



Bedford Public Schools

Grade 8 – Social Studies

Eighth Grade explores the essential question: **What does it mean to be a responsible citizen?** Over the course of the year, students will come to understand their role within society both as a United States citizen and as a citizen of the human race. The year begins by asking students to think about their own identity and how it influences the decisions they make and the viewpoints they hold. Students will then learn about the purpose of government and the foundations of the United States democratic model. This will include studying the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights. Included in this study will be a brief overview of some key events in United States history and United States geography. Students will then begin to explore how they can participate and engage in their own communities whether this be their school, town, state, or country. The year will finish with exploring case studies in civil rights movements particularly the integration of public schools in the 1950s. Students will prepare for their annual trip to Washington, D.C. by exploring the importance and symbolism of many of the sites they will visit on their trip and how these connect to the themes discussed throughout the school year. The goal of the 8th grade civics curriculum will be to give students the tools and knowledge they need to be responsible citizens of a democracy. A special emphasis will be placed on developing a student's ability to read and comprehend challenging primary source material and write in a persuasive, argumentative style in order to prepare them for a rigorous high school curriculum.



Learning Expectations

[Identity](#)

[Basics of Government/Citizenship](#)

[Geography](#)

[Declaration of Independence/Formation of the United States](#)

[United States Constitution and Bill of Rights](#)

[Citizenship and Group Identity](#)

[Civil Rights Case Studies](#)

[Washington D.C.](#)

Identity

Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .	Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .	Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible citizens work to understand individual and group identity before formulating opinions and conclusions. • Individual and group identity shapes the way humans see themselves and others. • Individuals are members of chosen and unchosen group identities. • Identity informs the choices people make. • Humans have a tendency to label, stereotype, and judge based off of identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compare and contrast various perspectives. • Develop a working understanding of such key concepts as identity, stereotypes, and race. • Use logic and reason to defend a point of view. • Recognize the way identity influences perception of self and others. • Identify and describe their own personal identity and how it has impacted their decisions. • Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.

Basics of Government/Citizenship

<p>Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .</p>	<p>Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .</p>	<p>Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible citizens contribute and engage in the process of governance. ● Humans create government in order to prevent chaos and structure society. ● Responsible governance seeks to create just society. ● Justice can be defined and achieved in many ways. ● Societies sacrifice freedoms in order to create safety. ● The origins of democracy and American citizenship come from the Classical Age. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understand and explain the basic purpose of government. ● Identify and describe the different types of government. ● Understand and explain what it means to have a just society. ● Be able to identify government work in current events. ● Understand and explain the historical tradition of citizenship that stems from the Classical Age. ● Reading and understanding a current events story from a periodical. ● Summarizing main ideas from primary source text. ● Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings.

Geography

Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .	Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .	Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible citizens are informed and knowledgeable of their physical and cultural surroundings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the major regions of the United States. • Identify the major political features of the United States (states and capitals). • Identify the major physical features of the United States. • Be able to distinguish differences between regions based on geography. • Understand that the United States offers a diverse geography that presents difficult challenges in governance. • Reading and understanding a current events story from a periodical. • Summarizing main ideas from primary source text.

Declaration of Independence/Formation of the United States

<p>Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .</p>	<p>Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .</p>	<p>Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responsible citizens are aware of the philosophical theory and history behind their civilization. • The Declaration of Independence (DoI) was the United States’ foundational document to describe and establish an identity amongst the nations of the world. • Colonists sought independence from Great Britain in order to become a self-ruled people. • Self-determination and independence is sought by people who are oppressed and who share a common sense of purpose/identity. • The DoI created a model and inspiration for independence movements. • The DoI did not provide a strong enough framework to create a fully united nation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and explain the major arguments for independence from Great Britain. • Know the main events and policies that led to colonists seeking independence. • Understand the many perspectives and opinions of colonists leading up to the American Revolution. • Explain the importance of creating a written document explaining an independence movement. • Understand the importance of the DoI for inspiring and guiding the American Revolution and the early days of nation forming. • Analyze and interpret primary sources. • Formulating an argument and supporting it with evidence. • Reference textual evidence to support an argument. • Compare and contrast texts to find connections in language and viewpoint.

