



# ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES



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UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS  
*for*  
**SOCIAL STUDIES**

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by the  
Utah State Board of Education

Utah State Board of Education  
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# UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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# Utah Elementary Social Studies Standards

Elementary students are deeply curious and full of questions. They may ask, “How did people build those things?” or “Why can’t countries seem to get along?” or even “How can I make a difference in the world?” One place they can find answers is in social studies. Social Studies is the study of the physical world and our place in it, which involves oral traditions, biographies, dances, artifacts, writings and original documents, and other aspects of culture that comprise the record of human life.

Effective social studies instruction in the elementary classroom encourages this inherent curiosity of young people. A firm grounding in rich and engaging content knowledge about history, geography, civics, and economics lifts learning for all students. This rich content knowledge — coupled with essential skills development — helps students deepen their understanding of the world around them. This deeper understanding will also help reach a central overarching goal of effective social studies instruction: to help young people develop civic competence including the ability to make informed decisions for the public good.

Developing civic competence is one of the fundamental purposes of public schools. The Utah State Board of Education’s [vision statement](#) strives for the civic engagement of students, as well as civic education. Utah [statute](#) defines civic education as “the cultivation of informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of representative democracy in Utah and the United States.” A thorough study of American history and government is an essential component of responsible citizenship.

The future progress of our communities, state, nation, and world rests upon the preparation of young people to collaboratively and deliberately address problems, defend their own rights and liberties — as well as the rights and liberties of others — and to balance personal preferences with the common good. *E pluribus unum*, or “out of many one,” emphasizes the idea that a varied and diverse people contribute to a unifying national identity. This rich phrase adds depth and understanding to our complex national history. Students are led to enquire about the character and talents of all Americans, which in turn promotes a greater understanding about their own individual contributions and the value they add to this nation.

Social studies offers the ideal venue to nurture civic virtue, consider current issues, practice acting civilly toward others, build a civic identity, bolster historical awareness of governmental structures, and cultivate global awareness. These skills, habits, and qualities of character will better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the liberties secured by the Constitution.

To reach these ends, students should have ample opportunities to:

- Engage in deliberative, collaborative, and civil dialogue regarding historical and current issues.
- Apply knowledge of governmental structure, historic concepts, geographic interrelationships, and economic principles to analyze and explain current events.
- Identify local, state, national, or international issues; consider solutions and understand who best can address the needs; and share their ideas with appropriate public and/or private stakeholders.
- Develop and demonstrate the values that sustain America’s constitutional democratic republic, such as open-mindedness, engagement, honesty, problem-solving, responsibility, diligence, resilience, empathy, self-control, respect for the beliefs of others, and cooperation, as well as its foundational principles, such as limited government, separation of state and federal governance, and free-market economy.
- Engage in dialogue regarding American exceptionalism in the sense of the special character of the United States as a free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty.

Civic competence requires an awareness of self and others. Social studies provides the underpinnings for civic awareness and action and exposes the history and wonders of cultures. Disciplines as varied as history, geography, economics, and civics provide clearer vision as students interpret, analyze, and make sense of the world. Access to and use of primary and secondary sources are foundational to understanding historical events. Ideas and concepts central to the purpose of public education are also central to social studies, among them the notion of the common good, the value of self-rule and self-determination, the dignity and necessity of honest labor, respect for parents, home, and family, the rights and responsibilities we humans share, and the interconnectedness of human endeavor. With their application of democratic processes, personal responsibility, and life skills, students will be prepared to protect the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, improving their lives and the lives of all members of society.

### The Organization of the Elementary Social Studies Standards

Utah standards are organized into **strands**, which represent significant areas of learning within content areas. Depending on the core area or grade level, these strands may be designated by time periods, thematic principles, modes of practice, or other organizing principles.

Within each strand are **standards**. A standard is an articulation of the demonstrated proficiency to be obtained. A standard represents an essential element of the learning that is expected. While some standards within a strand may be more comprehensive than others, all standards are essential for mastery.

