# History and Social Science

# Standards of

# Learning

# for

# Virginia

# Public Schools

****

**Board of Education**

**Commonwealth of Virginia**

**History and**

**Social Science**

# Standards of

# Learning

**for**

**Virginia**

**Public Schools**

**Adopted in April 2023 by the**

**Board of Education**

Daniel A. Gecker, President

Dr. Tammy Mann, Vice President

Grace Turner Creasey, M. Ed.

Pamela Davis-Vaught

Bill Hansen

Anne B. Holton

Andy Rotherham

Dr. H. Alan Seibert

Dale Sturdifen

**Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Dr. Lisa Coons

Commonwealth of Virginia

Board of Education

Post Office Box 2120

Richmond, VA 23218-2120

Copyright © 2023

by the

Virginia Department of Education

P. O. Box 2120

Richmond, Virginia 23218-2120

[Virginia Department of Education](http://www.doe.virginia.gov)

All rights reserved. Reproduction of these materials for instructional purposes in public school classrooms in Virginia is permitted.

**Statement of Non-Discrimination**  
The Virginia Department of Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, political affiliation, or against otherwise qualified persons with disabilities. The policy permits appropriate employment preferences for veterans and specifically prohibits discrimination against veterans.

## Guiding Principles

### Introduction

Virginia’s History and Social Sciences standards aim to raise our aspirations for history and social science instruction and restore excellence, curiosity and excitement around teaching and learning history. The teaching of history should illuminate insights from the past and inspire current and future generations to lead lives that are informed and inspired by those who walked this journey before them.

### Expectations For Virginia’s Students

Every graduate from Virginia’s K-12 schools will possess a robust understanding of the places, people, events and ideas that comprise the history of Virginia, the United States and the world. Our students will learn from the rise and fall of civilizations across time, so that we may pursue and maintain government and economic systems that have led to human achievement. The Virginia standards are grounded in the foundational principles and actions of individuals and institutions so that we may learn from them as we strive to maintain our political liberties and personal freedoms and thrive as a nation.

The United States, whose founding history is rooted in Virginia’s history, has led the world in political, social and economic thought and action in ways that fundamentally changed the interactions and expectations of individual citizens with government. Students will know that the Declaration of Independence first stated that “all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The standards will recognize the world impact of America’s ongoing quest for a “more perfect Union” and the optimism, ideals and imagery captured by Ronald Reagan’s “shining city upon a hill” speech, Lincoln’s Second Inaugural Address, and Frederick Douglas’ complicated love for America. Students will know our nation’s exceptional strengths, including individual innovation, moral character, ingenuity and adventure, while learning from terrible periods and actions in direct conflict with these ideals.

Our students will also understand that our history encompasses a broad civilization beyond their neighborhood, Virginia and the United States. They will learn that humankind has spanned continents, ethnicities and religions, with common qualities that unite us and differences that enrich our society. The events of our history demonstrate that people have incredible ability to inspire, innovate and improve lives, and this human story also shows that evil exists and people are capable of destroying civilizations, communities and individual lives.

The standards provide an unflinching and fact-based coverage of world, United States and Virginia history. Students will study the horrors of wars and genocide including the Holocaust and the ethnic cleansing campaigns that have occurred throughout history and continue today. They will better understand the abhorrent treatment of Native Americans, the indelible stain of slavery, segregation and racism in the United States and around the world, and the inhumanity and deprivations of totalitarian and communist regimes. Students also will study inspirational moments including the achievements of Greek and Roman governments and advancements in engineering, architecture and art, the European Enlightenment, the American Revolution, the triumph of America’s Greatest Generation in World War II, the Marshall Plan, the Civil Rights Movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Project Apollo, progress against diseases, and the heroic sacrifice of Flight 93 passengers.

Students will have an in-depth understanding of the good and the bad in the world, United States and Virginia history. The Standards will include an appreciation of the attributes and actions that have made America the world’s exemplar of freedom, opportunity and democratic ideals. This comprehensive story of the United and the world will prepare every student for the rights, opportunities and responsibilities of Americans. As noted by George Santayana over 100 years ago, “those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

### Principles

The foundational principles for these History and Social Sciences learning standards include:

