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# **History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools**

**Adopted in March 2001 by the  
Board of Education**

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# PREFACE

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. The Standards of Learning provide a framework for instructional programs designed to raise the academic achievement of all students in Virginia. Since 1995, school divisions and teachers have worked to incorporate the standards in local curriculum and classroom instruction. The Virginia General Assembly in 2000 directed the Board of Education to establish a cycle for periodic review and revision of the Standards of Learning. Pursuant to that legislation and in response to issues raised by the public, the Board of Education in June 2000 appointed a Task Force comprised of Board members, legislators, community representatives, and social studies educators to direct the review of the History and Social Science Standards of Learning. Review committees of social studies educators revised the standards consistent with recommendations made by the Task Force. The revised History and Social Science Standards of Learning were approved by the Board of Education following a public comment period.

The Task Force directed the review committees to revise the 1995 History and Social Science Standards of Learning and the 1999 History and Social Science Standards of Learning Teacher Resource Guide. This review was conducted to ensure that both the standards and the supplemental teacher resource reflect current scholarship, identify essential content knowledge and skills, and address the academic needs of Virginia students. The revised History and Social Science Standards of Learning incorporate recommendations made by Task Force members. The Task Force recommendations were designed to focus the revision on

- the quantity of content that can be taught and learned effectively in the minimum instructional time prescribed by the Virginia Standards of Accreditation for core academic disciplines;
- the sequential development of content knowledge and skills designed to extend previous academic expectations which are appropriately rigorous for the age of the student for whom the standards are written; and
- the experiences and contributions of men and women of diverse racial, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds.

The Task Force asked review committee members to be judicious in the scope of their revisions, acknowledging the burden to school divisions of aligning curriculum, instructional materials, and professional development initiatives with the revised standards. The committees thoughtfully considered the key events and people to be included. Names of individuals traditionally studied at grades K–3 have been included in the standards for those grades. In keeping with Task Force recommendations to identify content that can be taught within the minimum instructional time, only the names of individuals and events that are crucial to understanding the concepts identified are included in the standards for grades 4–12.

The History and Social Science Standards of Learning are not intended to encompass the entire curriculum for a given grade level or course or to prescribe how the content should be taught. It is understood that these academic standards are to be incorporated into a broader, locally designed curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to go beyond the standards and select instructional strategies and assessment methods appropriate for their students. The History and Social Science Standards of Learning, amplified by the Curriculum Framework, define the essential understandings, knowledge and skills that are measured by the Standards of Learning

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tests. The Curriculum Framework provides additional guidance to school divisions and their teachers as they develop an instructional program appropriate for their students. It assists teachers as they plan their lessons by framing essential questions, identifying essential understandings, defining essential content knowledge, and describing the intellectual skills students need to master. This supplemental guide delineates in greater specificity the minimum content that all teachers should teach and all students should learn. Names of individuals whose study further enriches the standards and clarifies the concepts under investigation will be found in this resource guide.

The History and Social Science Standards of Learning do not prescribe the grade level at which the standards must be taught or a scope and sequence within a grade level. The Board of Education recognizes that local divisions will adopt a K–12 instructional sequence that best serves their students. The design of the Standards of Learning assessment program, however, requires that all Virginia school divisions prepare students to demonstrate achievement of the standards for elementary and middle school history and social science by the grade levels tested. The high school end-of-course Standards of Learning tests, for which students may earn verified units of credit, are administered in a locally determined sequence.

The History and Social Science Standards of Learning and the Standards of Learning assessment program form the core of the Virginia Board of Education’s efforts to strengthen public education across the Commonwealth and to raise the level of academic achievement of all Virginia students.

# INTRODUCTION

## Goals

The study of history and social science is vital in a democratic society. All students need to know and understand our national heritage in order to become informed participants in shaping our nation's future. The History and Social Science Standards of Learning were developed with the assistance of educators, parents, business leaders, and others with an interest in public education.

The History and Social Science Standards of Learning are designed to

- develop the knowledge and skills of history, geography, civics, and economics that enable students to place the people, ideas, and events that have shaped our state and our nation in perspective;
- instill in students a thoughtful pride in the history of America through an understanding that what “We the People of the United States” launched more than two centuries ago was not a perfect union, but a continual effort to build a “more perfect” union, one which has become the world's most successful experiment in constitutional self-government;
- enable students to understand the basic values, principles, and operation of American constitutional democracy;
- prepare students for informed and responsible citizenship;
- develop students' skills in debate, discussion, and writing; and
- provide students with a framework for continuing education in history and the social sciences.

## History

History should be the integrative core of the curriculum, in which both the humanities (such as art and literature) and the social sciences (political science, economics, and geography) come to life. Through the study of history, students can better understand their own society as well as others. By understanding the relationship between past and present, students will be equipped to deal with problems that might arise in the future. Students will understand chronological thinking and the connections between causes and effects and between continuity and change. History enables students to see how people in other times and places have grappled with the fundamental questions of truth, justice, and personal responsibility, to understand that ideas have real consequences, and to realize that events are shaped both by ideas and the actions of individuals.

## Geography

The goal of geography instruction is to provide an understanding of the human and physical characteristics of the earth's places and regions, how people of different cultural backgrounds interact with their environment, and how the United States and the student's home community are affected by conditions and events in distant places. Geographic themes include location, place, human environment, movement, and region. Geographic skills include the ability to use maps, globes, and aerial imagery; to interpret graphs, tables, diagrams, and pictures; to observe and record information; and to assess information from various sources.

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## **Civics**

The goal of civics instruction is to develop in all students the requisite knowledge and skills for informed, responsible participation in public life. Civics instruction should provide regular opportunities at each grade level for students to develop a basic understanding of politics and government and to practice the skills of good citizenship. Students should develop an understanding of the values and principles of American constitutional democracy. They should be aware of their rights; be willing to fulfill their responsibilities; be able to obtain, understand, and evaluate information relating to the performance of public officials; and be willing to hold those officials accountable.

