

# Family Guides to Support Learning

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE

Parents and caregivers want their middle schoolers to succeed in school – to be engaged and excited about learning; to build strong relationships with their teachers and peers; and to learn each year the knowledge and skills they need to be successful academically.

But it hasn't always been easy for parents and caregivers to figure out what children should know and be able to do by the end of each grade – and how to discuss these topics with their children and their teachers.

Moreover, while families are usually able to help if kids get stuck in the early grades, the content gets more challenging as students get older. Suddenly, parents and caregivers may feel like they don't have much help to offer. But that's not the case. Research confirms that families still have a big role to play in helping students learn. It's just a different role.

In addition to providing encouragement, a study of more than 50,000 students found that relating what middle and high school kids are learning in school to their future life goals is one of the most effective ways families can help. What doesn't work? Trying to be directly involved with schoolwork. It can feel to middle school students like you're interfering or even confusing them. And this IS the time to encourage students to take more responsibility and be more independent; helping them take charge of their learning is important.

These Family Guides provide parents and caregivers with the information and tools they need to support their children academically in social studies. With these Guides, families can engage more deeply in their middle schoolers' education, advocate for them, and build partnerships with their teachers – thus developing the strong bond between students, families, and teachers that ensures kids thrive.

<sup>1</sup>Harvard Graduate School of Education (2009). Hill: Parents need to link schoolwork to future goals.  
<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/09/05/hill-parents-need-link-schoolwork-future-goals>.

# JUNIOR HIGH Social Studies



**Santa Barbara Unified**  
Every child, every chance, every day.

## THIS GUIDE INCLUDES

- **What junior high students are learning** – What experts say is the most important content (knowledge and skills) for students to learn in social studies by the end of junior high.
- **Talking about Social Studies with your junior high student** – Ways families can talk with their junior high student about what they are learning in school and find related materials.
- **Tips for talking with teachers** – How you and your child's teachers can work together to help students grow.
- **Tools and resources** – websites you can visit with your student for further learning



**STUDENT  
ACHIEVEMENT  
PARTNERS**



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## WORLD HISTORY: WHAT 7TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING

Students in the 7th grade study the social, political, economic, cultural, and religious changes that occurred throughout the world during the period between 27 B.C.E. and 1789 C.E.. After reviewing the ancient world, students study the history and geography of the great civilizations of Rome, China, Japan, Africa, The Middle East, Medieval /Early Modern Europe, as well as the American empires of the Maya, Aztec and Inca.

- Students will develop basic geographic literacy, reading, and writing skills, with an emphasis on understanding cause and effect relationships, trends, and repetitive themes in history.
- In addition to studying how to respond to essay questions and to write creatively, students experience hands-on learning as they analyze artifacts, examine primary source materials, role play, engage in simulation activities, and work cooperatively.
- Students analyze primary and secondary sources to learn the history of peoples from around the world as well as understanding the authors' points of view.
- Students complete writing assignments including multi-paragraph essays, arguments focused on discipline-specific content, informational / explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, personal reflections, summaries, and short research projects to answer a question, using several sources to generate more specific questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- Students engage in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on each others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Technology is integrated into the curriculum with online, interactive assignments and assessments, multimedia presentations, and online research including analyzing the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats and explaining how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue.



## TALKING ABOUT SOCIAL STUDIES WITH YOUR 7TH GRADER

- Encourage your 7th grader to watch the news, read magazines or newspapers, or find news in other ways. Talk about world events they learn about. Current events do not happen in a vacuum, but stem from past (historical) events.
- Encourage your 7th grader to read historical fiction or other novels, historical graphic novels, or nonfiction books set outside the United States. Exposure to other cultures will provide essential background to their studies.
- Pick a topic in world history or the current world to learn about together. Read books, look online, or do short research projects together.
- Ask what they learned in their class. Have them present or share with you, with friends, or with other family members.
- Listen to podcasts together, or encourage your student to listen to podcasts of their choice and tell you about what they discover. There are a wide range of podcasts available.



## TIPS FOR TALKING WITH TEACHERS

- What are my 7th grader's strengths, and how do you use them in instruction?
- How do you select topics? Will my 7th grader see historical figures, events, and topics that represent them, their background, and their identity? Will they learn new perspectives and about new and diverse characters through the texts you use in the classroom?
- What topics are 7th graders learning about? What should my student be able to understand, write, and talk about as a result of what they have learned?
- What opportunities does my 7th grader have to choose topics that interest them? Are they limited to a specific topics or are they allowed to choose topics based?
- Is my 7th grader able to write in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning? Are they able to use evidence from historical texts, present their responses in detail, and write with sufficient depth? How can I help?
- Is my 7th grader able to speak and listen in class discussions and conversations in ways that show you they understand what they are reading and learning? Do they use evidence from historical texts, present their responses in detail, and speak with sufficient depth? If not, what challenges are they facing?
- How can I support and encourage my 7th grader to build a strong relationship with you and take age-appropriate responsibility for their own learning?

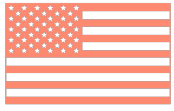
## TOOLS AND RESOURCES



- California Social Studies Framework for 7th grade <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfchapter11.pdf>
- Activities and games related to world geography (the site has ads) <https://www.sporcle.com/search/quizzes/?s=world+maps>
- The History Channel has many interesting videos relating to world history <https://www.history.com/>



## U.S. HISTORY: WHAT 8TH GRADERS ARE LEARNING



Students will follow the development of the United States political system by tracing the growth of its governmental institutions, historical problems, conflicts, and current issues. Beginning with an overview of American history from the arrival of the first Americans to the end of the Revolutionary War, students will begin an in depth study of the American Constitution, Manifest Destiny, Slavery, the Civil War and Reconstruction, the rise of Industrialism, and Progressivism. Emphasis is placed on the contributions of many minority groups which make up the American people.

- Students analyze primary and secondary sources to learn the history of various groups within the United States as well as understanding the authors' points of view.
- Students complete writing assignments including multi-paragraph essays, arguments focused on discipline-specific content, informational / explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events, personal reflections, summaries, and short research projects to answer a question, using several sources to generate more specific questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.
- Students engage in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners, building on each others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- Technology is integrated into the curriculum with online, interactive assignments and assessments, multimedia presentations, and online research including analyzing the main ideas and supporting details presented in diverse media and formats and explaining how the ideas clarify a topic, text, or issue.



## TALKING ABOUT SOCIAL STUDIES WITH YOUR 8TH GRADER

- Encourage your 8th grader to watch the news, read magazines or newspapers, or find news in other ways. Talk about events taking place in California or the United States. Current events do not happen in a vacuum, but stem from past (historical) events.
- Encourage your 8th grader to read historical fiction or other novels, historical graphic novels, or nonfiction books set in the United States. Exposure to our history will provide essential background to their studies.
- Pick a topic in US history or current events to learn about together. Read books, look online, or do short research projects together.
- Ask what they learned in their class. Have them present or share with you, with friends, or with other family members.
- Listen to podcasts together, or encourage your student to listen to podcasts of their choice and tell you about what they discover. There are a wide range of podcasts available.



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## TOOLS AND RESOURCES



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- Activities and games related to US geography (the site has ads) <https://www.sporcle.com/search/quizzes/?s=us+maps>
- The History Channel has many interesting videos relating to US history <https://www.history.com/>