



# ELEMENTARY SOCIAL STUDIES



---

UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS  
*for*  
**SOCIAL STUDIES**

---

Adopted December 2022  
by the  
Utah State Board of Education

Utah State Board of Education  
250 East 500 South  
P.O. Box 144200  
Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200

Sydney Dickson, Ed.D.  
State Superintendent of Public Instruction

[www.schools.utah.gov](http://www.schools.utah.gov)



# UTAH STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

250 East 500 South P. O. Box 144200 Salt Lake City, UT 84114-4200  
<https://schools.utah.gov/board>

<i>District</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>City</i>
District 1	<b>Jennie L. Earl</b>	Morgan, UT
District 2	<b>Scott L. Hansen</b>	Liberty, UT
District 3	<b>Matt Hymas</b>	Stansbury Park, UT
District 4	<b>Brent J. Strate</b>	South Ogden, UT
District 5	<b>Laura Belnap</b>	Bountiful, UT
District 6	<b>Stacey Hutchings</b>	Kearns, UT
District 7	<b>Carol Barlow Lear</b>	Salt Lake City, UT
District 8	<b>Janet A. Cannon</b>	Holladay, UT
District 9	<b>Cindy Davis</b>	Cedar Hills, UT
District 10	<b>Molly Hart</b>	Sandy, UT
District 11	<b>Natalie Cline</b>	Bluffdale, UT
District 12	<b>James Moss Jr.</b>	Midway, UT
District 13	<b>Randy Boothe</b>	Spanish Fork, UT
District 14	<b>Mark Huntsman</b>	Fillmore, UT
District 15	<b>Kristan Norton</b>	St. George, UT
	<b>Sydnee Dickson</b>	State Superintendent of Public Instruction
	<b>Cybil Child</b>	Secretary to the Board

# Utah Elementary Social Studies Standards

Elementary students are deeply curious and full of questions. They may ask, “How did people build those things?” or “Why can’t countries seem to get along?” or even “How can I make a difference in the world?” One place they can find answers is in social studies. Social Studies is the study of the physical world and our place in it, which involves oral traditions, biographies, dances, artifacts, writings and original documents, and other aspects of culture that comprise the record of human life.

Effective social studies instruction in the elementary classroom encourages this inherent curiosity of young people. A firm grounding in rich and engaging content knowledge about history, geography, civics, and economics lifts learning for all students. This rich content knowledge — coupled with essential skills development — helps students deepen their understanding of the world around them. This deeper understanding will also help reach a central overarching goal of effective social studies instruction: to help young people develop civic competence including the ability to make informed decisions for the public good.

Developing civic competence is one of the fundamental purposes of public schools. The Utah State Board of Education’s [vision statement](#) strives for the civic engagement of students, as well as civic education. Utah [statute](#) defines civic education as “the cultivation of informed, responsible participation in political life by competent citizens committed to the fundamental values and principles of representative democracy in Utah and the United States.” A thorough study of American history and government is an essential component of responsible citizenship.

The future progress of our communities, state, nation, and world rests upon the preparation of young people to collaboratively and deliberately address problems, defend their own rights and liberties — as well as the rights and liberties of others — and to balance personal preferences with the common good. *E pluribus unum*, or “out of many one,” emphasizes the idea that a varied and diverse people contribute to a unifying national identity. This rich phrase adds depth and understanding to our complex national history. Students are led to enquire about the character and talents of all Americans, which in turn promotes a greater understanding about their own individual contributions and the value they add to this nation.

Social studies offers the ideal venue to nurture civic virtue, consider current issues, practice acting civilly toward others, build a civic identity, bolster historical awareness of governmental structures, and cultivate global awareness. These skills, habits, and qualities of character will better prepare students to recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the liberties secured by the Constitution.

