
Draft Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) Social Studies

Subject Overview

What is social studies?

Social studies is the study of history, geography, economics, civics and citizenship, and government and politics. Students explore important questions and actively engage with issues to understand lessons from the past and to become active and well-informed citizens in their communities. Students use a knowledge-based curriculum and combine social science methods, including research, source evaluation and evidence interpretation, to enhance understanding, draw conclusions and build robust critical-thinking skills.

History

Social studies gives students a strong understanding of local, national and international history. By understanding the past, students can interpret the present. By learning about societies, cultures and civilizations, students will be equipped to understand the origins of current events and the roles of institutions.

Critical thinking

Social studies equips students with essential critical-thinking skills. Alberta's social studies curriculum encourages students to question assumptions and ask questions. Students will also develop an understanding of research methods and the importance of knowing how to analyze source information objectively.

Supporting active and responsible citizens

Social studies empowers students to become active and responsible citizens by developing their critical-thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills. Students will learn about the importance of rights and responsibilities and will understand the various ways in which citizens can and should participate in their communities.

K-12 social studies snapshot by grade

The snapshots below provide an overview of the content students will explore in each grade.

Kindergarten: Culture, tradition and community

Children explore tradition, history, culture and language as they:

- develop a sense of self in relation to their community and others
- examine needs and wants, belonging and working together
- understand rules, expectations and civic responsibility

Content covered in Kindergarten includes:

- places in communities
- culture and traditions
- needs and wants
- leaders in communities
- civic responsibilities

Grade 1: Local communities and cultures

Students explore traditions and cultures in their local community as they:

- develop understanding of themselves and those around them to appreciate the ways in which people work together
- understand roles and responsibilities in the community

Content covered in Grade 1 includes:

- key features of our physical world, including landmarks
- First Nations, Métis, Inuit and francophone communities
- goods and services, buying and selling
- respecting diverse cultures
- Canada's official symbols

Grade 2: Canada (Communities and heritage)

Students develop an understanding of Canada and build an appreciation of the diversity of people and places as they:

- explore Canada's Indigenous communities
- build an understanding of Canada's political structure and decision-making process, and engage in democratic discussions

Content covered in Grade 2 includes:

- Canada's physical regions, provinces and territories
- leaders in Canada, including the prime minister, the premiers, the King, and First Nations, Métis and Inuit leaders
- traditions and heritages across Canada, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit
- opinions, forming opinions and distinguishing facts from opinions
- basic economic concepts of buying and selling and exchanging goods to meet needs and wants in communities

Grade 3: Alberta and the prairies

Students explore the people and places in Alberta and Western Canada as they:

- develop understanding of the contributions and perspectives of diverse Albertans over time
- learn stories of First Nations, Métis, Inuit, francophone and immigrant communities
- recognize Alberta's unique geographic features, official symbols and government structure

Content covered in Grade 3 includes:

- physical geography of Alberta
- First Nations and Métis contributions to Alberta
- francophone settlement and contributions to Alberta
- provincial and municipal governments
- Alberta's official symbols
- Alberta's natural resources
- voting, charitable giving and volunteerism

Grade 4: Colonial Canada and Confederation

Students explore the arrival of French explorers and traders and investigate the transition from French to British rule and events leading up to Confederation as they:

- develop an understanding of how colonial Canada evolved and resulted in the establishment of Canada
- explore how the French and British interacted with First Nations

Content covered in Grade 4 includes:

- Jacques Cartier and early settlements
- Samuel de Champlain and the establishment of Quebec City and New France
- the Treaty of Paris and the transfer of Canada to the British
- United Empire Loyalists
- the Rebellions of 1837, the Durham Report, responsible government and Confederation
- the fur trade and Canada's natural resources
- citizenship rights and responsibilities

Grade 5: Ancient civilizations

Students explore the enduring legacies of civilizations as they:

- develop appreciation of the ways societies were founded around the world, the contributions of those empires to contemporary life and patterns of change
- investigate civilizations and empires: their political and social structures, their belief systems and the importance of rivers and waterways to their establishment and survival
- examine the major technological, social and economic innovations and discoveries that are still used today or that have influenced the development of modern society

Content covered in Grade 5 includes:

- ancient civilizations (China, Greece, India, Rome, Persia and Mesopotamia)
- trade networks, farming, agriculture and the importance of rivers
- authoritarian governments, social structures
- ways ancient civilizations and empires influence society today
- the origins of taxes and their use by government

Grade 6: Democracy (History, principles and operation)

Students explore the principles of democracy, including history and development as they:

- explore the history, principles and operation of democracy
- investigate the historical evolution of democracy
- examine the importance of active and responsible civic participation as the foundation of a democratic society
- compare select democratic decision-making models used today

Content covered in Grade 6 includes:

- Athenian democracy, Roman Republic and Iroquois democracy
- creation of laws, rights and freedoms
- provincial government
- formal and informal civic participation
- direct democracy vs. representative democracy
- economic freedom and personal choice

Grade 7: Canada (Building a nation)

Students explore post-Confederation Canada as they:

- explore the territorial expansion of Confederation westward
- understand the creation of the Canadian identity and Canada's path to sovereignty

Content covered in Grade 7 includes:

- the Fathers of Confederation
- the Numbered Treaties
- the Red River conflict, Métis provisional government and the establishment of the RCMP
- expansion west, including discrimination against immigrant communities
- development of Canada's military and Canada's role in the First World War
- Canada's natural resource-based economy

Grade 8: Political parties, ideologies and party organization

Students explore political ideologies, types of governments and political parties as they:

- compare the operations of democracies
- explore political ideologies, branches of government and types of government

Content covered in Grade 8 includes:

- political ideologies, including liberalism, conservatism, socialism, communism and green
- types of governments, including monarchies, dictatorships and parliamentary/presidential democracies
- government spending, debt and deficits
- planned economics vs. free-market economies
- branches of government and roles of parliamentarians
- active involvement in the political process through volunteering, nominations, party memberships, conventions and local riding associations

Grade 9: Building the Canadian identity

Students develop understanding of Canada's growing political and economic roles and responsibilities both to its citizens and to the international community as they:

- focus on the expansion of the Dominion of Canada and its transition toward a sovereign, pluralistic Canada
- contrast Canada's contributions internationally with the challenges of extending rights to all citizens
- explore Canada's mixed economy in regard to balancing support for citizens and economic growth

Content covered in Grade 9 includes:

- suffrage, the Famous Five
- Japanese internment, the Sixties Scoop and residential schools
- Canada's role in the Second World War
- Canada's role in NATO and peacekeeping
- non-European immigration to Canada
- growth of Canada's economy, NAFTA and free trade
- rights and responsibilities of Canadians

Grade 10: Expanding global interactions

Students explore the impact of changing ideas and technology on global development as they:

- examine the works of social, economic and political philosophers
- relate causes and consequences of economic, social and political changes to contemporary times
- examine the relationship between rising nationalism, revolutions and authoritarianism

Content covered in Grade 10 includes:

- the Renaissance and the Islamic Golden Age
- the Magna Carta, the English Civil War and the supremacy of parliament over the King
- the Peace of Westphalia and the development of nation-states
- the age of European exploration and colonization
- mercantilism and economic theories of Adam Smith, John Maynard Keynes and Karl Marx
- the political philosophies of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, Machiavelli, Aristotle and Plato
- the decline of absolute monarchies
- free speech

Grade 11: Global conflict and cooperation

Students explore the major conflicts of the 20th century and the rise of multilateralism and cooperation as they:

- examine identity-based conflict, genocides and mass killings
- explore the rise of multilateralism and Canada's contribution to global peace and security

Content covered in Grade 11 includes:

- the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War
- the Holocaust, Holodomor and genocides
- civil rights movements, apartheid in South Africa
- development of a global economy, International Monetary Fund, World Bank
- the establishment of the state of Israel and conflict in the Middle East
- victims of communism
- global economy and currency exchange
- European integration, the EU
- multilateralism, NATO and the UN

Grade 12: A changing world

Students will apply knowledge to contemporary issues in society as they:

- explore current and emerging threats to global peace and security
- investigate the most recent political developments and election outcomes in Alberta and Canada
- examine contemporary economic challenges and the future of the global economy
- explore the future of Canada's military

Content covered in Grade 12 includes:

- terrorism, September 11
- foreign affairs, military modernization, Arctic security
- policy positions of political parties
- the Euro and single monetary policy
- diplomacy and the roles of ambassadors, consul generals, embassies and foreign offices

K-12 social studies learning by discipline

Below are examples of what students will learn from Kindergarten to Grade 12 across areas of study.

History

- build foundational knowledge across local, provincial, national and global contexts to deepen understandings of the past, the present and implications for the future
- recognize that diverse cultures, histories, contributions and perspectives support a pluralistic society
- learn about histories, contributions and perspectives of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities
- learn about histories, contributions and perspectives of francophone communities
- understand the valour and heroism exhibited by Canadian soldiers through global events and conflicts
- learn about the history of Canada and its journey to sovereignty
- explore the histories of Alberta, Canada and the world from ancient to modern times, connecting prior knowledge to new learning contexts
- examine how those in the past understood themselves and how that helps us know ourselves today
- examine the past to create connections to issues and challenges in the present and to shape and contribute to a better world in the future

Geography

- explore physical features of Alberta, Canada and the world
- learn about interactions between people and the environment
- study the movement of goods and people globally to build connections between the land, ways of life, resource use and sustainability
- develop awareness of the location and significance of First Nations and francophone communities in Alberta, Métis settlements in Alberta and the territories of the Numbered Treaties

Economics

- build an understanding of economics and economic systems
- examine the impact of agreements, innovations, choices, interventions and ethics on an economy
- examine the importance of natural resources to Alberta's and Canada's economies
- explore taxation, government spending, deficits and debt
- contrast planned and free-market economies
- investigate competing economic theories
- build an understanding of interest rates, inflation and the effects of government spending

Civics

- explore how to be an active, engaged and responsible citizen
- understand and learn from different cultures and traditions to build intercultural tolerance and understanding
- recognize the difference between opinions and facts and differentiate between the two
- understand the importance of charitable giving and volunteerism
- learn about rights and responsibilities of citizens
- understand voting, the democratic process and how to participate to the fullest extent possible
- recognize the importance of obeying the law and protecting equality under the law
- explore the public policy development process
- understand how citizens can be involved in political parties

Politics

- learn about national and provincial official symbols
- understand leadership and recognize leaders in our communities, province and country
- understand the structure of government in Canada and Alberta
- explore the role that MLAs and MPs play and how they contribute to democracy
- examine the evolution of power and authority through history
- recognize the differences between direct democracy and representative democracy
- learn about political ideologies, party systems, parliamentary organization, party operations, branches of government and types of governments
- understand how decisions are made in our political system, including the power and authority of Cabinet and ministers
- examine the works of key political philosophers and contrast their positions
- understand supranational governments, foreign affairs and diplomacy