

# Reading Public Schools

*Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow*



**Curriculum Guide Social Studies**

**Grade 8**

## Priority Areas

### United States and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life

Students study the roots and foundations of U.S. democracy, how and why it has developed over time, and the role of individuals in maintaining a healthy democracy. They study these topics by exploring guiding questions such as, “How have concepts of liberty and justice affected the United States democratic system of government?” and “How can power be balanced in government?” Additional supporting questions appear under each topic. The questions are included to stimulate teachers’ and students’ own questions for discussion and research.

## Practice Standards

- Demonstrate civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions.
- Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries.
- Organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources.
- Analyze the purpose and point of view of each source; distinguish opinion from fact.
- Evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source.
- Argue or explain conclusions, using valid reasoning and evidence.
- Determine next steps to take informed action, as appropriate.

## Literacy Standards

- Read and comprehend history/social studies texts exhibiting complexity appropriate for grade 8
- Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources
- Write informative/explanatory texts, including the narration of historical events
- Initiate and participate effectively in a range of collaborative discussions

## Grade 8 History and Social Science Topics

Topic 1. The philosophical foundations of the United States political system

Topic 2. The development of the United States government

Topic 3. The institutions of the United States government

Topic 4. Rights and responsibilities of citizens

Topic 5. The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court decisions

Topic 6. The structure of Massachusetts state and local government

Topic 7. Freedom of the press and news/media literacy



<b>Units of Study</b>	<b>Essential Questions</b>	<b>Key Activities</b>
<b>Topic 1: The philosophical foundations of the United States political system</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What were the roots of the ideas that influenced the development of the United States political system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Analysis of primary source documents, scholarly sources, &amp; connections between history and current events</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 2: The development of the United States government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did the framers of the Constitution attempt to address issues of power and freedom in the design of the new political system?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop active reading strategies such as annotating, sourcing, contextualizing, corroborating, and close reading</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 3: The institutions of United States government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How do the institutions of the United States political system work?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Variety of writing assignments</li> <li>• Class debates and seminar style discussions</li> <li>• Tests &amp; quizzes</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 4: Rights and responsibilities of citizens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the role of the individual in maintaining a healthy democracy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Conduct short as well as more sustained re- search projects</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments and Supreme Court decisions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How has the content and interpretation of the Constitution evolved over time?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage with and create a variety of media such as political cartoons, photographs, documentary films, song lyrics</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 6: The structure of Massachusetts state and local government</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the role of state and local government in the U.S. political system?</li> </ul>	
<b>Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does a free press support a democratic government?</li> </ul>	

# Reading Public Schools

*Instilling a joy of learning and inspiring the innovative leaders of tomorrow*



## Curriculum Guide Overview

### Curriculum Guide

Curriculum guides are public documents aligned with the Massachusetts Department of Education Curriculum Frameworks. They focus on the set of standards that students will learn within certain disciplines at appropriate grade levels. Each area of the curriculum is divided into general strands (broad categories) under which the standards fall. When we discuss “standards-based education” we mean that students are measured against their proficiency and growth towards meeting these standards. Curriculum Guides are intended for teachers, parents, and the wider school community as an overview document of the course of study for the year.

### Curriculum Map

Curriculum maps are internal documents utilized as planning tools for teachers. Curriculum maps keep a focus on the end-of-year standards and chart a course for the teaching and learning over the year. They are typically organized in a grade-level overview organized by month or marking period. Curriculum maps typically include; standards and expectations for the grade/content, essential skills/concepts, methods of assessment, and major content resources. Maps are never “done” as ongoing work of educators include revisions, additions, and revisits to the maps. They provide an overview for the year while also allowing educators to see a vertical picture of how the content develops as students progress through each grade.

### Practice Standards

Students practice the skills used by historians, political scientists, economists, geographers, and ordinary citizens. Students practice research and inquiry skills and processes necessary for a thorough curriculum and to better prepare for citizenship.

### Priority Areas

Priority areas are defined by the state of Massachusetts as the most critical areas in each grade level on which instructional time should focus.

### Literacy Standards

When learning civics, geography, history, and economics, students will practice strong literacy skills. The Literacy Standards for History and Social Science are directly linked to the Massachusetts English Language Arts and Literacy Curriculum Framework.

### Essential Questions

Essential questions are questions that are not answerable with an easy answer or a simple instruction. The purpose of essential questions is to provide opportunities for inquiry into the learning and act as an umbrella to anchor the unit/lesson.

### Key Activities

Key Activities are not final. The activities are examples of what typically may occur throughout the curriculum as students learn and experience the content.