To reach these ends, students should have ample opportunities to:

- Engage in deliberative, collaborative, and civil dialogue regarding historical and current issues.
- Apply knowledge of governmental structure, historic concepts, geographic interrelationships, and economic principles to analyze and explain current events.
- Identify local, state, national, or international issues; consider solutions and understand who best can address the needs; and share their ideas with appropriate public and/or private stakeholders.
- Develop and demonstrate the values that sustain America’s constitutional democratic republic, such as open-mindedness, engagement, honesty, problem-solving, responsibility, diligence, resilience, empathy, self-control, respect for the beliefs of others, and cooperation, as well as its foundational principles, such as limited government, separation of state and federal governance, and free-market economy.
- Engage in dialogue regarding American exceptionalism in the sense of the special character of the United States as a free nation based on democratic ideals and personal liberty.

Civic competence requires an awareness of self and others. Social studies provides the underpinnings for civic awareness and action and exposes the history and wonders of cultures. Disciplines as varied as history, geography, economics, and civics provide clearer vision as students interpret, analyze, and make sense of the world. Access to and use of primary and secondary sources are foundational to understanding historical events. Ideas and concepts central to the purpose of public education are also central to social studies, among them the notion of the common good, the value of self-rule and self-determination, the dignity and necessity of honest labor, respect for parents, home, and family, the rights and responsibilities we humans share, and the interconnectedness of human endeavor. With their application of democratic processes, personal responsibility, and life skills, students will be prepared to protect the freedoms guaranteed by our Constitution, improving their lives and the lives of all members of society.

### The Organization of the Elementary Social Studies Standards

Utah standards are organized into **strands**, which represent significant areas of learning within content areas. Depending on the core area or grade level, these strands may be designated by time periods, thematic principles, modes of practice, or other organizing principles.

Within each strand are **standards**. A standard is an articulation of the demonstrated proficiency to be obtained. A standard represents an essential element of the learning that is expected. While some standards within a strand may be more comprehensive than others, all standards are essential for mastery.

**Compelling questions** have been included for possible use by teachers to support and reinforce the essential role of inquiry in social studies.

The Elementary Social Studies Standards use a modified “expanding environments” approach to social studies. This approach includes, each year, studies in history, geography, economics, civics, and United States history. As the grades progress, the focus of study expands, moving from classroom and neighborhood to the local community, the state, the nation, and the world. Basic civic virtues and components of United States history are built upon the foundations set the previous year. This allows for direct application of principles included in the [Utah Constitution](#) and Utah code. The core expectations deepen and expand, as appropriate, for each corresponding grade level.

Many exemplary lists of historical figures are included in the standards. Some lists are meant to be inclusive of specific historical figures as to create an equitable knowledge base of historical events for Utah’s school children. Other standards open the door to exploration and research of exemplary figures who exhibit excellence in music, science, government, religion, economics, or other areas articulated in the standards.

In **kindergarten**, social studies focuses on helping students learn about the world around them and what traits can be attributed to good citizenship. The Kindergarten Standards build on the [Early Learning Social Studies Standards](#) by helping students extend their understanding of the social structures and norms that create a community and their role as an active participant in that community.

In **first grade**, social studies expands students’ understanding of community to include their state and nation while they continue to consider their own role and begin to consider the roles of others in those communities. Students are further introduced to the idea of history — what it means and how it is shaped. Basic geographical concepts and skills are introduced, as well as basic economic principles.

In **second grade**, students consider continuity and change over time in their own community, the state, and the nation. They are introduced to chronology and timelines, as well as the concept of government. They will consider rights and responsibilities, conflict resolution, and respecting differences as they learn about celebrations, cultural events, and traditions of diverse people. Emphasis begins to be placed on the significance of geographical features and their effect on where and how people live. Map use and construction will build on the basics of geography that were learned in previous grades.

In **third grade**, students will be introduced to the United States Constitution. They will also learn about culture and community, focusing on their own local Utah community’s heritage as well as learning about the history, geography, governmental and economic structures, and cultures of other communities. They will study the interrelationships between physical geography and cultural development. They will also begin to learn about representative government and their personal civic responsibility in the classroom, community, and country.