United States Constitution and Bill of Rights

<p>Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .</p>	<p>Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .</p>	<p>Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible citizens are aware of the structure, rights, and responsibilities of their government. ● US Constitution is the blueprint for the United States government. ● US Constitution was created to protect individual rights while honoring group safety. ● US Constitution was created to unite the US under a federal system. ● The Preamble to the Constitution sets out the basic goals of US government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Describe the main goals of the United States government. ● Identify and describe the structure of the US government (federal, state, local, and school). ● Apply their knowledge of the US Constitution to the structure of their school community. ● Identify and describe the rights guaranteed by the Bill of Rights and Amendments. ● Apply their knowledge of their rights to real life scenarios. ● Analyze and interpret primary sources. ● Formulating an argument and supporting it with evidence. ● Reference textual evidence to support an argument. ● Compare and contrast texts to find connections in language and viewpoint.

Citizenship and Group Identity

Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .	Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .	Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible citizens understand how to engage in their community and create positive change. ● There are many forms of power and they can be used to influence change and decisions. ● Humans have a tendency to identify within groups that make them feel most comfortable and powerful. ● Group identity can have both positive and negative forces on the development of society. ● Groups have a tendency to view themselves as superior to other groups and to label and judge based on this assumption. ● In a democracy, citizens are expected to actively participate. ● Citizenship has a deeper meaning than just a legal status. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and describe different forms of power in society and in current events. ● Apply knowledge of the forms of power to identify problems and how to generate a plan for a solution. ● Apply concepts of group identity and human behavior to social class and race based identity. ● Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in context, including figurative and connotative meanings. ● Analyze and interpret primary sources. ● Formulating an argument and supporting it with evidence.

Civil Rights and Case Studies

<p>Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .</p>	<p>Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .</p>	<p>Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Responsible citizens are aware of the difficult/challenging moments of their society’s past and look to use this knowledge to create a better present and future. ● The United States has struggled to create equality amongst all populations. ● Political, social, and economic structures have prevented equality amongst all populations of the United States. ● Despite many changes to improve equality amongst all populations, the United States is a work in progress towards this goal. ● Slavery, segregation, and racism have been major challenges to creating equality amongst all populations. ● Practices of inequality are detrimental to the success of a diverse, pluralistic society and the basic goals of the United States democratic model. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify and describe the political, social, and economic history and legacy of segregation in the United States. ● Identifying and describing various perspectives that informed important choices. ● Evaluate the choices made in the desegregation of schools in Little Rock, AK. ● Summarize and interpret the meaning of key legal decisions for civil rights. ● Compare and contrast different civil rights movements in American history. ● Identify the civil rights issues of their contemporary world. ● Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in context, including figurative and connotative meanings. ● Analyze and interpret primary sources. ● Formulating an argument and supporting it with evidence. ● Reference textual evidence to support an argument.

Washington D.C.

<p>Enduring Understandings In order to meet the standards, the students will need to understand that . . .</p>	<p>Essential Questions In order to understand, students will need to consider questions such as . . .</p>	<p>Knowledge and Skills Learning this material will require students to . . .</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Washington, D.C. was designed to represent and celebrate the United States’ core values and to function as the seat of federal governance. ● Monuments and memorials are created to represent important events, symbolize values, and create a legacy of a people’s past. ● Educational tourism is about learning and experiencing new things in a respectful manner. ● Having a plan for an educational tour allows the tourist to learn more. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What does it mean to be a responsible citizen? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Research and describe several important sites in Washington, D.C. ● Apply the content of American history to the related monuments, memorials, and museums that we will tour. ● Identify and describe the characteristics of a good tourist.