Curriculum & Instruction

SUMMIT PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Content Area: Social Studies
Course: We the Students
Grade(s): 8

Course Overview

Overview:
The 8th grade social studies program will provide students with a thorough, relevant, and engaging standards-based curriculum that focuses on United States government, civics, and current events from around the globe. It will emphasize problem-based learning experiences, 21st century skills, and literacy across the content areas in a supportive, challenging environment for all students.

New Jersey State Learning Standards

Summit Public Schools curriculum aligns with the New Jersey Student Learning Standards.

Content Area Standards:

- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.1:** Evaluate, take, and defend a position on why government is necessary, and the purposes government should serve.
- **6.2.8.CivicsDP.4.a:** Cite evidence of the influence of medieval English legal and constitutional practices on modern democratic thought and institutions.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.2:** Evaluate the extent to which different forms of government reflect the history and values of various societies.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.1:** Analyze primary sources to explain how democratic ideas in the United States developed from historical experiences.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.2:** Evaluate the effectiveness of fundamental principles of the Constitution.
- **6.1.8.CivicsHR.3.a:** Explain how and why constitutional civil liberties were impacted by acts of government during the Early Republic.
- **6.1.8.HistoryCC.3.d:** Compare and contrast the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution.
- **6.1.8.CivicsPD.3.a:** Cite evidence to determine the role that compromise played in the creation and adoption of the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

- **6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.d:** Use data to determine how demographics influenced the debate on representation in Congress (NJ vs. VA plans).
- **6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.b:** Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution.
- **6.1.8.CivicsPI.3.a:** Evaluate the extent to which different forms of government and political structures reflect the values and needs of various societies.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.5:** Engage in simulated democratic processes to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.7:** Compare how ideas become laws at local, state, and national levels.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.2:** Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate level of government.
- **6.3.8.CivicsDP.2:** Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and the limitations of First Amendment rights (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court decisions).
- **6.3.8.CivicsDP.3:** Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.3:** Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue and share this information with a governmental or nongovernmental organization as a way to gain support for addressing the issue.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPI.4:** Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people's lives and share this information with individuals who might benefit from this information
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.1:** Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPD.3:** Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.
- **6.3.8.CivicsDP.:** Identify an issue of inequality, develop multiple solutions, and communicate the best one to an appropriate government body.
- **6.3.8.CivicsHR.:** Construct an argument as to the source of human rights and how they are best protected.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.3:** Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict, such as liberty and equality.
- **6.3.8.CivicsPR.4:** Use evidence and quantitative data to propose or defend a public policy related to climate change.

Interdisciplinary Standards:

- W.AW.8.1. Write arguments on discipline-specific content (e.g., social studies, science, technical subjects, English/Language Arts) to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.
- W.IW.8.2. Write informative/explanatory texts (including the narration of historical events, scientific procedures/ experiments, or technical processes) to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

- SL.PE.8.1. Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
- SL.II.8.2. Analyze the purpose of information presented in diverse media and formats (e.g., visually, quantitatively, orally) and evaluate the motives (e.g., social, commercial, political) behind its presentation.
- SL.UM.8.5. Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.
- SL.PI.8.4. Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

Career Readiness, Life Literacies and Key Skills Standards:

- 9.4.5.IML.1: Evaluate digital sources for accuracy, perspective, credibility and relevance (e.g., Social Studies Practice - Gathering and Evaluating Sources).
- 9.4.5.IML.2: Create a visual representation to organize information about a problem or issue (e.g., 4.MD.B.4, 8.1.5.DA.3).
- 9.4.5.IML.4: Determine the impact of implicit and explicit media messages on individuals, groups, and society as a whole.
- 9.4.5.IML.6: Use appropriate sources of information from diverse sources, contexts, disciplines, and cultures to answer questions (e.g., RI.5.7, 6.1.5.HistoryCC.7, 7.1.NM. IPRET.5)

Career Ready Practices

CRP 1. Act as a responsible and contributing citizen and employee.
CRP 2. Apply appropriate academic and technical skills.
CRP 3. Attend to personal health and financial well-being.
CRP 4. Communicate clearly and effectively and with reason.
CRP 5. Consider the environmental, social and economic impacts of decisions.
CRP 6. Demonstrate creativity and innovation.
CRP 7. Employ valid and reliable research strategies.
CRP 8. Utilize critical thinking to make sense of problems and persevere in solving them.
CRP 9. Model integrity, ethical leadership and effective management.
CRP 10. Plan education and career paths aligned to personal goals.
CRP 11. Use technology to enhance productivity.
CRP 12. Work productively in teams while using cultural global competence