* Individual liberty and representative government are cornerstones of the American way of life;
* The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are remarkable documents that provide the freedoms and framework for our constitutional republic.
* We aspire to live up to the ideals expressed but not fully realized by the Founders for a society that recognizes all individuals are created equal.
* From thirteen diverse colonies to a unified nation, “E Pluribus Unum” – “Out of Many, One,” has always been our strength. Immigrants from around the world continue to come to the United States seeking freedom and opportunity to build a better life and have contributed to our communities and added to the rich history of the United States.
* Free enterprise, property rights and the rule of law enable an economic system that allocates assets through free markets and competition and fosters innovation, opportunity and efficiency.
* Centralized government planning in the form of socialism or communist political systems, as well as fascism, totalitarianism, and other forms of government that preference state power or control over individual liberty and consent of the governed, are incompatible with democracy.
* America is both exceptional and imperfect.
* The rights codified in the United States and Virginia constitutions and the Bill of Rights provide for individual freedoms that place a responsibility on current and future generations of Americans to engage in the political process with civility and fulfill their civic obligations.
* Through the ages, civilizations have grown, prospered and vanished. Every student should understand our Great American Experiment is not guaranteed forever. As Benjamin Franklin warned citizens over 200 years ago, “you have a republic… if you can keep it.”

### Implementation Of Virginia’s History And Social Science Standards

Human history is complex and evolving as new technologies emerge and old stories are uncovered. We update our standards every seven years because we continue to learn more about the multiple facets of historical events through new discoveries and expanded research.

The virtues and flaws of Virginia, the United States and other world civilizations will be taught in an objective, factual and age-appropriate way by balancing fact and inquiry-based learning opportunities. These standards lay out the achievements and progress of our story and where Americans and Virginians have fallen short. Virginia’s History and Social Science education will highlight our shared humanity and the opportunity to work together in our constitutional republic to improve our own lives as well as the lives of our families and communities. The study of history and civics through these standards will provide the foundation for students to be engaged and deeply informed citizens who will continue to strengthen our communities, our economy and our republic.

The success of Virginia’s 2023 History and Social Science standards depends on the sound judgment and strong preparation of teachers and informed engagement by parents and communities. The standards and state-developed curriculum frameworks will serve as guides for best-in-class teaching and learning. While the immense responsibility of defining curriculum and texts used in classrooms across Virginia rests with local school boards, these standards should be implemented in the following ways:

* Students should be exposed to the facts of our past in a content rich and engaging way, even when those facts are uncomfortable.
* Teachers, whether they are new to the profession or are veteran educators, should utilize these standards in their classrooms as a mechanism to support their content knowledge and the important work they do each day in classrooms as they teach students across the Commonwealth.
* Every local school board has the responsibility to select and fully implement curricula that are aligned with the core history and social science standards for every grade level and course.
* The curriculum selected by local school boards should provide a level of guidance, consistency, high quality instructional materials, and professional development so that teachers, especially less experienced teachers, are not *required* to develop materials on their own.
* The Virginia Department of Education will provide our teachers with excellent instructional tools and training so they will be able to teach *all*of our history in an objective, fair, empathetic, nonjudgmental and developmentally appropriate manner in accordance with Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
* Teachers must facilitate open and balanced discussions on difficult topics, including discrimination and racism, and present learning opportunities without personal or political bias.
* Teachers should engage students in fact-based, non-ideological, and age-appropriate ways that do not imply students today are culpable for past events. Teachers should not intentionally expose students to embarrassment or disparagement or unreasonably restrict student access to varying points of view.
* Teachers, students, and parents should insist on dignity and respect for each other as part of civil society.
* Parents should have access to all instructional materials utilized in any Virginia public school. Division policies and practices should reflect this commitment.

## 

## Background and Context for the History and Social Science Standards Revisions

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education published **Standards of Learning** in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science for kindergarten through grade 12. Subsequently, Standards of Learning were developed for all academic content areas. The Standards of Learning are designed to raise the academic achievement for all students in Virginia by providing clear and specific benchmarks at each grade level about what students should know and be able to do.

Pursuant to legislation from the 2000 Virginia General Assembly, the Board of Education established a seven-year cycle for review of the Standards of Learning. Thus, the 1995 History and Social Science Standards of Learning were reviewed in 2001, 2008, and 2015. The Virginia Department of Education convened review committees in 2021-2022 to review and revise the 2015 History and Social Science Standards of Learning. The feedback of the committees, exceptional work by department staff, and extensive public comment are reflected in these standards.

**Curriculum**, on the other hand, created at the division or local level, should prescribe a specific sequence of coherent “units” or “modules” that combine instructional strategies with resources and a sequence of student activities to help students meet the standards. A locally developed curriculum should specify how resources, instructional strategies, content vocabulary, student activities, formative and summative assessments, and evaluation procedures may be combined into those coherent units.