In **fourth grade**, students continue to focus on the four essential social studies disciplines and apply them to their study of Utah. Students learn about significant events in Utah history, noting how successive cultural interactions have shaped the

story of the land now called Utah. Students will learn about the physical geography of Utah, and how the geography of Utah affects human life, including economic development. Fourth graders will also deepen their understanding of civics as they learn more about rights and responsibilities in Utah and how governments in Utah are organized. Inquiry into current events will help students make connections between the past and the present.

In **fifth grade**, the study of the United States is the focus. Students will explore significant eras in United States history — eras that paint in broad terms some of the significant themes of the story of America. They will also continue their study of geography, economics, and civics. Foundational principles of government that were learned in previous grades have prepared students for the depth and rigor of the Fifth Grade Standards, including understanding the role of limited government while articulating the purposes of state and federal governments. There is neither an intention nor a possibility of successful “coverage” of all of United States history and geography or all of the social, economic, and political movements that have helped create the story of America. Rather, students should “discover” and “uncover” this story. As students develop an understanding of key events relating to the basic chronology of United States history, the nation’s geography, and its economic history, they will be building a foundation that will serve them well in the years to come. Primary source documents and literature that recount the stories of people of exemplary character will help students understand their own place in the continuing chronicle of America.

In **sixth grade**, the focus of the standards expands to look at world history and culture. Knowledge and skills gained in the preceding grades will prepare students for an introductory survey of world history and culture. Students will learn about regions of the world and the societies that have formed there, including their systems of governance, religion, the rights and responsibilities they held, how their societies have changed and continued over time, and how these regions are interconnected economically and geographically.

A chronological framework across grade levels helps reinforce the essential understandings of time, continuity, and change, and is intended to help build a conceptual scaffold for future study. Students will compare institutions common to all societies such as government, education, and religious institutions. Relevance is reinforced by connecting the past to current issues facing the world, as well as to potential opportunities for solutions.

Excitement, wonder, inquiry, and delight are central to meaningful learning in social studies. Social studies should be engaging and intriguing for all students and provide ample opportunities to make important life-long connections between the past, present, and future. Students who appreciate the sacrifices that have been made in the past and understand the challenges that lie ahead can make better decisions in the present.

The most important goal of Elementary Social Studies is an informed and well-lived life, in which students recognize and accept responsibility for preserving and defending the blessings of liberty inherited from prior generations and secured by the United States Constitution.

# FOURTH GRADE

## FOURTH GRADE STRAND 1: UTAH'S UNIQUE GEOGRAPHY

Students will examine Utah's geography, and analyze its historical and current impacts on residents.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- Where is Utah located in the world?
- Why is Utah's most populated area along the Wasatch Front?
- How does the physical geography of Utah affect its inhabitants?

- **Standard 4.1.1:** Use a variety of geographic tools to identify Utah and its surrounding states: latitude, longitude, hemisphere, climate, natural resources, landforms, and regions (for example, Rocky Mountains, Colorado Plateau, Basin and Ridge Region).
- **Standard 4.1.2:** Examine maps of Utah's precipitation, temperature, vegetation, population, and natural resources; make inferences about relationships between the data sets. Describe how and why humans have changed the physical environment of Utah to meet their needs (for example, reservoirs, irrigation, climate, transcontinental railroad).
- **Standard 4.1.3:** Describe how the physical geography of Utah has both negative and positive consequences on our health and safety (for example, inversions, earthquakes, aridity, fire, recreation).

## FOURTH GRADE STRAND 2: PRE-EXPANSION (BEFORE 1847)

Students will learn that while recorded history spans only a few centuries, humans have lived in the land now called Utah for thousands of years. They will recognize that for centuries the historic tribal groups of Utah—the Goshute, Navajo (Diné), Paiute, Shoshone, and Ute—adapted to their ever-changing environment. Students will understand that more adaptations occurred due to contact and trade while Utah was part of the Spanish Empire and later Mexico. Students will identify the factors that encouraged early trade and exploration among varied explorers and frontiersmen.

