

# Understanding Your Child's Social Studies Education in North Carolina: Grades K-8

## Welcome!

This guide will help you understand what your child will learn in North Carolina Social Studies for grades K-8. The social studies standards cover behavioral sciences, civics/government, economics/financial literacy, geography, U.S. history, and world history. The National Council for the Social Studies defines Social Studies as “Social studies is the study of individuals, communities, systems, and their interactions across time and place that prepares students for local, national, and global civic life.” Examples of students' work include understanding behavioral sciences, promoting civic engagement, understanding economic decision-making, and achieving financial literacy.

Within the K-8 Social Studies Standards framework, your child will engage in activities and assignments that showcase their understanding of concepts and conceptual ideas. Students will explore culture and human behavior through the disciplinary strand of behavioral sciences. Through the political science focus on civics and government, students will examine the structure and function of governments, the foundations and participatory nature of government, and ways to promote civic engagement, develop a sense of responsibility, and understand the role of the individual within their community. When students study social studies through the lens of economics, they are asked to analyze the factors that influence economic choices and decision-making. The economic lens of social studies fosters critical thinking and problem-solving skills necessary for making decisions in everyday life that satisfy human wants and needs. Additionally, students will work towards achieving financial literacy, gaining the knowledge and skills necessary for sound financial decision-making in their lives.

The discipline most familiar to people in the study of social studies is history. History is the study of change over time and how the societies we live in come to be. Through the lens of History, students study aspects of human society and use narratives to examine and analyze sequences of past events to objectively determine the patterns of cause and effect. In geography, students will explore state, national, and global landscapes and the geography of their local community. Geography focuses on the study of place and the relationships between people and their environments. Students will examine how humans interact with the natural environment and how “place” impacts people, their beliefs, the way people live, and the things they do in the places they live. Although history and geography are quite similar, the difference between the lens of history and the lens of geography is that history studies events and people with a focus on change over time - “when” and “how,” while geography focuses on the “where” and “spatial perspective.” As a parent, you can look forward to witnessing the growth of your child's understanding and application of these essential social studies concepts, fostering a well-rounded and socially aware learner.

## Social Studies Overview: Grades K-8

### What Your Child Will Learn:

From Kindergarten to 8th grade, your child will use inquiry skills to explore the history, geography, economy, government, and culture of their local community, North Carolina, the United States, and the world. They will learn about important events, diverse cultures, and how the past shapes our present. Inquiry learning allows students to use the lenses of a historian, geographer, economist, or political scientist to gain knowledge and deepen their understanding of the past and today's world. The inquiry process in each grade and course of the North Carolina Social Studies Standard Course of Study asks students to inquire, think critically, evaluate sources, use evidence, solve problems, communicate ideas, and take action.

### Conceptual Knowledge by Grade Span

The table below provides examples of understandings and skills your child will learn in grades K-8 in history, geography, economics, civics and government, and behavioral sciences. They demonstrate how students' ideas and conceptual understandings become increasingly sophisticated as they progress through grades K-8.

These are assessment examples that align with the NC Social Studies standards. The assessments presented here are not exhaustive, and teachers may use various methods to assess student understanding. The assessments provided are only examples, offering insight into the tasks students might encounter to demonstrate their knowledge, skills, and understanding of learning.

HISTORY STRAND		
Grade Band	Understandings What will students learn	Assessment Examples What students should be able to do
K-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People and places change over time</li><li>• The historical contributions of people and events to communities locally and around the world</li></ul>	<p><b>Kindergarten:</b> After discussing changes that may occur in people's lives, students use pictures to document examples of how they have changed over time.</p> <p><b>1st Grade:</b> After studying how people change communities, the teacher assigns each student one choice that a historical person made. On a worksheet with an outline of a body, students list the causes and effects of the historical person's choice inside the outline. The causes and effects should describe how that person's achievements changed a community or the course of history.</p> <p><b>2nd Grade:</b> Students read an article about a historical figure. Students then participate in a role-play activity where they emulate the historical figure they read about and summarize their contribution and influence on American history.</p>