To assist school divisions with the creation of the local curricula, the Virginia Department of Education will separately issue **Curriculum Frameworks** for the HSS. The Curriculum Frameworks will suggest instructional resources (print and non-print), suggested students' activities, suggested formative and summative assessment and evaluation materials, and suggested pacing. They will also include scaffolding and differentiation suggestions to help curriculum developers address the needs of struggling learners and those who need challenges. The Frameworks will offer important instructional guidance to ensure that students are learning and applying the **skills of historical analysis**, such as being an active listener, looking at events and issues from various perspectives, analyzing primary and secondary sources, evaluating, and developing arguments, and citing evidence in support of one’s opinion both orally and in writing. Finally, the suggested student activities will encourage students to wrestle with complex texts and ideas, including the important and transcendent themes associated with the study of history, such as liberty, democracy, self-government, truth and citizenship. In short, Curriculum Frameworks will be issued to further enrich and clarify the concepts set forth in the *Virginia Standards for History and Social Science*.

Organization and Prescribed Order of History and Social Science Courses

Historically, Virginia has offered flexibility around the grades at which some of these “courses” are taught; in this configuration, the standards are presented in the Board of Education’s recommended grade level sequence. School divisions are strongly encouraged to adopt this sequence, but it is not required. Local School Boards that authorize alternative approaches must ensure that gaps in student learning are avoided and make accommodations for students who transfer from another division and ensure that students satisfy Board-prescribed graduation requirements.

### Skills

Preceding the standards at each grade level is a skills standard. The development of these skills at each grade level is important as they develop academically in all content areas. Note: The skills will not be assessed in isolation; rather, they will be assessed as part of the content in the History and Social Science Standards of Learning.

#### Grades K-3

Standards are organized into the four core strands of social studies: history, geography, civics and economics:

* The **history** strand offers opportunities for students to read, hear, learn about, research, and explore the lives of people and events in the community, Virginia, the United States, and the world.
* The **geography** strand entails the study of both basic geographic skills and specific geography standards that align with and enhance students’ understanding of the history taught at each grade.
* The **civics** strand builds students’ knowledge of citizenship, patriotism, and the establishment of the U.S. Constitution. The strand includes specific expectations for students’ knowledge of how the U.S. government is structured (the three branches of government), and confirms a nascent understanding of the basic rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.
* In the **economics** strand, students in K – 3 acquire an understanding of the most basic principles of economics on which the 6 – 12 standards will build.

Additionally, the students in K-3 are introduced to basic history and social science skills:

* Kindergarteners learn about their **Community** and focus on patriotism, citizenship, and history.
* First graders learn about the **Commonwealth of Virginia** through the lives of changemakers and events in Virginia history. They also learn more about patriotism, civics, and citizenship, map skills, and basic economics.
* Second graders are introduced to **United States of America** history through the lives of changemakers and historical events. They focus on civics education with an introduction to key aspects of America’s constitutional democracy, and learn more about citizenship, patriotism, geography, and economics.
* Third graders study the **World** by learning about ancient China, Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Mali. They also continue to develop skills and knowledge about maps, civics, and economics.

Standards for grades 6 – 12 proceed in an integrated way, focused on the following aspects of American history:

#### Grades 4-6

* Grade Four: Virginia Studies, chronological story of the history of Virginia
* Grade Five: United States History to 1865, America’s history from its earliest days to the Civil War
* Grade Six: United States History 1865 to the Present, the story of the America from the Civil War – present

#### Grades 7-8

Students in grades seven and eight refocus their attention on three strands of social studies content in preparation for a more in-depth look at world and American history in grades 9 – 12:

* Grade Seven: Civics and Economics
* Grade Eight: World Geography

#### Grades 9-12

In grades nine – twelve, students trace closely the causes, course of events, and effects of the most essential aspects of world and American history, culminating in one last immersion in American government, solidifying students’ knowledge of the rights and obligations of U.S. citizenship.

* Grade Nine: World History to 1500 CE
* Grade Ten: World History 1500 CE to the Present
* Grade Eleven: Virginia and U.S. History
* Grade Twelve: Virginia and United States Government

A picture containing text, screenshot, font, design

Description automatically generated

## Grade 9: World History and Geography to 1500 A.D.

These standards will enable students to explore the historical development of people, places, and patterns of life from ancient times until 1500 A.D. in terms of the impact on Western civilization. The study of history rests on knowledge of dates, names, places, events, and ideas. Historical understanding, however, requires students to engage in historical thinking, raise questions, and marshal evidence in support of their answers. Students engaged in historical thinking draw upon chronological thinking, historical comprehension, historical analysis and interpretation, historical research, and decision making. These skills are developed through the study of significant historical substance from the era or society being studied.