### *Compelling Questions:*

- What can the study of archaeology teach us about the economies,



## UTAH CORE STATE STANDARDS for SOCIAL STUDIES

communities, and other aspects of the cultures of indigenous Native American tribes within Utah?

- How did the arrival of European and American trappers and traders alter the human geography of Utah?
- What may happen when two or more cultures, with significant differences, come into contact?
- What can economic systems and trading patterns tell us about cultures?
- Why is it important to protect historical sites?

- **Standard 4.2.1:** Use evidence (for example, artifacts, texts, oral traditions, geographic inquiry) to make inferences about, and explain the importance of, the geography of the land that would become Utah in the culture of one or more prehistoric or historic Native American cultures.
- **Standard 4.2.2:** Explain the economic concepts of trade, scarcity, and supply and demand. Apply these concepts in analyzing the economic activity of Native American tribal groups that existed during this period in the land now called Utah and their trade with European-American trappers and traders..
- **Standard 4.2.3:** Use primary and secondary sources to compare important aspects of the ways of life of at least two Native American tribal groups (for example, Ute, Paiute, Navajo (Diné), Shoshone, Goshute) existing existing within the land now called Utah and how those ways of life changed as settlers from Europe arrived prior to 1847.
- **Standard 4.2.4:** Investigate the reasons why early explorers and frontiersmen came to the land now called Utah, and determine how their contributions are relevant to Utahns today.

### FOURTH GRADE STRAND 3: EXPANSION (1847-1896)

Students will learn about the unprecedented migration, dramatic cultural change and conflicts, and new technologies of this era. Students will study the migration of diverse populations who settled across the region that would become Utah. They will learn about some of the implications of this settlement on Native American communities. Students will evaluate the relationships between the Industrial Revolution, the completion of the transcontinental railroad, other technologies, and the human and physical geography of the region. Students will also learn about the process and challenges Utah faced transforming from a territory to the 45th state.

#### *Compelling Questions:*

- What factors led people from all over the world to settle in Utah and

positioned Utah to become “The Crossroads of the West”?

- Why did Utah struggle to attain statehood?
  - How did new immigrant communities contribute to the history and culture of Utah?
  - How did Native American life change as settlement continued?
  - How did improved transportation, industry, and mining transform Utah’s economy, politics, and other aspects of culture?
- **Standard 4.3.1:** Use primary sources to compare experiences of at least three groups’ migration to Utah between 1847–1896 (for example, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, people from Greece, Italy, China).
  - **Standard 4.3.2:** Explain how Utah’s physical geography provided opportunities and imposed constraints for human activities between 1847–1896 (for example, agriculture, mining, settlement, communication, transportation networks) and how people changed the physical environment to meet their needs.
  - **Standard 4.3.3:** Describe the establishment of communities and the economic development of the Great Basin area under the direction of Brigham Young as the first Territorial Governor of Utah.
  - **Standard 4.3.4:** Identify the political challenges that delayed Utah’s statehood, and explain how these challenges were overcome. Describe the involvement of Utah women in the state and national Women’s Suffrage Movement.
  - **Standard 4.3.5:** Cite multiple perspectives to explain the historical significance and context of at least one conflict of this period (for example, The Utah War, The Mountain Meadows Massacre, The Bear River Massacre, The Black Hawk War).
  - **Standard 4.3.6:** Describe how and why humans have changed the physical environment of Utah to meet their needs (for example, reservoirs, irrigation, climate, transcontinental railroad) between 1847–1896.
  - **Standard 4.3.7:** Explain how the creation of the Transcontinental Railroad and other transportation and communication networks changed Utah’s economy and led to greater economic interdependence.

FOURTH GRADE STRAND 4: **POST-STATEHOOD (1896-1999)**

Students will study Utah’s continued development as a state, including learning about its Constitution and the role of geography in Utah’s economy and settlement patterns. Students will evaluate the roles and functions of different levels and types of governments. They will identify and explain the cultural connections that Utah’s diverse communities share.