**Compelling questions** have been included for possible use by teachers to support and reinforce the essential role of inquiry in social studies.

The Elementary Social Studies Standards use a modified “expanding environments” approach to social studies. This approach includes, each year, studies in history, geography, economics, civics, and United States history. As the grades progress, the focus of study expands, moving from classroom and neighborhood to the local community, the state, the nation, and the world. Basic civic virtues and components of United States history are built upon the foundations set the previous year. This allows for direct application of principles included in the [Utah Constitution](#) and Utah code. The core expectations deepen and expand, as appropriate, for each corresponding grade level.

Many exemplary lists of historical figures are included in the standards. Some lists are meant to be inclusive of specific historical figures as to create an equitable knowledge base of historical events for Utah’s school children. Other standards open the door to exploration and research of exemplary figures who exhibit excellence in music, science, government, religion, economics, or other areas articulated in the standards.

In **kindergarten**, social studies focuses on helping students learn about the world around them and what traits can be attributed to good citizenship. The Kindergarten Standards build on the [Early Learning Social Studies Standards](#) by helping students extend their understanding of the social structures and norms that create a community and their role as an active participant in that community.

In **first grade**, social studies expands students’ understanding of community to include their state and nation while they continue to consider their own role and begin to consider the roles of others in those communities. Students are further introduced to the idea of history — what it means and how it is shaped. Basic geographical concepts and skills are introduced, as well as basic economic principles.

In **second grade**, students consider continuity and change over time in their own community, the state, and the nation. They are introduced to chronology and timelines, as well as the concept of government. They will consider rights and responsibilities, conflict resolution, and respecting differences as they learn about celebrations, cultural events, and traditions of diverse people. Emphasis begins to be placed on the significance of geographical features and their effect on where and how people live. Map use and construction will build on the basics of geography that were learned in previous grades.

In **third grade**, students will be introduced to the United States Constitution. They will also learn about culture and community, focusing on their own local Utah community’s heritage as well as learning about the history, geography, governmental and economic structures, and cultures of other communities. They will study the interrelationships between physical geography and cultural development. They will also begin to learn about representative government and their personal civic responsibility in the classroom, community, and country.

In **fourth grade**, students continue to focus on the four essential social studies disciplines and apply them to their study of Utah. Students learn about significant events in Utah history, noting how successive cultural interactions have shaped the

story of the land now called Utah. Students will learn about the physical geography of Utah, and how the geography of Utah affects human life, including economic development. Fourth graders will also deepen their understanding of civics as they learn more about rights and responsibilities in Utah and how governments in Utah are organized. Inquiry into current events will help students make connections between the past and the present.

In **fifth grade**, the study of the United States is the focus. Students will explore significant eras in United States history — eras that paint in broad terms some of the significant themes of the story of America. They will also continue their study of geography, economics, and civics. Foundational principles of government that were learned in previous grades have prepared students for the depth and rigor of the Fifth Grade Standards, including understanding the role of limited government while articulating the purposes of state and federal governments. There is neither an intention nor a possibility of successful “coverage” of all of United States history and geography or all of the social, economic, and political movements that have helped create the story of America. Rather, students should “discover” and “uncover” this story. As students develop an understanding of key events relating to the basic chronology of United States history, the nation’s geography, and its economic history, they will be building a foundation that will serve them well in the years to come. Primary source documents and literature that recount the stories of people of exemplary character will help students understand their own place in the continuing chronicle of America.

In **sixth grade**, the focus of the standards expands to look at world history and culture. Knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades will prepare students for an introductory survey of world history and culture. Students will learn about regions of the world and the societies that have formed there, including their systems of governance, religion, the rights and responsibilities they held, how their societies have changed and continued over time, and how these regions are interconnected economically and geographically.