### Skills

#### Skills WHI The student will apply history and social science skills to the content by

1. selecting and synthesizing evidence from information sources, including but not limited to artifacts, primary/secondary sources, charts, graphs, and diagrams events in world history;
2. applying geographic skills to determine and predict patterns and trends of people, places, or events;
3. questioning to construct arguments using evidence from multiple sources;
4. investigating and analyzing evidence from multiple sources to construct arguments and draw conclusions;
5. comparing and contrasting historical, cultural, economic, and political perspectives;
6. determining cause and effect to analyze connections;
7. using economic decision-making models to analyze and explain the incentives for and consequences of a specific choice;
8. engaging and communicating as civil and informed individuals with different perspectives;
9. developing products that reflect an understanding of research and content; and
10. contextualizing and corroborating sources to evaluate sources for credibility, propaganda, and bias to determine patterns and trends to understand the ancient world.

### Paleolithic Era into the Agricultural Revolution Neolithic Era

#### WHI.1 The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the period from the Paleolithic Era into the Neolithic Era by

1. describing the archaeological evidence of the first human, and their geographic locations;
2. explaining the effect that geography had on the emergence and migration of hunter-gatherer societies;
3. describing characteristics of hunter-gatherer societies, including their use of tools and fire;
4. analyzing how technological and social developments gave rise to sedentary settlements; and
5. analyzing how archaeological discoveries change current understanding of early societies.

### Social, Cultural, Political, and Economic Development of Early Societies

#### WHI.2 The student will apply history and social science skills to describe early societies in the Fertile Crescent by

1. locating and explaining the development of Egypt and Nubia;
2. locating and explaining the development of Mesopotamia;
3. describing the development of the Israelites as well as the origins, beliefs, traditions, customs, persecution and spread of Judaism; and
4. describing the development of the Phoenicians.

#### WHI.3 The students will apply history and social science skills to describe ancient Asian societies by

1. analyzing the impact of geography on the development of ancient India and China, including locating them in time and place and describing their major geographic features;
2. describing the social, cultural, political, and economic characteristics that define the societies of the Indian subcontinent, including but not limited to contributions and the concepts of Varna and Jati;
3. describing the origins, beliefs, customs, and spread of Hinduism;
4. describing the origins, beliefs, customs, and spread of Buddhism;
5. describing social, cultural, political, and economic development of ancient China; and
6. describing the impact of Confucianism, Taoism, and Legalism.

#### WHI.4 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand Persia and Greece by

1. describing the major geographic features of the region and analyzing the effect that geography had on its development;
2. describing the social, cultural, political, and economic aspects of ancient Persia;
3. describing the social, cultural, political, and economic development of Greece, including but not limited to the significance of Athens and Sparta, the development of citizenship, and the different forms of democracy;
4. evaluating the causes and consequences of the Persian and the Peloponnesian wars;
5. evaluating the significance of Alexander the Great’s conquest of Greece and the formation and the spread of Hellenistic culture; and
6. explaining the influence of ancient Greek contributions, including but not limited to science, art, architecture, philosophy, and mathematics in the present day.

#### WHI.5 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand Rome and the Byzantine Empire by

1. describing the influence of geography on Rome’s development and the factors that threatened territorial cohesion;
2. comparing and contrasting the political, social and religious structure and development of the Roman Republic and Roman Empire;
3. describing the social, cultural, political, and economic development of the Byzantine Empire, including but not limited to the establishment of Constantinople, and the eventual division of the Roman Empire;
4. describing the origins, beliefs, customs, and spread of Christianity, including the persecution and eventual adoption and transmission of Christianity, New Testament, differences between the Eastern and Western churches, and the influence of Christianity throughout Europe, Middle Asia, the Middle East, and North Africa; and
5. explaining the influence of Rome, including but not limited to citizenship, the existence of slavery, rights under Roman law, Roman art, architecture, engineering, philosophy.

#### WHI.6 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand Islamic societies by

1. identifying the physical features and describing the relationship between climate, land and surrounding bodies and water, and nomadic and sedentary ways of life of the Arabian peninsula;
2. describing the origins, beliefs, traditions, customs, persecution and spread of Islam;
3. explaining the significance of the Qur’an and the Sunnah as the primary sources of Islamic beliefs, practice, and law, and their influence in Muslims’ daily life;
4. describing the expansion of territory under Muslim rule and the spread of Islam and Arabic language among people in these territories, and the cultural and religious acceptance of Islam and the Arabic language; and
5. describing the growth of cities and the role of merchants in Muslim society, the expansion of trade routes in Asia, Africa, Europe, and the Indian Ocean, and identifying the products and inventions that traveled along these routes, including spices, textiles, paper, steel, new crops.