*Compelling Questions:*

- How has Utah’s physical and human geography impacted the development of the state?
- How is federal and state power balanced in Utah, and what is the function of Utah’s state Constitution?
- Who are some of the most influential leaders in Utah, and what are some of the contributions they have made to the state?
- How are issues between state, federal, and tribal lands resolved?

- **Standard 4.4.1:** Identify the function and location of state government. Analyze Article 1 of the Utah Constitution to explain how the enumerated rights reflect shared values.
- **Standard 4.4.2:** Compare the Utah Constitution with the United States Constitution, noting the similarities (including legislative, executive and judicial branches, rights of citizens) and important/significant differences (for example, role in education, public lands, local governance).
- **Standard 4.4.3:** Identify Utah symbols, their connection to history and geography, and what these symbols tell us about our shared culture. Explain how they can show respect and appreciation for those symbols.
- **Standard 4.4.4:** Use primary and secondary sources to explain how Utah’s economy has changed over time (for example, recreation, tourism, mining, information technology, manufacturing, agriculture, petroleum production).
- **Standard 4.4.5:** Analyze the way local, state, tribal, and federal governments interact with one another.
- **Standard 4.4.6:** Use case studies to explain how national or global events between 1896–1999 (for example, World War I, the Spanish Flu Epidemic, the Great Depression, World War II, Japanese American Incarceration, the Cold War, civil rights movements, Americans with Disabilities Act) had an impact in their local communities and state.

FOURTH GRADE STRAND 5: A NEW MILLENIA (2000–PRESENT)

Students will examine, through a 21st century lens, the enduring central themes of diffusion of cultures, global interconnectedness, the importance of creating and sustaining community, and the need for a strong economy. They will recognize that most current events (for example, interactions between Native American sovereign nations and state and federal governments, concerns about water, tensions and questions about the proper role and jurisdiction of local, state, and federal governments, ideas about how best to grow Utah’s economy) have their roots deeply embedded in Utah’s rich history. They will also understand that, while forced to make even further adaptations as they came into contact with European explorers, Native Americans still thrive as eight sovereign tribal nations in Utah.

*Compelling Questions:*

- What are historic and contemporary examples of Utah’s economic interdependence, and what are some ways to ensure growing demand for natural resources in Utah are met?
  - How do various ethnic and/or religious communities in Utah maintain and celebrate their unique cultures?
  - What are some of the most pressing issues facing Utah today?
  - What are your rights and responsibilities as a citizen or resident in Utah?
- **Standard 4.5.1:** Describe sovereignty as it relates to Native American sovereign nations (Ute Mountain Ute Tribe, Ute Indian Tribe of the Uintah and Ouray reservation, Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Navajo (Diné) Nation, Northwestern Band of the Shoshone Nation, Confederated Tribes of Goshute, Skull Valley Band of Goshute) existing within Utah, and explain efforts to preserve and maintain their culture.
  - **Standard 4.5.2:** Make a case for the lasting historical significance of an event in recent Utah history (2000–present), and create an argument for including it in a historical text.
  - **Standard 4.5.3:** Use data and trends to make recommendations for the best sustainable development of Utah’s resources (for example, forests, state lands, geology, coal, minerals, oil and gas, state parks, water, wildlife, School Trustlands).
  - **Standard 4.5.4:** Explain continuity and change over time by comparing experiences of today’s immigrants in Utah with those of immigrants in Utah’s past.
  - **Standard 4.5.5:** After studying examples of individuals or groups making positive changes in Utah, propose positive steps individual

students or groups of students can implement (for example, raising awareness through digital media, energy and resource conservation, letter writing, fundraising).

- **Standard 4.5.6:** Choose one of Utah’s cultural institutions (for example Utah Symphony, The Tabernacle Choir at Temple Square, Utah Opera Company, Ballet West, Utah’s Shakespeare Festival, Utah Festival Opera), and explain its historical significance as well as the cultural benefits to Utah families and our nation.