3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant people and events shape history and are often memorialized with monuments or other symbols</li> <li>• Different groups of people, including women, other minorities, and indigenous populations, have played significant roles in shaping North Carolina and American history</li> </ul>	<p><b>3rd Grade:</b> Students write short descriptions for famous wax museum figures explaining their contributions to their local community. Students then act out short presentations or monologues.</p> <p><b>4th Grade:</b> After reading an article about how women's roles in North Carolina have changed over time, students use images and short captions to create a slideshow. The slideshow should serve as a summary of how their roles have changed over time.</p> <p><b>5th Grade:</b> Students study how society viewed women's roles through World War II in the United States. Afterward, students write a letter to women of the past explaining how their contribution helped shape the lives of women today in the United States.</p>
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals and groups can cause change in a society through the influence of ideas, technology, and cooperative efforts</li> <li>• Individuals may often overcome oppression and injustice through resistance and resilience</li> <li>• Technology and innovation contribute to change in societies</li> </ul>	<p><b>6th Grade:</b> Students create a presentation explaining how an achievement of ancient history impacts present-day society.</p> <p><b>7th Grade:</b> Students will read articles about two different responses to globalization. Students will create a Venn diagram comparing the similarities and differences in the responses to globalization.</p> <p><b>8th Grade:</b> Students are assigned a person who contributed to the development of North Carolina or the United States. Students create a short one-page resume that lists all the ways the person impacted North Carolina or the United States.</p>
<b>GEOGRAPHY STRAND</b>		
<b>Grade Band</b>	<b>Understandings</b> What will students learn	<b>Assessment Examples</b> What students should be able to do
K-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People impact places and the environment</li> <li>• The environment impacts the movement and location of people.</li> <li>• The movement of people impacts the environment and place</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kindergarten:</b> The teacher chooses a location on the map for students to explore. The students are asked to point to various physical features on maps, globes, and/or other digital representations.</p> <p><b>1st Grade:</b> The teacher selects a region of the world for students to explore using Google Maps. Students work in pairs or groups of three to identify the various landforms they find.</p> <p><b>2nd Grade:</b> After reading about a specific period of movement, migration, or settlement, students work in groups to paraphrase what prompted people or the idea to move and how it impacted development in America.</p>

3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Geography and place impact the movement of people within local communities, the state, and our nation</li> <li>• The movement of people impacts geography within local communities, the state, and our nation</li> </ul>	<p><b>3rd Grade:</b> Students write a sales pitch explaining why the climate and physical environment of a specific geographic location is the ideal place to live. The students' sales pitches must include how the environment and climate impact their way of life in their chosen location.</p> <p><b>4th Grade:</b> Students read an article regarding the decision or experiences of a person or group of people choosing to leave North Carolina and migrate to other places in the United States during a time period determined by the teacher or connected to the topic being studied. The students create a newspaper headline that summarizes the reasons for the forced or voluntary migration.</p> <p><b>5th Grade:</b> Students create a poster that explains the push/pull factors for immigrants entering the United States, between 1880-1920, through the Ellis Island and Angel Island immigration stations.</p>
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Location and place may impact the movement and migration of people</li> <li>• The development of civilizations and societies impacts the environment</li> </ul>	<p><b>6th Grade:</b> Students complete a chart showing how an innovation or particular technology was the cause of people migrating or settling in a civilization. The chart should also show how the innovation or particular technology influenced the movement of goods and ideas in a civilization.</p> <p><b>7th Grade:</b> Students will examine charts and graphs of population growth and decline of an assigned nation and explain how at least one to two changes impacted the society.</p> <p><b>8th Grade:</b> Students annotate a topographical map of North Carolina in a way that summarizes three human characteristics and three physical characteristics of each region.</p>

### ECONOMICS STRAND

Grade Band	Understandings What will students learn	Assessment Examples What students should be able to do
K-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Scarcity and Resources impact economic decisions and choices</li> <li>• Meeting the needs and wants of individuals is determined by the number of available resources</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kindergarten:</b> As a class, students create a list of wants and needs and discuss items on the list that could be a want for some and a need for others.</p> <p><b>1st Grade:</b> As a class, students discuss what they recognize about the demand for ice cream and the supply of ice cream available based on the prompt: <i>In December, the price of ice cream went down. How can we use the concept of supply and demand to understand the price drop?</i></p>

		<b>2nd Grade:</b> Students read a scenario about a furniture factory that makes tough decisions due to limited resources. Students write an explanation of how the limited resources dictate what can and can not be produced.
<b>3-5</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of resources, production, and supply and demand affect people's choices and impact economic growth and decline</li> <li>• Production and supply and demand are influenced by the availability of resources</li> <li>• There are positive and negative outcomes of personal financial decisions</li> </ul>	<p><b>3rd Grade:</b> Students read an article about the supply and demand of a good or service in a community. Students then write a 3-5 sentence summary about the role supply and demand play in the local economy, using evidence from the text.</p> <p><b>4th Grade:</b> Students read about various North Carolina industries. On a map of North Carolina, students plot where lumber is grown, fish is caught, and other resources are located. Students then explain how those resources are spread around the state and how the availability of these resources impacts production from various industries.</p> <p><b>5th Grade:</b> Students read about assembly lines and mass production and write a paragraph explaining how industrialization impacted economic growth in the United States.</p>
<b>6-8</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic factors and decisions impact economic systems, societies, individuals, communities, and businesses</li> <li>• Industry and trade impact the economy and economic growth and decline</li> </ul>	<p><b>6th Grade:</b> Students work in pairs to create a table/chart showing various economic reasons for the rise and fall of the assigned civilization, empire, or society. The table/chart should include the following column headings: 1) Civilization/Empire/Society; 2) Economic Factors Leading to Rise; and 3) Economic Factors Leading to Decline.</p> <p><b>7th Grade:</b> Students will create a cause and effect diagram detailing a government's power and authority, how the power/authority has created conflict and how that conflict has led to change.</p> <p><b>8th Grade:</b> Students create their own scenarios of financial decision-making. The students must tell how the economic decision impacts the economy.</p>

## CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT STRAND

Grade Band	Understandings What will students learn	Assessment Examples What students should be able to do
<b>K-2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individuals play a role in shaping their community and government</li> <li>• Government and authority should help make people's lives better and protect their rights</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kindergarten:</b> As a group, students create a cause-and-effect chart of what could happen if someone didn't follow a particular rule (e.g., running in the classroom, falling, and getting hurt).</p> <p><b>1st Grade:</b> Given a list of different types of people in a community, students give the teacher an example of how each person on the list helps to shape the</p>

		<p>community. This may be done orally, through drawings, or in writing.</p> <p><b>2nd Grade:</b> After studying the three branches, students complete a Triple Bubble Thinking Map in order to demonstrate their understanding of the similarities and differences between the three branches.</p>
3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Groups and individuals may influence state and local governments</li> <li>• Rights and responsibilities of individuals are reflected in the constitution</li> <li>• The structure, function, roles, and responsibilities of government</li> </ul>	<p><b>3rd Grade:</b> Students work in a group to create a script for a 3-5 minute TV show that teaches children about the structure of government and compares the roles of different state and local government entities. Students perform their brief TV show skit.</p> <p><b>4th Grade:</b> The teacher provides a list of rights and responsibilities reflected in the North Carolina Constitution. Students create a tree map that points out and differentiates the rights and responsibilities of citizens in the state constitution.</p> <p><b>5th Grade:</b> Students are provided with a list of actions each of the three branches could take in a given scenario. Students distinguish the ones that are most likely to help the branches successfully work together to resolve the issue and explain why they chose what they did.</p>
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beliefs and ideas help shape government and society</li> <li>• Governments can be based on the ideals and beliefs of the society from which they form or from outside influences</li> </ul>	<p><b>6th Grade:</b> Students choose two governments they have been studying. The students then create a Venn Diagram showing the similarities and differences of the structures of the two governments.</p> <p><b>7th Grade:</b> Students will be given an international economic organization (World Bank, IMF, OPEC, etc.). They will explain the reasons for the formation of that organization as well as the impact of that organization around the world.</p> <p><b>8th Grade:</b> Students watch a video or read about the preamble of the United States' Constitution and summarize the democratic ideals with a storyboard or series of political cartoons.</p>
<b>BEHAVIORAL SCIENCE STRAND</b>		
<b>Grade Band</b>	<b>Understandings</b> What will students learn	<b>Assessment Examples</b> What students should be able to do
K-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The culture and cultural practices of a community reflect the values of the people who live in the community (global focus)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Kindergarten:</b> As a class, students create charts showing categories that identify cultural practices for places around the world (e.g., When studying American Indians, students would compare the different types of homes and discuss the similarities and differences).</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The concepts of culture, community, and cultural practice undergird values, beliefs, and development of identity, which begins to be the focus in grades 3-5</li> </ul>	<p><b>1st Grade:</b> From a list, students pick cultural practices that people and groups have in common around the world.</p> <p><b>2nd Grade:</b> Students create a museum mural that explains how American Indian communities have influenced culture in America.</p>
3-5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity, values, and beliefs contribute to the cultural development of local places, states, and nations</li> </ul>	<p><b>3rd Grade:</b> Students create a Venn Diagram to compare the visual arts created by two different groups in their community. After completing the Venn Diagram, students write a short paragraph about the similarities and differences between the groups.</p> <p><b>4th Grade:</b> Students read about 3 North Carolina cultures and write a newspaper article explaining how each culture contributed to the development of North Carolina.</p> <p><b>5th Grade:</b> Students study the life of indigenous populations before and after contact with other cultural groups. Students then design a museum exhibit, complete with artifacts with descriptions, that demonstrates their findings and how indigenous populations influenced American identity.</p>
6-8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identity, values, and beliefs contribute to the cultural development of states, nations, and civilizations</li> </ul>	<p><b>6th Grade:</b> Students develop a cultural exhibit in a museum for a chosen civilization in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Pacific Islands, or the Americas. The student's exhibit plan should include examples of art, monuments, sculptures, and literature and explain how each item in the museum reflects the values of that civilization.</p> <p><b>7th Grade:</b> Students will complete a chart that shows how the values and beliefs within a society or nation positively or negatively affect justice and equality.</p> <p><b>8th Grade:</b> Students compare and contrast communication styles of various regional, social, ethnic, and racial groups to understand how such communication has contributed to the development of North Carolina and the nation.</p>

## How to Help Your Child at Home:

As a parent, your involvement is crucial in enhancing your child's understanding of history, geography, and the world around them. Here are some concrete ways to actively contribute to their learning at home. Incorporating these activities into your family routine creates a supportive environment that complements and enriches your child's social studies education.