### The Middle Ages

#### WHI.7 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the civilizations of China in the Middle Ages by

1. describing the reunification of China under the Tang Dynasty and reasons for the spread of Buddhism in Tang China, Korea, and Japan;
2. describing agricultural, technological, and commercial developments during the Tang and Sung periods;
3. analyzing the influences of Confucianism and changes in Confucian thought during the Sung and Mongol periods;
4. explaining the importance of both overland trade and maritime expeditions between China and other civilizations in the Mongol Ascendancy and Ming Dynasty;
5. tracing the historic influence of such discoveries as tea, the manufacture of paper, woodblock printing, the compass, and gunpowder; and
6. describing the development of the imperial state and the scholar-official class.

#### WHI.8 The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the sub-Saharan civilizations of Ghana and Mali in Medieval Africa by

1. describing the Niger River and the relationship of vegetation zones of forest, savannah, and desert to trade in gold, salt, food, and enslaved people; and the growth of the Ghana and Mali empires;
2. analyzing the importance of family, labor specialization, and regional commerce in the development of states and cities in West Africa;
3. describing the role of the trans Saharan caravan trade in the changing religious and cultural characteristics of West Africa and the influence of Islam;
4. tracing the growth of the Arabic language in government, trade, and Islam; and
5. describing the importance of written and oral traditions in the transmission of African history and culture.

#### WHI.9 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the civilizations of Medieval Japan by

1. describing the significance of Japan’s proximity to China and Korea and the intellectual, linguistic, religious, and philosophical influence of those countries on Japan;
2. discussing the reign of Prince Shotoku of Japan and the characteristics of Japanese society and family life during his reign;
3. describing the values, social customs, and traditions prescribed by the lord-vassal system consisting of shogun, daimyo, and samurai and the lasting influence of the warrior code in the twentieth century;
4. tracing the development of distinctive forms of Japanese Buddhism;
5. examining the ninth and tenth centuries’ golden age of literature, art, and drama and its lasting effects on culture today including Murasaki Shikibu’s *Tale of Genji*; and
6. analyzing the rise of a military society in the late twelfth century and the role of the samurai in that society.

#### WHI.10 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the civilizations of Medieval Europe by

1. describing the geography of the European and the Eurasian landmass including location, topography, waterways, vegetation, and climate and their relationship to ways of life in Medieval Europe;
2. describing the spread of Christianity north of the Alps and the roles played by the early church and by monasteries in its diffusion after the fall of the western half of the Roman Empire; and
3. explaining the development and role of feudalism in the medieval European economy, and the role of the manor as the center of feudal relationships at the foundation of the political order; and
4. describing the growth of towns and trade as Europe emerged from feudalism.

#### WHI.11 The student will apply history and social science skills to analyze the conflict and cooperation between the Papacy and European monarchs by

1. explaining the significance of developments in medieval English legal and constitutional practices, including but not limited to the Magna Carta, parliament, development of habeas corpus, an independent judiciary in England;
2. analyzing the reasons for the Great Schism in 1054;
3. tracing the causes and course of the Crusades, and the effects on the Christian, Muslim, and Jewish populations in Europe and territorial claims;
4. describing the history of the decline of Muslim rule in the Iberian Peninsula that resulted in the expansion of Christian rule and the rise of Spanish and Portuguese kingdoms; and
5. explaining the importance of the Catholic church as a political and intellectual institution, and its effects on education, religious orders, preservation of languages and texts, and philosophy.

#### WHI.12 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the Meso-American and Andean civilizations by

1. describing the locations, landforms, and climates of Mexico, Central America, and South America and their effects on Mayan, Aztec, and Incan economies, trade, and development of urban societies;
2. explaining how and where each empire arose and how the Aztec and Incan empires were defeated by the Spanish;
3. describing the artistic and oral traditions and architecture in the three civilizations;
4. describing the Meso-American achievements in astronomy and mathematics including the development of the calendar and the Meso-American knowledge of seasonal changes to the civilizations’ agricultural systems; and
5. examining the roles of people in each society, including class structures, family life, warfare, religious beliefs and practices, and slavery.

### Leading to the Renaissance

#### WHI.13 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the factors contributing to the European Renaissance by

1. determining the economic, political, philosophical, and cultural foundations of the Italian Renaissance;
2. sequencing events related to the rise of Italian city-states and their political development including Machiavelli’s theory of governing; and
3. analyzing the contributions of artists and philosophers of the Italian Renaissance including Leonardo da Vinci, Michelangelo, and Petrarch.