



# 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.

# THIRD GRADE

## THIRD GRADE STRAND 1: TYPES OF GOVERNMENT AND THE UNITED STATES AND UTAH CONSTITUTIONS

Students will learn about and compare different types of government. They will identify significant ideas in the United States and Utah Constitutions, as well as compare similarities and differences between the documents.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- How are the founding documents of the United States unique?
- How does the government protect individual rights?
- How does the Preamble reflect the Founding Fathers' expectations for the role of government?
- How are checks and balances applied in government?

- **Standard 3.1.1:** Discuss the basic differences between different forms of government, including a constitutional republic, a pure democracy, an oligarchy, and a monarchy.
- **Standard 3.1.2:** Explain why the first three words of the United States Constitution are vital to the workings of representative government.
- **Standard 3.1.3:** Summarize how the Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land, and explain how laws provide order and stability.
- **Standard 3.1.4:** Identify the rights protected by the First Amendment in the Bill of Rights, and analyze how those rights affect them.
- **Standard 3.1.5:** Explain how the Constitution balances power between the three branches of government at both the state and federal levels (checks and balances).

## THIRD GRADE STRAND 2: YOUR COMMUNITY

Students analyze the communities in which they live, including geography, relative size, and interdependent relationships.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- What are some of the different communities to which you belong?

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- What is your culture?
  - What do communities need to thrive?
  - What are some unique aspects of your community?
  - How has your community changed or remained the same with the passage of time and why?
- **Standard 3.2.1:** Locate their community, city or town, state, country, and continent on print and digital maps of the earth, and contrast their sizes and the relationships in scale.
  - **Standard 3.2.2:** Describe how geography (that is, physical features and natural resources) has shaped where and how their community developed, how it sustains itself, and how it will sustain itself in the future.
  - **Standard 3.2.3:** Define their own cultures or the cultures of their communities (for example, art, music, food, dance, system of writing, architecture, government to which they are regularly exposed or of which they are part).
  - **Standard 3.2.4:** Evaluate how their community has changed over time (for example, economic interdependence, changes to the environment).

### THIRD GRADE STRAND 3: YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES AS A COMMUNITY MEMBER

Students delineate their civic rights and responsibilities as members of their community and the limits to their rights when they conflict with the rights of others. Students are introduced to the concepts of civil rights, public virtue, and civic engagement.

#### *Compelling Questions:*

- What do you like about your community? Are there changes you would like to make?
  - Who decides what your community is like?
  - How can you demonstrate respect for others in your community?
  - How has your community improved, and how can you help your community continue to improve?
  - How are your local leaders chosen, and how does your community assure that its leaders do what your community wants and/or needs?
- **Standard 3.3.1:** Analyze how their community has been shaped by the diverse people who have resided within it. Compare primary

and secondary sources (when available) from or about these people.

- **Standard 3.3.2:** Reflect upon the processes used to address needs and reach solutions within their family, their classroom, or other groups of which they are a part. Compare those to the democratic processes used to address needs and reach solutions within their communities.
- **Standard 3.3.3:** Research improvements that have been made in their community over time (for example, schools, roads, emergency services, utilities, jobs, recreation, libraries, clean environment, protection of civil rights).
- **Standard 3.3.4:** Describe some of the civic roles that people fulfill within their community, and explain the reasons why people choose to serve in those roles and how they benefit the community.
- **Standard 3.3.5:** Explain how their community's leaders are elected or appointed and effective ways to work together with them to improve the community.
- **Standard 3.3.6:** Describe why governments collect taxes and how they decide how to use them.
- **Standard 3.3.7:** Discuss how the choices of individuals and leaders affect their community and its future (for example, supporting local businesses, volunteering, voting).
- **Standard 3.3.8:** Collaborate with peers to address a need in their local community through service.

### THIRD GRADE STRAND 4 : **CONNECTING YOUR COMMUNITY TO THE WORLD**

Students learn about one or more communities in other regions of the world. Students use what they have learned in the first three Strands about their own community as a basis for comparison. These communities could reflect the diverse heritage of class members and community members.

***Compelling Questions:***

- How is your community both alike and different from other communities in other parts of the world?
- Where are these other communities located and how do their locations affect people's lives?
- Why do other communities have different cultures and systems of government?

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- **Standard 3.4.1:** Choose a community outside of the United States. Locate that community on both print and digital maps of the Earth, their continent, country, and city or town, and contrast their sizes and the relationships in scale.
- **Standard 3.4.2:** Research the geography (that is, physical features and natural resources) of the community they chose in 3.4.1, and make inferences regarding how the geography influenced the cultures that have developed there.
- **Standard 3.4.3:** Define the cultures of the community they chose in 3.4.1 (for example, art, music, food, dance, system of writing, architecture, government, religion).
- **Standard 3.4.4:** Examine the types of government found in the community they chose in 3.4.1, and compare them with the government of their community (for example, how community leaders are selected, how the government maintains order, keeps people safe, and makes and enforces rules and laws; the role of a community member; the inclusion of immigrants).
- **Standard 3.4.5:** Examine how and why the community they chose in 3.4.1 has adapted to and/or modified its environment over time, and identify the consequences of these environmental changes.