New Jersey Curriculum Mandates:

This curriculum integrates lessons that address the following interdisciplinary New Jersey Curriculum Mandates:

- Diversity and Inclusion (Grades K - 12)
- Holocaust & Genocide Education (Grades K - 12)
- Amistad Act (Grades K - 12)
- Climate Change Education (Grades K - 12)
- Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (Grades K - 12)
- History and Contributions of Individuals with Disabilities and LGBTQ persons (6 - 12)

Learning Objectives

Learning objectives are clear, specific statements that define what students should know, understand, and be able to do.

- Identify and explain the four main theories of the origin of state/government (Force, Divine Right, Evolutionary, Social Contract).
- Analyze and differentiate the five basic purposes of government: Protection, Maintenance of Public Order, Resolution of Social Conflicts, Economic Stability, and Public Services.
- Compare and contrast the philosophical perspectives of Enlightenment thinkers (e.g., Thomas Hobbes and John Locke) regarding human nature and the Social Contract.
- Evaluate various systems and forms of government operating worldwide (monarchies, dictatorships, direct/indirect democracies, oligarchies, theocracies, and anarchy).
- Analyze the foundational principles of representative democracy and the rule of law in the United States.
- Examine mechanisms that limit governmental authority and safeguard individual liberties.
- Apply foundational civic concepts to contemporary national and global events.
- Trace the historical sequence of events leading to the Constitutional Convention, including the failures of the Articles of Confederation.
- Analyze the major debates and compromises negotiated during the Constitutional Convention (e.g., the Great Compromise, representation plans).
- Explain and provide concrete examples of the 6 core principles embedded in the Constitution: Popular Sovereignty, Limited Government, Separation of Powers, Checks and Balances, Republicanism, and Federalism.
- Outline the structural components of the U.S. Constitution (Preamble, 7 Articles, and Amendments).
- Describe the formal amendment process under Article V.
- Identify the fundamental rights guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and examine subsequent landmark amendments (13th, 14th, 15th, 19th, 22nd, 26th).
- Analyze how social movements utilize First Amendment rights to achieve constitutional change.
- Evaluate Federalist Papers #47 and #51 to explain arguments for separation of powers and checks and balances.
- Compare and contrast the bicameral structure of the House of Representatives and the Senate, including qualifications, terms, and representation models.
- Trace the step-by-step procedure of how a bill becomes a federal law, evaluating the presidential role.
- Differentiate between legislative (expressed/implied) powers and non-legislative powers granted to Congress under Article I.
- Explain the role of the U.S. Census in reapportionment and redistricting every ten years.
- Research major landmark civil rights legislation and evaluate historical challenges faced during passage.
- Participate in simulated legislative procedures and debates over proposed legislation.
- Identify the constitutional qualifications, term length, and process required to become President of the United States.
- Describe the major roles of the President, including chief executive, commander in chief, chief diplomat, legislative leader, head of state, and leader of political party.
- Distinguish between the expressed, delegated, and informal powers exercised by the President.
- Cite evidence from Article II of the United States Constitution to explain the powers and responsibilities assigned to the Executive Branch.
- Explain the purpose of the presidential Cabinet and evaluate how Cabinet departments and