A chronological framework across grade levels helps reinforce the essential understandings of time, continuity, and change, and is intended to help build a conceptual scaffold for future study. Students will compare institutions common to all societies such as government, education, and religious institutions. Relevance is reinforced by connecting the past to current issues facing the world, as well as to potential opportunities for solutions.

Excitement, wonder, inquiry, and delight are central to meaningful learning in social studies. Social studies should be engaging and intriguing for all students and provide ample opportunities to make important life-long connections between the past, present, and future. Students who appreciate the sacrifices that have been made in the past and understand the challenges that lie ahead can make better decisions in the present.

The most important goal of Elementary Social Studies is an informed and well-lived life, in which students recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the United States Constitution.

# KINDERGARTEN

## KINDERGARTEN STRAND 1: HISTORY

Students will understand that history is the study of events, people, and places of other times.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- Who are the people in our families and communities that we honor? Why are these people honored and remembered? Whom do we honor in United States history?
  - Why are some events and people from history remembered?
  - What are some of the ways families and communities remain the same over time?
  - What are some of the ways families and communities change over time?
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- **Standard K.1.1:** Compare how people lived in earlier times and how their lives would be different today (for example, growing food, making clothing, living by different rules and laws).
  - **Standard K.1.2:** Use a variety of texts to analyze and retell the stories of a diverse range of key historical figures, including some from United States history, and make inferences about why they are remembered and honored as people who exemplify the traits of honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, respect, and obedience to law.
  - **Standard K.1.3:** Explain how families provide physical, social, and emotional support and how each family has its own unique history.

## KINDERGARTEN STRAND 2: GEOGRAPHY

Students will demonstrate knowledge of basic physical and human geographical concepts.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- What stories do maps and globes tell?
- What new things can we learn from studying maps?
- How do you find your place on a map?



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- **Standard K.2.1:** Construct a simple map, and explain how the map represents a place.
- **Standard K.2.2:** Explain how a globe is a model of the Earth.
- **Standard K.2.3:** Recognize and describe geographical features in their community that make it unique (for example, mountains, rivers, lakes, roads).
- **Standard K.2.4:** Describe and use relative location terms of objects (for example, left/right, above/below, up/down, near/far) while using maps and globes.

### KINDERGARTEN STRAND 3: CIVICS

Students will learn and exhibit traits of good citizenship.

#### *Compelling Questions:*

- Why are rules important? What can happen when rules are broken?
  - What are ways we feel like we belong and are welcome in our school and community?
  - What are your responsibilities at home and at school?
  - What purposes do symbols of our school, community, and country serve?
  - Who in your community promotes the welfare and safety of others?
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- **Standard K.3.1:** Describe some of the rules students or family members follow and why they are important as a member of a family, class, and school.
  - **Standard K.3.2:** List and describe the essential qualities needed to learn and work together as friends, neighbors, and family members (for example, honesty, integrity, morality, civility, duty, honor, service, respect, obedience to law).
  - **Standard K.3.3:** Identify ways that people work together to build a strong community (for example, parents, religious leaders, teachers and other school personnel, police officers, firefighters, soldiers, business owners).
  - **Standard K.3.4:** Explain why national, state, and other symbols and actions (including the United States flag, the Pledge of Allegiance, the bald eagle, the Utah flag) are considered important. What rules and traditions have been made to reflect that importance?

KINDERGARTEN STRAND 4: **ECONOMICS**

Students will identify basic economic concepts of needs, wants, spending, saving, sharing, and the value of work.

*Compelling Questions:*

- What happens when you have to choose between two things you need or want?
- How might saving money improve someone’s life in the future?
- Why do people save money?

- **Standard K.4.1:** Make distinctions between basic human needs and individual wants and how that can change over time.
- **Standard K.4.2** Relate how different types of work can help people and communities meet their needs and wants.
- **Standard K.4.3** Identify ways that people use money, including spending, saving, and sharing.