



WAUNAKEE
COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

Social Studies Update

November 17, 2025

Social Studies Leadership Team

Dawn Peters

Elem. Coordinator

Andrea Hernandez -6th

IS Coordinator

(Gretchen Kestler-5th rep.)

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Dept Co-Chairs

MS Co-Coordinators

Bryan Barfknecht

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HS Co-Coordinators



District Goal



By June 2029, all Waunakee Community

*Schools will **significantly exceed expectations** or increase by 2 points on the Wisconsin State Accountability Report Card.*

- Our Social Studies goal is to support the READING goal
Ongoing discussions as to HOW to support
- Different assessment measures at each building level

What Are Our Students Learning in Social Studies?



K-8 Progression of Social Studies

K-3

Social Studies standards are covered through World Language

4

Social Studies Standards are covered with a focus on Wisconsin

5-6

Intro to US History

5th Grade: 3-5 Standards

6th Grade: 6-8 Standards

7-8

World Geography
US History/Civics





Behavioral Sciences Strand

Learning about the behavioral sciences helps students understand people in various times and places. By examining cultures, students are able to compare our ways of life and those of other groups of people in the past and present. As citizens, students need to know how institutions are maintained or changed and how they influence individuals, cultures, and societies. Knowledge of the factors that contribute to an individual's uniqueness is essential to understanding the influence on self and on others.



Economics Strand

Individuals, families, businesses, and governments must make complex economic choices as they decide what goods and services to provide and how to allocate limited resources for distribution and consumption. In a global economy marked by rapid technological change, students must learn how to be better producers, consumers, and economic citizens.



Geography Strand

Students gain geographical perspectives of the world by studying the earth and the interactions of people with places where they live, work, and play. Knowledge of geography helps students to address the various cultural, economic, social, and civic implications of life in earth's many environments.



History Strand

Students need to understand their historical roots and those of others, and how past events have shaped their world. In developing these insights, students must know what life was like in the past and how things change and develop over time. Reconstructing and interpreting historical events provides a needed perspective in addressing the past, the present, and the future.



Political Science Strand

Knowledge about the structures of power, author contemporary society is essential if young citizen effective citizens and problem solvers when they international organizations function and interact.



Social Studies Inquiry Practices and Processes

Advances in human knowledge come about not because people can memorize factoids or are great at filling out worksheets in school; rather, they come about when people ask questions and pursue those questions in reasoned self-critical ways. This is the essence of inquiry, beginning with questions to be answered and the work needed to begin to answer them, and is the reason that the social studies C3 document, developed by 15 professional social studies and content area associations, is built around the "inquiry arc" (developing questions, students learning to use disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence, communicating conclusions).*

Wisconsin Social Studies Standards: Strands

Elementary Schools





Elementary Units

Inquiry

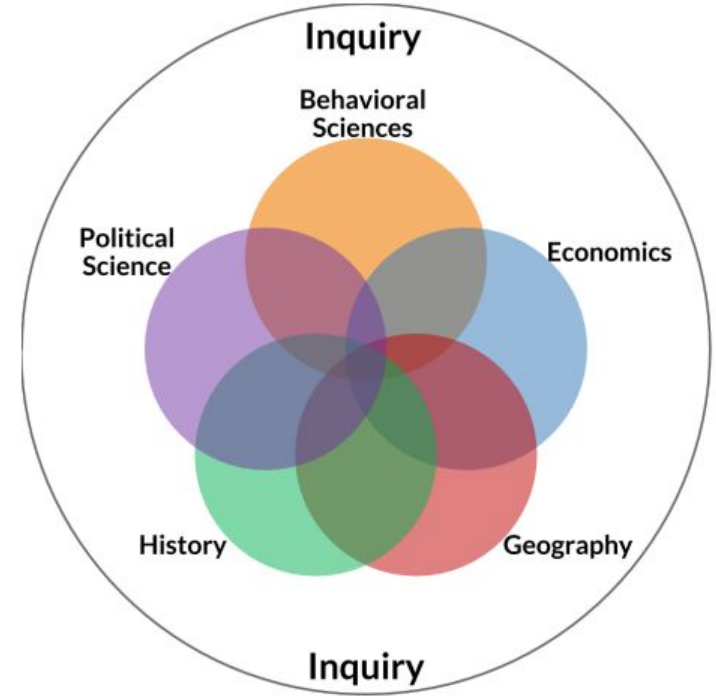
Geography

History

Government

Tribes of Wisconsin

Logging, Mining, Agriculture





Skills & Knowledge

Content Knowledge

Analyzing Sources

Reading Comprehension -

Non-fiction text

Vocabulary

Lake Superior Lowland

Lake Superior Lowland
The Lake Superior Lowland only extends 5-20 miles inland from Lake Superior, from the southernmost point, the Lowland slopes north toward Lake Superior. The Lowland has many trees, including aspen and birch trees. The Apostle Islands National Lakeshore is a part of the Lake Superior Lowland.

The Apostle Islands
The Apostle Islands were named by the first French explorers who ventured to Lake Superior. The two most objectives for most French explorers were to build forts and establish trading relationships with Native Americans. They did both on the Apostle Islands. With it on the Lake Superior, fur traders from the interior of the continent could sell their furs, which were taken to eastern cities on the Saint Lawrence River. From there, the furs were shipped to Europe. After the fur trade declined, logging became an important industry on the Apostle Islands. But eventually, most of the Apostle Islands were abandoned. In 1970, 21 of the 22 Apostle Islands were made into a national park. Today, visitors visit the Apostle Islands National Lakeshore to see historic lighthouses, explore sandstone sea caves, and engage in many water activities, such as canoeing and scuba diving.