executive agencies assist the President in carrying out federal laws and policies
- Identify and describe the responsibilities of selected Cabinet departments and their secretaries.
- Explain the purpose of an Executive Order and analyze how executive orders allow presidents to direct the operations of the Executive Branch.
- Evaluate a historical or contemporary Executive Order to determine its purpose, constitutional basis, effects, and possible limitations.
- Explain the constitutional impeachment process, including the separate responsibilities of the House of Representatives and the Senate.
- Analyze evidence from a historical impeachment case to determine how Congress used its constitutional authority to investigate and respond to alleged presidential misconduct.
- Identify and describe the structure of the federal and state court systems and the types of cases each system hears.
- Distinguish between civil and criminal law, including the roles of the parties involved in each type of case.
- Explain the purpose, structure, and role of the United States Supreme Court.
- Identify the requirements, appointment process, and terms of service for Supreme Court justices.
- Explain the concept of judicial review and how *Marbury v. Madison* established this power.
- Describe the types of cases and constitutional questions that the Supreme Court hears.
- Explain how Supreme Court justices use constitutional principles, legal precedent, and evidence to make decisions.
- Distinguish between majority and dissenting opinions and explain their significance in Supreme Court decisions.
- Analyze landmark Supreme Court cases to explain the constitutional issues, decisions, and impact of those rulings on American society.
- Evaluate how the judicial branch serves as a check on the legislative and executive branches and protects constitutional rights through its decisions.
- Identify the requirements for voting and explain how voting allows citizens to participate in and influence the government.
- Explain the different types of elections in the United States, including primary and general elections.
- Describe the expansion and contraction of voting rights throughout United States history and explain how changes in voting laws have affected participation in American democracy.
- Explain the purpose and role of political parties in the American political system.
- Compare the major political parties and analyze how their platforms reflect different political ideologies and approaches to government.
- Describe the political spectrum and use evidence to distinguish between major political ideologies, including liberalism and conservatism.
- Explain the purpose and process of the Electoral College and analyze arguments for and against its continued use in presidential elections.
- Identify and evaluate factors that influence the outcome of political campaigns, including polling, advertising, endorsements, speeches, political issues, and campaign strategy.
- Explain the role of campaign financing in elections and evaluate arguments concerning the regulation of money in political campaigns.
- Analyze how individuals, political parties, campaigns, and other organizations influence elections and public opinion and evaluate the importance of informed and active participation in a democracy.
- Define human rights and explain their historical origins.
- Describe the creation, structure, work, and legal limitations of the United Nations.
- Analyze the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and identify the rights it protects.
- Explain the accomplishments of influential human rights activists.
- Investigate contemporary human rights violations and historical examples of genocide.

- Apply the UDHR to a contemporary human rights problem and communicate possible actions or solutions.
- Identify core economic concepts: define scarcity, opportunity cost, supply, and demand, and explain how they influence decision-making for consumers and producers.
- Analyze market dynamics: illustrate how supply and demand interact to determine prices and the allocation of resources within the U.S. economy.
- Evaluate economic systems: compare the basic characteristics of the United States free enterprise (market) economy with command and traditional economic systems.
- Examine the role of government: describe how the U.S. government regulates the economy, collects taxes, and provides public goods and services to maintain market stability**.**
- Apply financial planning principles: construct a balanced personal budget that accounts for income, spending, saving, and fixed vs. variable expenses.
- Evaluate credit and banking: differentiate between using cash, credit, and debit, and explain the consequences of borrowing money, interest rates, and building credit responsibly.
- Define civic identity: Define the duties, rights, and responsibilities of a citizen within local city, town, or county government.
- Understand local structure: Describe the structure, leadership roles (e.g., mayor, city council, school board), and primary functions of local government.
- Differentiate government levels: Distinguish between local, state, and national government responsibilities, highlighting services uniquely provided by local municipalities
- Analyze community Issues: Research a specific issue affecting the local community and identify the appropriate local department or official responsible for addressing it.
- Propose civic solutions: Develop a realistic plan or solution to address a community problem using public policy processes.
- Evaluate methods of action: Examine different ways citizens influence local decisions, such as attending town halls, voting in local elections, petitioning, and volunteering.
- Execute civic engagement: Demonstrate direct civic contribution by organizing, participating in, or reflecting on a community service or civic action project.

Units of Study

Units of study are organized collections of lessons and learning experiences focused on a specific topic and set of skills within a course. Each unit is guided by a set of essential questions.

Unit 1: The Purpose and Foundations of Government (3 Weeks)

- Why do governments exist and what is their purpose?
- What was/is the best way to structure government?
- What are the different types of government that exist and what do they look like?
- What are the core principles of democracy in the United States of America?
- What are some current events that are going on right now and how do they connect to what we've learned in class?

Unit 2: The U.S. Constitution (3 Weeks)

- What are some key events that led to the creation of the Constitution?
- What are the main ideas, or principles, that are included in the Constitution?
- What is the structure of the Constitution?
- How and when should the Constitution be changed or updated?
- What are some current events that are going on right now and how do they connect to what we've learned in class?