- **Two-Way Communication:** Foster a collaborative partnership with your child's classroom teacher. Meet with your child's teacher(s) early in the year and help the teacher get to know your child. Recognizing the teacher's efforts in the classroom is also a great way to show support for your child and the teacher. Making intentional efforts to say "thank you" also helps foster positive communication between the home and the classroom. Taking part in school events whenever possible is another way to foster positive communication.
- **Ask Thoughtful Questions:** Engage your child in meaningful conversations about what they've learned in social studies. Please encourage them to share their thoughts, questions, and insights. By fostering open dialogue, you create a space for them to express and solidify their understanding.
  - Examples of Questions you may consider asking:
    - What events or historical figures have you found most interesting in your history class?
    - How do you think the past has shaped the present? Can you give me an example?
    - How does geography influence people's lives in different parts of the world?
    - Why do you think it's important for citizens to participate in their government?
    - What have you learned about making wise financial decisions or budgeting?
    - Is there anything you find particularly interesting or concerning happening in the world?
    - How do you think global events can impact our community or country?
- **Read Together:** Explore a world of knowledge through literature. Incorporate books and articles about history, culture, and social studies into your reading routine. Visit your local library together, allowing your child to choose topics that intrigue them.
- **Visit Museums and Historical Sites:** Transform learning into a family adventure by visiting museums and historical sites. These outings reinforce classroom lessons and provide a hands-on and memorable way for your child to connect with their study subjects.
  - Free museums and historical sites you can visit in North Carolina:
    - North Carolina Museum of Natural Sciences (Raleigh)
    - North Carolina Museum of History (Raleigh)
    - North Carolina Museum of Art (Raleigh)
    - North Carolina Maritime Museums (Beaufort, Southport, Hatteras)
    - North Carolina Museum of the Coastal Plain (Tarboro)



- North Carolina Transportation Museum (Spencer)
  - Historic Bath (Bath)
  - Guilford Courthouse National Military Park (Greensboro)
  - Fort Raleigh National Historic Site (Manteo)
  - Wright Brothers National Memorial (Kill Devil Hills)
  - Museum of the Cherokee Indian (Cherokee)
- **Media Literacy Discussions:** Stay informed about current events by watching the news together. Take the opportunity to discuss what's happening globally and locally. This practice deepens your child's awareness of the world and nurtures their critical thinking skills. Discuss news articles, advertisements, or online content together. Teach your child to critically evaluate sources, identify biases, and distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.
- **Vote Together:** Transform civic engagement into a family affair by discussing choices and planning to vote together. This hands-on experience introduces your child to the democratic process and instills a sense of responsibility for active citizenship.
- **Document Family History:** Explore your family's history together. Encourage your child to interview relatives, look at old photos, and discover shared stories. This enhances their understanding of history and connects them to their heritage.
- **Create a Travel Journal:** Encourage your child to maintain a journal if your family enjoys travel. Documenting experiences from various locations fosters an appreciation for diverse landscapes, cultures, and histories.
- **Financial Literacy Activities:** Introduce age-appropriate financial concepts. Create a simple budget together, discuss saving money, or involve your child in making informed purchasing decisions.
- **Learn Online With Your Child Using Teacher Suggested Resources. Here Are Several Safe and Vetted Online Learning Sites:**
  - [iCivics](#) provides a platform to engage students in meaningful civic learning. They provide free inventive resources to ensure every student receives a high-quality civic education. As the largest provider of civics curriculum in the country, it is used in 50 states by over 110,000 teachers.
  - [Kids in the House](#) is a public service website provided by the Office of the Clerk of the U.S. House of Representatives. Its mission is to provide educational and entertaining information about the legislative branch of the United States Government to students of all ages. Topics covered include the role of the U.S. House of Representatives, the legislative process, and House history.
  - [Center for Civic Education](#) promotes an enlightened and responsible citizenry committed to democratic principles and actively engaged in the practice of democracy. It develops high-quality curriculum materials, provides exceptional professional development for teachers, and advocates for stronger civic education in the United States and emerging democracies.

**Resources:**

The following resources can be found at the link below:

- State Board of Education Approved K-12 Social Studies Standards
- Crosswalk
- Unpacking
- Strand Maps
- Glossary
- Graduation Requirements & Credit Allowances

[NCDPI Social Studies Resources](#)