



# ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES



---

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

---

Adopted December 2022  
by the  
Utah State Board of Education

Utah State Board of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

Sydney Dickson, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

[www.schools.utah.gov](http://www.schools.utah.gov)



# UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

250 East 500 South P. O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200  
<https://schools.utah.gov/board>

<i>District</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>City</i>
District 1	<b>Jennie L. Earl</b>	Morgan, UT
District 2	<b>Scott L. Hansen</b>	Liberty, UT
District 3	<b>Matt Hymas</b>	Stansbury Park, UT
District 4	<b>Brent J. Strate</b>	South Ogden, UT
District 5	<b>Laura Belnap</b>	Bountiful, UT
District 6	<b>Stacey Hutchings</b>	Kearns, UT
District 7	<b>Carol Barlow Lear</b>	Salt Lake City, UT
District 8	<b>Janet A. Cannon</b>	Holladay, UT
District 9	<b>Cindy Davis</b>	Cedar Hills, UT
District 10	<b>Molly Hart</b>	Sandy, UT
District 11	<b>Natalie Cline</b>	Bluffdale, UT
District 12	<b>James Moss Jr.</b>	Midway, UT
District 13	<b>Randy Boothe</b>	Spanish Fork, UT
District 14	<b>Mark Huntsman</b>	Fillmore, UT
District 15	<b>Kristan Norton</b>	St. George, UT
	<b>Sydnee Dickson</b>	State Superintendent of Public Instruction
	<b>Cybil Child</b>	Secretary to the Board

# 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.

## FIFTH GRADE

FIFTH GRADE STRAND 1: **THE IMPACTS OF GEOGRAPHY AND HUMAN INTERACTION IN NORTH AMERICA (PRE-CONTACT TO EARLY COLONIZATION)**

Students will understand how geography had a major impact on the more than 500 tribes and over 50 million indigenous people living in North America prior to European exploration, as well as how it affected methods of exploration. They will evaluate how the Age of Exploration and early colonization opened the way for the global movement of ideas, innovations, foods, and values and how the world was affected in ways that we can still see today.

***Compelling Questions:***

- How did geography help shape the lives of Native Americans and early explorers?
  - What were some of the most significant ways Native Americans interacted with European colonists?
  - Why did different groups who were in North America during this time experience varying degrees of freedom?
  - How did spirituality and ritual shape the lives of Native American individuals and communities?
- 
- **Standard 5.1.1:** Cite examples to illustrate how the physical geography of North America (for example, landforms, seasons, weather, bodies of water) influenced the lives of Native American tribal groups.
  - **Standard 5.1.2:** Identify ideas, innovations, and contributions of Native Americans that have had a lasting impact on human civilization (for example, agriculture, respect for the earth and environment, inventions, fashion, art, government, language, medicines, ritual and ceremony).
  - **Standard 5.1.3:** Use maps and primary/secondary sources to evaluate the push and pull factors that led to exploration and colonization of North America (for example, fleeing persecution, enslavement, economic advancement, indentured servitude, religious freedom/isolationism).



## UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS for SOCIAL STUDIES

- **Standard 5.1.4:** Describe how conflicts over land, trade, and alliances sometimes arose during colonization in North America (for example, Bacon’s Rebellion, King Philip’s War, the French and Indian War).

### FIFTH GRADE STRAND 2: ROAD TO SELF-GOVERNMENT

Students will examine British colonial policies that led colonists to becoming Loyalists, Patriots, or neutral leading up to the American Revolution. They will recognize how the actions of key individuals influenced the outcome of the Revolution. Students will explain how the colonists prevailed in gaining their independence and summarize significant ideas in the Declaration of Independence.

#### *Compelling Questions:*

- What motivated some groups to be revolutionary, some to be loyalists, and others to be neutral?
  - In what ways was the American Revolution a war of ideas?
  - Under what circumstances did the Declaration of Independence justify rebellion?
  - What are factors that may lead to victory in war?
- **Standard 5.2.1:** Use primary sources to craft an argument representing different perspectives during the period leading to the American Revolution (for example, men and women who were Loyalists, Patriots, Native Americans, enslaved people).
  - **Standard 5.2.2:** Summarize the most significant ideas found in the Declaration of Independence.
  - **Standard 5.2.3:** Explain how the actions of key individuals and groups influenced the outcome of the American Revolution (for example, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, Thomas Paine, Benjamin Franklin, Mercy Warren, Alexander Hamilton, King George III, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy, Marquis De Lafayette, Phillis Wheatley).
  - **Standard 5.2.4:** Use evidence from primary and secondary sources to craft an argument that explains how the American colonists prevailed over one of the world’s most powerful empires.

### FIFTH GRADE STRAND 3: UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT AND CITIZENSHIP

Students will demonstrate their understanding of the Constitution and its relevance in their lives, including the Bill of Rights, the branches of government, and how the Constitution has changed and been interpreted over time.

