intentions	What are our goals?
Evaluation	What does success look like? How will we measure it?
Obstacles	What are our primary needs or challenges?
Timing	Where does the student instruction fit into the school year?
Integration	Where does <i>Sirius Online</i> integrate into the curriculum/classes?
Coordination	How does <i>Sirius Online</i> connect to your core curriculum?
Needs	What are the instructional pathways for different students?

There is no one best way to use *Sirius Online* because each classroom has unique needs. However, we strongly encourage implementations that extend throughout the full school year. Research shows that “cramming” is not effective for complex cognitive tasks, such as online STAAR social studies questions with a quote or visual.

6 Instructional Tips for Using *Sirius Online*

6.1 Make a Commitment to Use *Sirius Online*

New habits do not just happen. They take deliberate effort. We encourage teachers to make a commitment to use *Sirius Online* (ideally each week), and to designate a certain day and time to assign, review student work, and plan for next steps.

In working with students, rhythm and routine can be powerful supports in encouraging them to apply themselves. Your internal commitment to use *Sirius Online* (something new) will be sensed and respected by students. Students tend to follow their teachers.

6.2 Use Instruction and Practice for Ungraded Activities

We highly recommend that **Instruction** and **Practice** assignments be ungraded. Research shows that students are more likely to take risks, make mistakes, and use the feedback to get better in low-stakes activities. In contrast, for **Assessments**, students should be focusing on getting the correct answer: performing instead of practicing.

Although teachers can convert **Practice** assignments into **Assessments** (so students get no immediate feedback), we suggest that this be used cautiously for special situations.

6.3 Release Assignments for Student Review

We encourage teachers to release assignments for students to review their work. Furthermore, teachers need to help students develop the habit of using the Review mode to analyze the items that they got correct and/or incorrect. In Review mode, students also get access to full solutions as well as the tools that they used such as Highlights, Sticky Notes, and feedback comments from the teacher. For assessment, you can simply delay the release of any assessment until all students have submitted it.





6.4 Build Teacher-Student Relationships

We encourage teachers to take advantage of the student Self-Evaluation at the end of each **Instruction** and **Practice** assignment. Teachers can respond directly to each student's written response to encourage, support, and challenge them individually.

- **Confidence** in what students learned/practiced
- **Effort** or how hard students tried
- **Reflect** or short written response (shared with teacher)





Sirius Online **Instruction** and **Practice** assignments ask students to reflect on their work with 3 end-of-assignment unscored questions:

CONFIDENCE How confident are you in what you learned?

I'm confused I feel okay I feel pretty I'm an expert!

EFFORT How hard did you focus or try?

Not Much Effort Some Effort Good Effort My Best Effort

REFLECTION Complete one or more of the sentence stems below.

- I learned...
- I had difficulty...
- I feel...

Many students are poor judges of their **learning** and/or **effort**. Teachers should look for students who are particularly off—meaning their **performance** does not match their confidence and/or their **effort** does not match their **time on task**.

Understanding and working with students' self-perceptions can be a key factor in helping change student behaviors. Research shows that students' self-efficacy or beliefs may be the most important factor in student engagement.

Teachers can share observations including student written responses (anonymously) with the entire class. This shows the teacher is reviewing student work and that they are focusing on productive thinking behaviors instead of scores. When students feel seen, they tend to engage more deeply.

6.5 Focus on Thinking

STAAR Social Studies Tests Are Thinking Tests

STAAR social studies tests emphasize reading and analyzing STAAR questions carefully. So instead of the recall of facts such as historical people and events, students need to think through questions and answers, including questions with stimuli.

STAAR social studies tests require specialized reading. Instead of reading for pleasure, students are reading questions with quotes and stimuli to answer them. Thus, STAAR test questions demand purposeful reading—identifying and understanding what is being asked, finding the relevant information in the quote, analyzing answer choices, and navigating new STAAR 2.0 question types as well as the online testing platform.

Learning to Think Through STAAR Questions is a Process

Helping students become better and more confident STAAR thinkers is challenging and takes time. The learning process for answering STAAR questions is similar to riding a bicycle—students learn by doing it themselves. *Sirius Online* has ample practice with scaffolds that empower students to make choices and take greater ownership of reasoning processes.

Thinking is hard work, and some students will be reluctant to apply themselves diligently. But you cannot do the work for students. Some teachers need to be careful to monitor and limit the help that they provide students to avoid undermining the necessary struggle.

Three Key Thinking Habits Teachers Can Promote

To promote careful thinking, we suggest teachers focus on positive affirmations for three common bad thinking habits (and related limiting attitudes). Teacher can repeat each phrase regularly, such as after a student request for help.

