

Social Studies Standards FAQs

With the release of the new *Rhode Island Social Studies Standards*, there have been numerous questions about how they affect social studies curriculum and instruction in Rhode Island. The purpose of this document is to answer many of those questions as educators and LEAs prepare for implementation of these new standards.

When do the new standards go into effect?

LEAs should be assessing where and when to make their shifts for full implementation K-12 by the 2026-2027 school year. A timeline is on the [Social Studies page](#) of RIDE's website under "Social Studies Standards."

Do LEAs have to follow the *Social Studies Standards*?

Yes. The *Standards* ensure that all Rhode Island students receive a robust and comprehensive social studies education from kindergarten through high school.

What is the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*?

The *Social Studies Curriculum Framework* provides guidance to educators around the implementation of the *Rhode Island Social Studies Standards*, particularly as it relates to the design and use of curriculum materials, instruction, and assessment.

When will the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework* document be available?

The *Social Studies Curriculum Framework* will be published in the fall of 2023.

What curriculum is available that aligns with the new standards?

RIDE will be completing a review process of core curriculum materials with review teams made up of Rhode Island teachers. The goal will be to provide summary reports on the strengths and weaknesses of reviewed core curricula along with their alignment to the new standards. The summary reports will help guide LEAs in their curriculum selection.

RIDE will also publish a curriculum review tool and curriculum review protocol for LEAs to use on their own. They may wish to review the curricula RIDE did not, conduct their own review on curricula that was a part of RIDE's review, or review their existing curricula.

RIDE's review will occur in these intended phases and timelines: Review of curricula for grade 8 and the five high school courses modeled in the *Standards* will occur summer 2023, review for curricula for grades 5 to 7 will be in fall 2023, and review for curricula for kindergarten to grade 4 in early winter 2023.



Do LEAs have to adopt a social studies curriculum that RIDE reviewed?

No, RIDE's reviews are for the purpose of supporting LEAs to make choices that are best for them. However, RIDE has established what criteria to look for to determine if social studies materials are high-quality. These criteria are outlined in the forthcoming *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*. LEAs should consider these and use RIDE's forthcoming review tool and review protocol if not choosing curriculum that has been reviewed through RIDE's review process.

What is the difference between core and supplemental curriculum?

High-Quality Curriculum Materials in Social Studies include core and supplemental materials.

Core instructional materials are the comprehensive print or digital educational material, including basal material, which constitute the necessary instructional components of a full academic course of study.

Supplementary instructional materials are used to reinforce, enrich, or enhance instruction driven by core instructional material.

(Definitions adapted from New Mexico's instructional materials legislation 6.75.2.7 C and W)

Can you post the standards in tables for LEAs to be able to conduct crosswalks with their current curriculum?

RIDE will post the alignment documents that were created for core curriculum vendors for LEAs to also use to conduct their own reviews of curriculum.

How is there sufficient time for social studies in the elementary schedule?

Though social studies has always been challenging to incorporate into the elementary school schedule, the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework* will provide guidance to ensure there is sufficient time to teach social studies in elementary schools. The *Framework* offers sample elementary schedules that show how elementary schools can incorporate time for social studies. The Social studies standards do not require 180 days of instruction at the elementary levels to implement them fully, and many High-Quality Instructional Materials in social studies offer flexible pacing.

How will elementary teachers be able to teach the fifth-grade social studies curriculum? / How do I teach topics I don't know about?

In the curriculum review summary reports, RIDE will note which core curriculum materials include support for their implementation. This can include guidance and resources designed to build teachers' subject matter knowledge and on-site and/or asynchronous professional development opportunities for teachers to build content and skills knowledge. If teachers feel they need to build content knowledge, they are encouraged to seek professional learning experiences.



Can ELA curriculum be used as the social studies curriculum, or can social studies curriculum be used to teach ELA?

No, though there may be opportunities to make connections between an LEA's chosen social studies and ELA curricula. Though many of the approved ELA curriculum materials include reading content in the sciences and social studies, **this content is considered supplemental and not a replacement for robust social studies and science curricula**. This will be further explained in the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*. LEAs interested in a humanities approach may integrate the two as long as they are both taught with integrity and to their respective standards.

I've heard that the grade 7 standards only cover medieval history. Is that true?

No. Grade 7 begins where grade 6 left off. Medieval history is only part of Topic 1 and Topic 2 in grade 7.

I've heard there is no US history in middle school. Is that true?

No. In looking at the big picture of the K-8 sequence, students will be introduced to US history in grade 3, dig into state history in grade 4, and take a deeper dive into some of those same grade 4 topics through a national lens in grade 5. This sets students up to learn about the Nation's context in the world. They learn more about early peoples in the Americas in grade 6. In grade 7, they explore themes of colonialism and revolution, including in the Americas; the world wars and the Cold War, including the involvement of the United States; and globalization, including the Nation's participation. In grade 8, students will revisit some of what was covered in grade 5 to learn about the foundations of the United States government, the *Constitution*, historic supreme court decisions, and the responsibilities of citizenship more deeply. Within their grade 8 studies, they will also learn about civil and human rights histories.

How are teachers going to cover all standards? It seems like there is a lot of material to cover.

Many core curriculum materials provide pacing guidance, including alternate or flexible pacing to fit social studies instruction within an elementary schedule. It is also important not to confuse the learning assessment objectives that are in the standards tables for the standards themselves. It is feasible to cover all standards.

Is every standard supposed to be covered at the same level of depth?

No, some standards will require more time than others. Many core curriculum materials provide pacing guidance and educators can use formative assessments to determine the need for more or less instruction in a particular area.

There are five high school courses modeled in the *standards*, does this mean that students need to take all five courses?

No, the five high school courses are provided as model courses. Where they fit within RIDE's high school social studies course expectations will be outlined in the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*.



What courses count towards the three-credit graduation requirement?

RIDE's high school course expectations for social studies will be outlined in the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*.

Will there be guidance for the student-led civics project?

Yes, there will be forthcoming guidance for the student-led civics project along with civics education instructional strategies. We are expecting this to be available in summer 2024.

Where do I find information about teaching the content that is required by legislation (e.g., Holocaust, African American studies)?

RIDE has webpages of resources pertaining to content required by legislation on the [Social Studies page](#) of RIDE's website under "Instructional Resources."

Is there going to be a state assessment in social studies?

Currently, no state assessment for social studies is planned.

How will proficiency in a standard be assessed?

Guidance for how educators can assess their student proficiency in the *Standards* will be provided in the *Social Studies Curriculum Framework*.