*Compelling Questions*

- What civil rights and liberties are included in the Constitution and Bill of Rights?
  - How have the rights and liberties in the Constitution been interpreted and applied to different groups over time?
  - What is the purpose of the three branches of government, and how do they interact?
- **Standard 5.3.1:** Use examples from the Constitution to investigate and explain the development, general purpose, and significant foundational principles of the United States government (a compound constitutional republic), as well as earlier documents and philosophies used to help develop the Constitution (for example, the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, Articles of Confederation, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy).
  - **Standard 5.3.2:** Apply the ideals found in the Preamble of the United States Constitution to historic and current events and issues.
  - **Standard 5.3.3:** Explain why the Founders established a compound constitutional republic with three branches, and cite historic and current examples of checks and balances.
  - **Standard 5.3.4:** Explain the significance of the Bill of Rights, and identify the impact of one of these amendments in history, a current event, and/or your daily life.
  - **Standard 5.3.5:** Investigate how constitutional amendments are passed, and provide examples of how amendments to the Constitution have extended rights to groups originally denied protection under the Constitution (for example, women, enslaved people, immigrants, Black Americans, Native Americans).
  - **Standard 5.3.6:** Describe the civic duties members of American society have today (for example, voting, holding public office, jury duty).

FIFTH GRADE STRAND 4: 19TH CENTURY—A TIME OF CHANGE

Students will analyze changes brought by Westward Expansion, the Industrial Revolution, and the movement of people. They will understand the effects of this expansion and movement on Native American people and the preservation of those communities while facing adversity. Students will examine how conflicts and division led to the United States Civil War and the lasting impacts of its outcome.

*Compelling Questions*

- What were some of the impacts of Westward Expansion?

## UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS for SOCIAL STUDIES

- Why did the North and South go to war?
- How did the Industrial Revolution change our country?

- **Standard 5.4.1:** Use evidence from multiple perspectives (for example, pioneers, 49ers, Black Americans, Chinese Americans, Native Americans, new immigrants, people experiencing religious persecution) to make a case for the most significant social, economic, and environmental changes brought about by Westward Expansion and the Industrial Revolution.
- **Standard 5.4.2:** Use primary sources to explain the driving forces for why people immigrated and emigrated during the 19th century, as well as the ways that movement changed the nation.
- **Standard 5.4.3:** Summarize the impacts of forced relocation and assimilation on Native American people and how they have preserved their communities in the face of such adversity.
- **Standard 5.4.4:** Use primary and secondary sources to compare how differences in economics, politics, and culture (for example, slavery, political and economic competition in Western territories) between the North and South led to the United States Civil War.
- **Standard 5.4.5:** Explain how the actions of key individuals and groups influenced the outcome of the Civil War (for example, Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Clara Barton, Robert E. Lee, Ulysses S. Grant, Stonewall Jackson, William Tecumseh Sherman, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Rose O’Neal Greenhow, Frederick Douglass, Harriet Tubman).
- **Standard 5.4.6:** Use evidence from primary and secondary sources to craft an argument that explains how the United States of America prevailed over the Confederate States of America in the United States Civil War.
- **Standard 5.4.7:** Identify the Civil War’s most important outcomes (for example, end of slavery, Reconstruction, expanded role of the federal government, industrial growth in the North), and explain how outcomes of the Civil War continue to resonate today.

### FIFTH GRADE STRAND 5: 20TH CENTURY TO NOW (MODERN AMERICA: SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ECONOMIC CHANGES, MODERN WARFARE, AND CURRENT EVENTS)

Students will examine impactful conflicts, moments, movements, communities, and people of the 21st century. They will analyze the role of the United States as a world power and the effects of its territorial and colonial expansion.

*Compelling Questions:*

- What makes an event historically significant and worthy of remembering?
- Have the benefits of leading on the world stage outweighed the costs for the United States?
- How do social movements form and grow?
- What are the benefits of learning about communities that are different from our own?
- How did the United States' territorial expansion affect the people native to those lands?

- **Standard 5.5.1:** Compare the motivations for and desired outcomes of U.S. entry into two or more of the wars of the 20th and 21st centuries.
- **Standard 5.5.2:** Compare the motivations for and desired outcomes of the entry of the United States into World War I and World War II.
- **Standard 5.5.3:** Craft an evidence-based argument for why a particular event should be considered the most significant moment in United States history from 1900–now (for example, Stock Market Crash of 1929, Great Depression, Voting Rights Act of 1965, terrorist attack on 9/11, the launch of the Internet).
- **Standard 5.5.4:** Make an evidence-based claim about the role the United States should play as a world power and leader in solving current global problems.

FIFTH GRADE STRAND 6: **CURRENT NATIONAL ISSUES AND POTENTIAL SOLUTIONS**

Students will understand current national issues and explore their rights and responsibilities as citizens and residents of the United States.

*Compelling Questions:*

- What are the most pressing issues facing the United States today?
  - What are some of the ways students your age can help to make a positive difference?
  - Who are some of the most inspiring people working to make positive change in the United States?
- **Standard 5.6.1:** Investigate and report on current pressing issues facing the United States, and propose potential solutions that they can support (for example, raising awareness through digital media, energy and resource conservation, letter writing, fundraising).

## UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS for SOCIAL STUDIES

- **Standard 5.6.2:** Evaluate the methods and impact of individuals and/or groups making positive changes in the United States today as models for civic engagement.
- **Standard 5.6.3:** Connect the causes and lasting effects of at least two social movements and their leaders in the 20th Century (for example, the Women’s Suffrage Movement, labor unions, the Civil Rights Movement, child labor reforms).
- **Standard 5.6.4:** Research and summarize the accomplishments and contributions of a minority community in the United States today.