## **Economics**

The United States is recognized as a leader among the nations of the world in large part because of its economic strength. To maintain that strength, American citizens must understand the basic economic principles that underlie the market economy. They must understand how our own economic system works, as well as how other systems work. They must learn to make wise economic decisions about their own lives and become intelligent consumers, employers, and workers. A solid grounding in economics will help students prepare for the global marketplace and the complex world of tomorrow.

## Virginia Studies

The standards for Virginia Studies allow students to develop a greater understanding of Virginia's rich history, from the early settlements of American Indian language groups and the founding of Jamestown to the present. Geographic, economic, and civic concepts are presented within this historic context. Students will develop the skills needed to analyze, interpret, and demonstrate knowledge of important events and ideas in our history, and understand the contributions made by people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Students will use geographic tools to examine the influence of physical and cultural geography on Virginia history. Ideas that form the foundation for political institutions in Virginia and the United States also are included as part of the story of Virginia.

The study of history must emphasize the intellectual skills required for responsible citizenship. Students practice these skills as they extend their understanding of the essential knowledge defined by all of the standards for history and social science.

### Skills

- VS.1 The student will develop skills for historical and geographical analysis including the ability to
- identify and interpret artifacts and primary and secondary source documents to understand events in history;
  - determine cause and effect relationships;
  - compare and contrast historical events;
  - draw conclusions and make generalizations;
  - make connections between past and present;
  - sequence events in Virginia history;
  - interpret ideas and events from different historical perspectives;
  - evaluate and discuss issues orally and in writing;
  - analyze and interpret maps to explain relationships among landforms, water features, climatic characteristics, and historical events.

### Virginia: The Land and Its First Inhabitants

- VS.2 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the geography and early inhabitants of Virginia by
- locating Virginia and its bordering states on maps of the United States;
  - locating and describing Virginia's Coastal Plain (Tidewater), Piedmont, Blue Ridge Mountains, Valley and Ridge, and Appalachian Plateau;
  - locating and identifying water features important to the early history of Virginia (Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay, James River, York River, Potomac River, and Rappahannock River);
  - locating three American Indian (First American) language groups (the Algonquian, the Siouan, and the Iroquoian) on a map of Virginia;
  - describing how American Indians (First Americans) adapted to the climate and their environment to secure food, clothing, and shelter.

### **Colonization and Conflict: 1607 through the American Revolution**

- VS.3 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the first permanent English settlement in America by
- explaining the reasons for English colonization;
  - describing how geography influenced the decision to settle at Jamestown;
  - identifying the importance of the charters of the Virginia Company of London in establishing the Jamestown settlement;
  - identifying the importance of the Virginia Assembly(1619) as the first representative legislative body in English America;
  - identifying the importance of the arrival of Africans and women to the Jamestown settlement;
  - describing the hardships faced by settlers at Jamestown and the changes that took place to ensure survival;
  - describing the interactions between the English settlers and the Powhatan people, including the contributions of the Powhatans to the survival of the settlers.
- VS.4 The student will demonstrate knowledge of life in the Virginia colony by
- explaining the importance of agriculture and its influence on the institution of slavery;
  - describing how European (English, Scotch-Irish, German) immigrants, Africans, and American Indians (First Americans) influenced the cultural landscape and changed the relationship between the Virginia colony and England;
  - explaining how geography influenced the relocation of Virginia’s capital from Jamestown to Williamsburg to Richmond;
  - describing how money, barter, and credit were used.
- VS.5 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of Virginia in the American Revolution by
- identifying the reasons why the colonies went to war with England as expressed in the Declaration of Independence;
  - identifying the various roles played by Virginians in the Revolutionary War era, with emphasis on George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Patrick Henry;
  - identifying the importance of the American victory at Yorktown.

### **Political Growth and Western Expansion: 1781 to the Mid 1800s**

- VS.6 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the role of Virginia in the establishment of the new American nation by
- explaining why George Washington is called the “Father of our Country” and James Madison is called the “Father of the Constitution”;
  - identifying the ideas of George Mason and Thomas Jefferson as expressed in the Virginia Declaration of Rights and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom;
  - explaining the influence of geography on the migration of Virginians into western territories.

### **Civil War and Post-War Eras**

- VS.7 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the issues that divided our nation and led to the Civil War by
- identifying the events and differences between northern and southern states that divided Virginians and led to secession, war, and the creation of West Virginia;
  - describing Virginia's role in the war, including identifying major battles that took place in Virginia.
- VS.8 The student will demonstrate knowledge of the reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War by
- identifying the effects of Reconstruction on life in Virginia;
  - identifying the effects of segregation and "Jim Crow" on life in Virginia;
  - describing the importance of railroads, new industries, and the growth of cities to Virginia's economic development.

### **Virginia: 1900 to the Present**

- VS.9 The student will demonstrate knowledge of twentieth century Virginia by
- describing the economic and social transition from a rural, agricultural society to a more urban, industrialized society, including the reasons people came to Virginia from other states and countries;
  - identifying the social and political events in Virginia linked to desegregation and Massive Resistance and their relationship to national history;
  - identifying the political, social, and/or economic contributions made by Maggie Walker, Harry F. Byrd, Sr., Arthur R. Ashe, Jr., and L. Douglas Wilder.
- VS.10 The student will demonstrate knowledge of government, geography, and economics by
- identifying the three branches of Virginia government and the function of each;
  - describing the major products and industries of Virginia's five geographic regions;
  - explaining how advances in transportation, communications, and technology have contributed to Virginia's prosperity and role in the global economy.