

What Do We Give Up?

An interdisciplinary six-week suite on trade-offs in civic and economic decision-making, mapped to the C3 Inquiry Arc with UDL designed in from the first draft rather than added at the end.

Grades 8–12 **Duration** 6 weeks, 18 sessions **Disciplines** Civics · Economics · History **Formats** Print and digital

Author Taylor Fox

About this document

This is a design document: the map I would put in front of a team before a line of student-facing copy gets written. I have built it at the level of specificity I would expect to defend in a scoping meeting, because a map that cannot survive questions about sequence, format, budget, and evaluation is not yet a map.

It draws on fifteen years teaching social studies, including AP U.S. History, AP World History, AP European History, AP Psychology, and U.S. Government; a full-year elective I designed and carried through University of California a-g subject-area review; standards alignment work across the College Board frameworks, California state standards, and Common Core literacy; and print production with a commercial vendor under a rights-holder agreement.

1. The problem this suite solves

Students arrive able to state positions and unable to price them. Ask a class whether a policy is good and you will get a show of hands in ten seconds. Ask what it costs, who pays, and what the second-best option was, and the room goes quiet. That gap is not a civics gap or an economics gap on its own. It sits between the two, which is why a single-discipline course keeps missing it.

Trade-off reasoning is the transferable move: every civic choice forecloses an alternative, and the alternative has a constituency. A student who can name what a policy gives up can argue with someone who disagrees without needing to believe that person is stupid or malicious. That is the skill this suite is built backward from, and it is the skill that makes civil discourse possible rather than merely polite.

COMPELLING QUESTION

When we choose one public good, what do we give up, and who decides that the trade is worth it?

2. C3 Inquiry Arc alignment

The C3 Framework organizes inquiry into four dimensions. This suite runs all four in sequence rather than sampling from them, so the arc is the spine of the map rather than a label applied to it afterward.

DIMENSION	WHAT THE SUITE DOES	WHERE IT LANDS
D1 Questions & Inquiries	Students receive the compelling question, then generate and prioritize their own supporting questions before any content is delivered. The four supporting questions below are the fallback set, used only if a class does not surface workable questions on its own.	Week 1
D2 Disciplinary Concepts	Opportunity cost, scarcity, incentives, and marginal thinking from economics. Federalism, enumerated and reserved powers, and the concept of a constituency from civics. Both are taught as tools for answering the question, not as a vocabulary unit.	Weeks 2–3
D3 Sources & Evidence	Students work a source set that deliberately contains good-faith disagreement: budget documents, two opposing op-eds, an agency impact statement, and one primary source from an affected group. Sourcing is taught as a reliability judgment, not an attribution exercise.	Weeks 3–4

DIMENSION	WHAT THE SUITE DOES	WHERE IT LANDS
D4 Communicating & Taking Action	A public deliberation in which students must argue a position they did not choose, followed by an individual written recommendation to a named decision-maker with the trade-off stated explicitly.	Weeks 5–6

Supporting questions

- What does this choice cost, and who pays that cost rather than the people who benefit?
- What was the next-best option, and why was it not taken?
- Which level of government decides this, and what happens to the answer if a different level decides?
- What would have to be true for someone who disagrees with me to be reasoning honestly?

3. Scope, sequence, and progression

Coherence in a suite is a claim about escalation, not about topical coverage. Each week here raises exactly one demand and holds the others steady, so a teacher can see what is new and a student can see what is now expected without support.

WEEK	FOCUS	NEW DEMAND INTRODUCED	SCAFFOLD REMOVED
1	Trade-offs in daily choice	Name the thing given up, not just the thing chosen	None. Everything modeled.
2	Scarcity, incentives, marginal thinking	Apply an economic concept to a case you have not seen	Worked example withdrawn
3	Who decides, and at what level	Identify the decision-maker and the constituency that bears the cost	Concept glossary moves from desk to wall
4	Reading sources in conflict	Judge reliability from the author's position, not from agreement	Sourcing sentence frame withdrawn
5	Deliberation	Argue a position you were assigned and do not hold	Prep notes permitted, script not
6	Written recommendation	Commit to a position and name its cost in the same paragraph	All scaffolds off. Exam conditions.

4. Universal Design for Learning

UDL is a design constraint here, not an accommodation appendix. The standard does not move: every student produces the same written recommendation against the same criteria in week 6. What varies is access to the content and the route through it.

Multiple means of engagement

Students choose the policy case their group investigates from three prepared dossiers at equal difficulty. Choice sits over subject matter, never over rigor. The deliberation assigns positions rather than letting students self-select, which removes the social cost of holding an unpopular view.

Multiple means of representation

Every source in the set exists at two reading levels carrying identical argumentative content, plus audio. Twelve terms are pre-taught and stay visible. The budget documents are supplied both as tables and as a plain-language summary, since numeracy load is a separate barrier from reading load and should be removed separately.