Take time to think	Get students to slow down and resist impulsivity!
Keep at it	Get students to try again and practice persistence!
Consider all options	Get students to be systematic and not rigid!

For a singular instructional goal, we suggest anything that slows students down, so that they think more carefully. Most of human thinking happens fast and automatically. Careful and deliberate thinking takes time and effort.

7 Concluding Questions

7.1 What Is Special About *Sirius Online*?

TEKS-Focused Instruction

Sirius Online supplements enhance existing instructional materials by providing essential TEKS instruction and authentic STAAR 2.0 practice. *Sirius Online* is used along with a core curriculum, not as a replacement. However, *Sirius Online* is needed because it fills instructional gaps in older adopted materials by closely matching STAAR 2.0 in all its details: content, format, and rigor.

Answering STAAR Questions with Stimuli

Because STAAR social studies STAAR tests are thinking tests, *Sirius* adds depth and rigor by helping students apply social studies skills and concepts to answering questions with stimuli. Learning to think more carefully is hard work. Because thinking is invisible, we cannot know for sure when students are thinking, and we cannot force students to think. But teachers can create the conditions that encourage and support thinking more deeply.

High-Quality Feedback

Effective feedback enables learning and relies upon a culture that is open to using feedback to impact future choices—to feedforward. This is where *Sirius*' robust and high-quality feedback comes in. *Sirius Online*'s comprehensive feedback options are designed to empower students through choice, and to be supported by teachers who can focus on student learning (instead of finding rigorous and effective curriculum).

7.2 How Do I Get Students and Parents to Support Use of *Sirius*?

Your belief that *Sirius* will help your students is the key. This belief will be transmitted to students and parents in everything you say and do. Students and parents trust you and will see your sincere efforts to help.

No surprise, the more you understand *Sirius Online*, the better you can use and appreciate our value in helping you support your students in learning the essential tested TEKS and practicing them in the exact ways they are tested in STAAR 2.0.

Yes, *Sirius Online* can be an efficient way to improve your students' STAAR performance. You are sharing with them a process for getting better at STAAR tested thinking. All students can improve and show progress.

When talking with parents, it can be helpful to know how they perceive STAAR and testing in general. Because STAAR is a requirement, we suggest avoiding negative talk about STAAR tests. We encourage teachers to focus on students and their needs and how STAAR focuses on answering questions with stimuli.

This is the same message you communicate to students: you are helping them learn and practice the thinking and rigor of STAAR. Complaining about STAAR to students can give them an excuse not to try their best and develop their capacities through hard work. And some students are looking for an excuse!



Sirius Companion Workbooks

Blended Learning That's Easy to Use

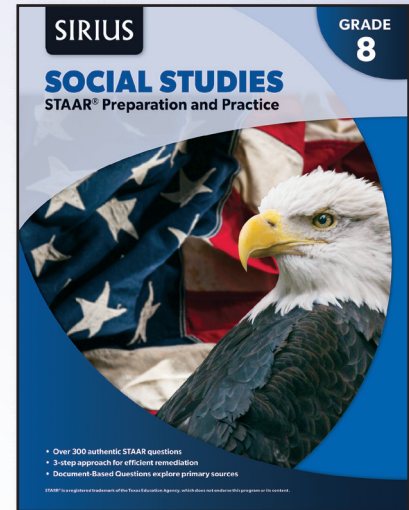
Sirius Online courses and our complementary print resources have similar organization and content so you can easily move between each medium, to adapt to best **serve the needs of your unique students**.

Many **struggling students often take greater ownership** of their learning when they can write in their OWN workbooks.

Additionally, students are better able to **transfer their thinking** processes to an online format when they see and experience the same content in both the print and online formats.

Sirius Online's **comprehensive courses integrate all** the content from our print-based workbooks and a full-length Practice Test. And with online resources, students get immediate feedback while teachers get auto scoring and powerful reporting.

You can register [here](#) to **examine our printed workbooks** as eBooks.



Sirius Online Is Research-Based

Sirius uses established research and design principles to ensure its resources are effective and easy to use to **support teachers in helping students** learn the essential TEKS and succeed on STAAR tests.

Sirius has partnered with McREL International to research the following expected outcomes.

McREL
INTERNATIONAL

Increased student:

- STAAR test performance
- Engagement and motivation with STAAR content
- Confidence in answering complex STAAR questions
- Self-efficacy about improving STAAR test performance

Sirius Education Solutions is conducting **ongoing user-experience** and **efficacy research** to continuously improve the student and educator experience.

Contact us to learn more and partner with us!