

Purpose & Design of the Standards

South Carolina's social studies standards are grounded in a simple conviction: **knowledge of our shared history is essential to the preservation of freedom.**

These standards are designed to ensure that every student develops the knowledge, reasoning skills, character, and civic understanding necessary to understand our shared past, participate responsibly in the present, and help sustain the blessings of liberty for the future.

They provide students with a coherent, knowledge-rich progression in South Carolina, United States, and world history; civics and government; geography; and economics. Students encounter important people, places, events, primary sources, ideas, and institutions in a purposeful sequence that builds the durable knowledge necessary for informed reasoning and responsible citizenship. The standards strengthen students' understanding of the foundations and development of the American constitutional republic while placing that story within the broader sweep of Western civilization and the wider world.

In this revision process, Western Civilization standards have been created to establish a coherent, knowledge-rich progression designed to ensure that every student encounters essential content chronologically and in purposeful sequence. Western Civilization standards were developed to fill a critical gap in that vertical continuum: students must understand the ancient, classical, medieval, and early modern foundations of Western thought, including Enlightenment ideas, natural rights, constitutional traditions, and civic virtue, before they can fully comprehend the origins, principles, and significance of U.S. History and the Constitution.

By positioning Western Civilization within the vertical articulation, students arrive at U.S. History and Government already equipped with the philosophical and historical inheritance from Aristotle and Cicero to Magna Carta, Locke, and Montesquieu that directly shaped America's founding. This sequence strengthens student understanding and reduces the need for reteaching foundational concepts, allowing U.S. History instruction to build deeper rather than begin from scratch.

Additionally, Human Geography is no longer a standalone course within the revised standards because geographic reasoning is embedded as one of five disciplinary strands woven throughout the entire K–12 social studies progression. Students develop spatial reasoning, map literacy, and geographic analysis within every course — ensuring geography is not siloed but integrated where it is most meaningful and contextually relevant to the content students are studying.

The revised standards intentionally strengthen and expand the study of African American history, Jewish history and the Holocaust, Native American history, religious history and religious liberty, the Civil Rights Movement, communism and other totalitarian regimes, and the experiences and contributions of Americans from every background. These subjects are integrated into the chronological historical narrative so that students encounter them not as isolated topics, but as

essential parts of a story: South Carolina, American, and world history. Teaching the History and Literature of the Old and New Testament standards were not revised in this revision cycle; they may be found here: [2019 Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards](#).

Civics is intentionally woven throughout this progression. Beginning with responsibility, rules, community, and citizenship in the earliest grades, students advance toward a sophisticated understanding of natural rights, constitutional government, ordered liberty, the rule of law, civil discourse, and the privileges and responsibilities of citizenship. Civic education is not confined to a single course because preparation for self-government cannot be confined to a single year.

Character formation, like civic understanding, must be cultivated with intention. A free society depends not only upon what its citizens know, but upon the kind of people they become. **These standards therefore establish an intentional, vertically aligned strand in character and civic virtue.** Through the study of history, exemplary lives, primary sources, civic institutions, and consequential human choices, students examine virtues such as prudence or wisdom, justice, courage, self-discipline, integrity, responsibility, perseverance, respect, compassion, service, sacrifice, citizenship, and patriotism. These virtues are studied in context, not as abstractions disconnected from academic content, and are connected to the habits necessary for individual flourishing, strong communities, responsible citizenship, and enduring self-government.

This is integration with intention: building knowledge, civic understanding, and character together rather than treating them as competing or disconnected purposes.

Throughout the standards, students also develop the disciplinary habits of historians and citizens: asking good questions, thinking critically, distinguishing fact from interpretation, evaluating evidence and competing perspectives, constructing reasoned arguments, and engaging in respectful civil discourse.

Particular emphasis is placed on the thoughtful use of primary sources, allowing students to encounter consequential ideas and historical voices directly and in context. The disciplinary reasoning standards require students to evaluate the origin, context, purpose, perspective, reliability, and corroboration of historical sources. A companion primary-source document will support implementation of the adopted standards by identifying important texts and developmentally appropriate selections for study.

Finally, these standards recognize that higher-order thinking depends upon knowledge. Students cannot reason deeply about history, government, geography, or economics without a durable foundation of names, places, events, chronology, documents, ideas, and vocabulary. The creation of companion resources, including essential knowledge for ready recall and essential American and South Carolina texts will identify foundational knowledge students should know from memory and seminal texts every South Carolina student should study, with selected passages designated for memorization and recitation.

Taken together, the standards seek to form students who know their history, understand their constitutional inheritance, think critically about evidence, practice the virtues of responsible citizenship, and are prepared to carry the work of self-government forward in their own generation.

South Carolina's social studies education ultimately exists to equip young people to steward our freedom, sustain our constitutional republic, and shape our shared future with wisdom and courage.