



Middle School Social Studies 2009-2010

Social studies education — curriculum and instruction in history, geography, civics/government, and economics — is uniquely important in the middle school grades. Students at this age are developmentally ready to dramatically deepen their understanding of the Earth and its peoples. They are ready to sharpen their skills of description and analysis, comprehend the rights and responsibilities of citizens in a culturally diverse democracy, and contribute to the common good. Social studies can help students find order in their lives by illustrating patterns and connections of human existence. In social studies, students examine the past and present for clues to the future. Through the perspectives of history, the interactions of people and places in geography, the lessons of rule of law in civics and the economics of society, the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in social studies give students the knowledge and skills they need to participate as responsible and effective citizens in an increasingly complex world.

The teaching of social studies in the schools of the Archdiocese of Seattle is grounded in Catholic values, especially Catholic social teaching because Catholic social teaching is inseparable from our understanding of human life and human dignity. Since every human being is created in the image of God and is therefore invaluable and worthy of respect as a member of the human family, the curriculum emphasizes the rights of individuals, the call to community, and the demands of the common good.

Principals of Catholic social teaching incorporated into the social studies curriculum include: Each person is sacred. Each person is social. We care for creation. All people have rights and responsibilities. We take care of the poor and vulnerable. Workers have rights; work has dignity. Solidarity is our call; we are the keepers of our brothers and sisters.

6th Grade: McDougall/Littell: *Ancient Civilizations*

In sixth grade social studies, students will learn about the world's earliest history and ancient civilizations. They will learn about the origins of civilization, achievements of empires, development of world religions and daily lives of ordinary people. They will examine similarities and differences in these civilizations to better understand how the world we live in today came to be.

Over the course of the year, students will come to their own understanding of the following essential questions:

- What do maps, globes, and charts teach us about the world? What are the five themes of geography?
- What is culture? What are the elements of culture?
- How does physical geography contribute to the political, economic, and cultural development of a particular civilization?
- What geographic factors stimulate the movement of goods, people, and ideas?
- How and why does the rule of law develop in civilizations? How do religion and government exercise authority over people?
- What legacies have been left by ancient civilizations, in particular, on our society? What significant contributions were made that advanced science, technology, and the arts?
- How does the movement of ideas, goods, and people affect cultures? How does trade affect culture? How do different economic systems affect people's daily lives?

Topics of study include:

- *The Tools of History*: How archaeologists study the past; how historians study the past.
- *The Earliest Human Societies*: Hunters and gatherers; learning to farm and raise animals; the first communities.
- *Ancient Mesopotamia*: Geography; the first civilization; life in Sumer.
- *Early Empires*: Mesopotamian empires; Assyria rules the Fertile Crescent; Persia controls southwest Asia.
- *Ancient Egypt*: Gift of the Nile; life in ancient Egypt; the pyramid builders; the new kingdom.
- *Ancient China*: Geography shapes life in Ancient China; China's ancient philosophies; the Qin and the Han; the legacy of ancient China.
- *Ancient Greece*: Geography; beliefs and customs; the City State and Democracy; Sparta and Athens.
- *The Rise of Rome*: Geography; the Roman Republic; Rome becomes an empire; the daily life of Romans.

7th Grade: Gibbs Smith: *Washington in the Pacific Northwest*;
McDougal/Littell: *World History: Medieval and Early Modern Times*

Seventh grade social studies is divided between a study of Washington State History, and World History in medieval and early modern times. In Washington State History, students explore Washington state geography, geology, and native resources. They learn about the Native Americans of the Pacific Northwest, study the emergence of Washington as a state, and explore the impact of the Great Depression and World War II on state development. They also explore Post World War II domestic, political, social and economic issues, and contemporary state government and lifestyle.

Over the course of the year, students will come to their own understanding of the following essential questions:

- How has physical geography affected the growth and development of the state?
- What impact did the development of Washington State have on different cultural groups?
- How did Washington emerge from a territory to achieve statehood?
- What is unique about the government of Washington State and what priorities does it reflect? What are the key industries of Washington State, past and present?
- How did the people of Washington State respond to the political, economic, and social challenges of the Great Depression and World War II? What is the legacy of how those challenges were met?
- What significant political, economic, and social challenges affected Washington State in the post-World War II era? How did these challenges impact individuals and groups of people?
- What challenges face the people of Washington State today? How can citizens work to address these challenges?

In World History, students will review the tools of history, and explore the rise of Islamic civilization, Europe in the Middle Ages, and African Kingdoms, Meso America, and Japan.

Over the course of the year, students will come to their own understanding of the following essential questions:

- How and why does the rule of law develop in civilizations? How do religion and government exercise authority over people?
- What legacies have been left by ancient civilizations, in particular, on our society? What significant contributions were made that advanced science, technology, and the arts?
- How does the movement of ideas, goods, and people affect cultures? How does trade affect culture? How do different economic systems affect people's daily lives?

8th Grade: McDougal/Littell: *Creating America: A History of the United States*

Social studies in the 8th grade includes United States History and Civics. Topics covered include:

- Founding a Government; Structure of Government; Rights and Responsibilities
- Differing Political Systems and Foreign Policy
- Revolution, Constitution and New Nation
- Expansion and Reform; Civil War and Reconstruction
- Industrialization, Immigration, and Urbanization
- World War I, World War II, the Civil Rights Era, Vietnam, and Contemporary History.

Over the course of the year, students will come to their own understanding of the following essential questions:

- How did the United States become a democratic republic?
- What are the origins and continuing influence of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution?
- How are power and responsibility distributed, shared, and limited in the government established by the United States Constitution?
- What are the rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizens? How can citizens participate in civic life?
- How did the United States become a nation and what issues did the young nation face?
- How did the United States expand and what was the social, political, and cultural impact of expansion?
- What progress was made toward social, political, and economic reforms?
- How has the United States dealt with conflict within its own borders and what are the legacies of these conflicts?
- How did industrialization, immigration, migration, and urbanization affect the United States?