Multiple means of action and expression

The final recommendation is written, and that is fixed, since the outcome is a written argument. Flexible: handwritten or typed, speech-to-text permitted, planning page available to anyone. Students who need to talk before writing may dictate to a partner and then revise.

Why designed in rather than added

The common failure is a unit that assigns product format by learning-styles inventory. Under that design a student can be routed to a non-writing product and never assessed on the stated outcome at all. UDL varies the route to one standard. Learning styles varies the standard and hides it. I audit my own materials for this, and it is the first thing I would look for in an inherited suite.

5. Print and digital deliverables

A suite that exists in two formats is two products with one argument, and the split has to be decided at the map stage. The rule I use: print carries anything a student marks up or a teacher hands out under time pressure; digital carries anything that updates, branches, or needs to be current.

COMPONENT	PRINT	DIGITAL
Teacher guide	72pp perfect-bound, includes the full source set and answer guidance	PDF with linked cross-references; revisable without a reprint
Student source set	24pp saddle-stitched consumable, two reading levels, wide margin for annotation	Accessible HTML, screen-reader tested, audio for every source
Policy case dossiers	Three 8pp inserts, illustrated	Updated annually; this is the component that dates fastest
Deliberation protocol	Single-sheet card, laminated, one per group	Timer and role-rotation tool
Assessment	Prompt sheet and analytic rubric	Rubric as a fillable form; optional item bank
Teacher onboarding	Two-page quick start inside the guide cover	Four short videos, one per C3 dimension

6. Production schedule and external collaborators

Dates are relative to a kickoff at week 0. The illustration and print milestones sit early on purpose, since a printer's proof cycle is the least compressible thing in the schedule and the one most likely to be discovered late.

WEEKS	MILESTONE	WHO IS INVOLVED BEYOND THE CURRICULUM TEAM
0–2	Needs assessment and gap scan against what is already available to teachers	Subject-matter scholars, two classroom reviewers
2–4	Map approved, compelling question and assessment locked	Scholars for content review
4–9	Draft of all six weeks; source set cleared for permissions	Rights and permissions, contributing writers
7–11	Illustration brief issued and art direction reviewed	Illustrator, designer
10–13	Copyedit and proofread against the map, not just the prose	Editor
12–15	Layout, then two printer proof cycles with a hard cutoff	Designer, print vendor
14–16	Accessibility pass on digital; video capture	Digital team, accessibility reviewer
16–18	Pilot in three classrooms; revision log opened	Pilot teachers

Where my experience of this is real

I have run the print half of this cycle. I produced a 16-page program through a commercial print vendor with a full proof cycle, under a licensing agreement with the rights holder, and on a schedule fixed by an opening night that could not move. I have managed production budgets and vendor invoicing across multiple productions, and I have art-directed original illustration. That is a smaller scale than a curriculum suite and a genuinely different subject, and the transferable part is the same: a proof cycle, a rights clearance, an illustrator, and a deadline set by someone other than me.

7. Evaluation plan

Evaluation appears three times in this role's responsibilities, and it is usually the weakest section of a curriculum plan because it gets written as a satisfaction survey. What follows separates whether teachers liked it from whether students could do the thing.

QUESTION	EVIDENCE	DECISION IT DRIVES
Can students do it?	Week 6 recommendations scored against the analytic rubric, compared to a week 1 baseline on the same criteria	Whether the sequence works, or which week is carrying too much
Did it get taught as designed?	Pilot teacher logs recording what was cut and why	What to shorten. A component cut by every pilot teacher is a design problem, not a fidelity problem.
Where did it break?	Item-level analysis of which rubric criterion failed most often	Which scaffold comes off too early
Would they use it again?	Adoption at the start of the following year, not end-of-pilot satisfaction	Whether to scale the suite or fix it first

One methodological note, since it is the kind of thing that is easier to build in than to retrofit. Small pilots produce small cells, and a rubric criterion crossed against a demographic variable in a three-classroom pilot can identify individual students. I set a suppression rule before the first table is built rather than after.

8. Two things this suite deliberately does not do

It does not teach students what to conclude. The source sets are built to contain honest disagreement, and the deliberation assigns positions rather than inviting students to defend the one they arrived with. A suite that produced uniform conclusions would have failed at the thing it claims to teach.

It does not cover the disciplinary content of a full civics or economics course. Six weeks buys one transferable reasoning move applied to four concepts. Naming that boundary is what keeps the suite from being adopted for a job it will not do.

C3 INQUIRY ARC

UDL

CURRICULUM MAPPING

INTERDISCIPLINARY

PRINT AND DIGITAL

BACKWARD DESIGN

CIVIL DISCOURSE

EVALUATION DESIGN

Taylor Fox · Curriculum Strategist · foxcurriculum.com

Prepared as a work sample, August 2026. Frameworks applied are the C3 Framework for Social Studies State Standards (National Council for the Social Studies) and Universal Design for Learning (CAST). Neither is mine; the application is.