Unit 3: The Legislative Branch (4 Weeks)

- How is Congress organized and is that the best way to represent the constituents of their district?
- What purpose does the Legislative Branch serve?
- How does a bill become law?
- What powers does Congress have that influence the nation?
- What are the requirements to become a member of Congress? Is this requirement fair?
- What are the benefits of term limits for members of Congress?
- What are some current events that are going on right now and how do they connect to what we've learned in class?

Unit 4: The Executive Branch (4 Weeks)

- What are powers that are given to the President in the Constitution?
- What are the requirements for becoming President?
- What are the major roles and responsibilities of the President?
- What is the difference between the President's constitutional powers and informal powers?
- How does the President influence the creation of laws?
- How can the President check the powers of Congress and The Supreme Court?
- How does the system of checks and balances prevent the President from becoming too powerful?
- How does the President use the Cabinet and executive agencies to carry out laws?
- What responsibilities do the different Cabinet departments have?
- What are executive orders and what's an example of a famous executive order that was used in history? Why are executive orders controversial?
- What is the President's Cabinet?
- What is impeachment? What is the impeachment process and what are the grounds for impeachment? How many presidents have been impeached?

Unit 5: The Judicial Branch (4 Weeks)

- How is the U.S. court system structured, and what roles do federal and state courts play?
- What is the difference between civil and criminal law, and how are these cases resolved?
- What is the role of the United States Supreme Court within the judicial branch?
- How are Supreme Court justices selected, and what responsibilities and powers do they have?
- How does judicial review allow the Supreme Court to interpret the Constitution and limit government power?
- How does the Supreme Court make decisions, and why do justices sometimes disagree?
- How have landmark Supreme Court cases changed the interpretation of the Constitution and affected American society?
- To what extent should the Supreme Court be considered an independent institution separate from politics?

Unit 6: Elections and Political Parties (4 Weeks)

- How does voting give citizens a voice?
- How do candidates and political campaigns organize to influence voters?
- What are the components of a political campaign and how do factors, including social/political issues, polling, advertising, endorsements, primaries and caucuses, and speeches affect the outcome of campaigns?
- What are the two main political parties in the United States?
- What is the role of the third party?
- How should campaigns be financed and what restrictions should be put in place if any?
- Should the Electoral College be Abolished?

Unit 7: Human Rights (4 Weeks)

- What are human rights?
- What is the United Nations, and what type of work does it do?
- Does the United Nations have global legal authority?
- Who are some influential human rights activists, and what did they accomplish?
- What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and what kinds of rights are included in it?
- What are human rights violations?

Unit 8: Economics and Personal Finance (4 Weeks)

- What is consumption, price, money, supply, demand and interest rates and how they affect our economy?
- What decisions are required for an effective personal finance budget plan?
- What is economic growth and its benefits and what may interfere with economic growth.

Unit 9: Local Government, Public Policy, and the Role of Citizenship (4 Weeks)

- What are the duties, responsibilities, and rights of citizens?
- What are ordinances and how does my town pass them?
- What kinds of laws exist in my town?
- How can I contribute to and participate in my local government?

Instructional Resources and Materials

Instructional resources are the information sources teachers utilize to guide their teaching and assessing. Instructional materials are the texts students read or review. The instructional resources and materials may vary in order to meet the learning needs of students. Additionally, students may utilize books from the school library and ones brought from home. Teachers will utilize a wide variety of print, audio and visual texts throughout the year. Below is a list of frequently used materials:

- Required Materials:
  - The United States Constitution
  - Library of Congress

- Recommended Materials
  - iCivics
  - Ted-Ed
  - Mini-Q

Assessment Strategies

Assessment measures a student's mastery of a course standard and learning objective. Assessment can be used for both instructional purposes and evaluative purposes. Teachers may choose one or more of the following options to assess learners. They may also modify these ideas to make the assessment more responsive to students' interests and needs.

Formative:

- Multiple Choice Assessments
- Short Writing
- Source Analysis

Summative:

- Multiple choice and short answer tests
- Essays
- Debate Activities
- Presentations
- Short/Long-term Projects

Benchmark:

- Multiple Choice Assessments

Alternative:

- Document-Based Question (DBQ) Analysis & Essay

Suggested Strategies for Modification & Differentiation

Modifications Chart