Northern Highland

Northern Highland
The highest point in Wisconsin is located in the Northern Highland Region. It is called Timpano Peak. There are rolling hills and forests throughout this region. The Chequamegon-Nicolet National Forest is located in this region. The Northern Highland region covers about one-third of Wisconsin.

Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests
One of the most abundant natural features in Wisconsin is forests. Most of the forests in modern Wisconsin consist of replanted trees because earlier forests were cut down for the logging industry. This is true of the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests. Sometimes after the trees had been cut down, immigrants would buy the land and try to farm it. However, the soil was not good for growing crops, and most of the farms were eventually abandoned. Some trees grew back naturally, but many had to be replanted.

In presidential proclamation in 1913, the Chequamegon and Nicolet National Forests were created. The name "Chequamegon" is believed to come from an Ojibwa word meaning "place of shallow water." The name "Nicolet" refers to French explorer Jean Nicolet, who came to the area in the 1630s. Technically, the Chequamegon and Nicolet are separate forests, however, they are run jointly. Combined, the forests cover 1,375,667 acres.

Central Plain

Central Plain
A plain is a large, flat area with few trees. The Central Plain of Wisconsin has a lot of rich farmland. Prehistoric glaciers cut a large gorge that the Wisconsin River flows through. This area is called the Dells of the Wisconsin River. The Dells have tall cliffs, some over 100 feet high, that overlook the Wisconsin River.

Eau Claire
The city of Eau Claire sits at the confluence of the Eau Claire and Chippewa Rivers. A confluence is a place where two rivers meet. The rivers are significant to the city of Eau Claire in many ways. Eau Claire means "clear water" in French. According to legend, the area got its name when French explorers were traveling down the river, they reached the confluence of the Chippewa and Eau Claire Rivers, they shouted, "Here is the clear water!"

The first major industry in Eau Claire was logging, which relied heavily on the rivers to transport logs and power sawmills. Once a tree was cut down, it was floated to a sawmill. Mills were using water-powered machines. Then saw cut timber was shipped by river to other places. Today, Eau Claire is the eighth-largest city in Wisconsin. Of Wisconsin's 10 most populous cities, it is the only one not located in the Eastern Ridges and Lowland Region.

Western Upland

Western Upland
The Western Upland has more rugged terrain than the rest of Wisconsin. The region is part of a larger geographical formation called the "Driftless Area," which also includes parts of Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. It gets the name "Driftless" because it was not covered by glaciers, which have left a jagged, rolling shape. The Western Upland is bordered by the Mississippi River and has large hills that overlook the river. There are many farms, trees, and cities in the region. The Badlands State Park is in the Western Upland region.

Devil's Lake
Devil's Lake is one mile long and half a mile wide. The lake sits on the Cheuk mountain located in the Badlands Hills. The Cheuk called the lake, De Malak, which means "hollow" or "spirit lake." The area around Devil's Lake has steep mountains. There are human-made hills that have been formed to look like animals or other shapes. They are called to the Native Americans who are credited them. Devil's Lake is now a state park. There are many things to do on and see at Devil's Lake. There are miles of colored rock and purple, red, and orange pyroclastic rocks, which is a former volcano. All trees that have not grown tall or wide because the soil lacks nutrients.

Eastern Ridges and Lowland

Eastern Ridges and Lowland
The Eastern Ridges and Lowland is an important part of Wisconsin's geography. Rugged limestone ridges are located in the western part of the region. The eastern part of the region is covered by a plain that slopes down toward Lake Michigan. This region has some of the world's best farmland. It is also the location of Wisconsin's largest urban centers. Nine out of the 10 largest cities in Wisconsin are located in the Eastern Ridges and Lowland.

Lake Michigan
Lake Michigan is one of the world's largest lakes. It was made by a glacier. The surface area of the lake is 22,300 square miles. It probably gets its name from the Ojibwa word "mishigami," which means "great water." The Great Lakes have served an important role in making and improving communication between the midwestern part of the continent and the Atlantic. Ojibwa, Lake Michigan helped connect the Saint Lawrence River system to the Mississippi River system. The people of Wisconsin have always relied on Lake Michigan to provide transportation, communication, and drinking water. Lake Michigan is also one of the state's most popular tourist draws.

REGIONS IN WISCONSIN

KEY/LEGEND

- EASTERN RIDGES AND LOWLANDS
- WESTERN UPLAND
- CENTRAL PLAIN
- NORTHERN HIGHLAND
- LAKE SUPERIOR LOWLAND



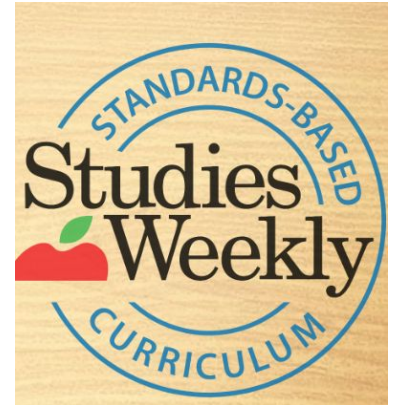
Resource: Wisconsin Studies Weekly

Aligned to the WI State Standards - revised in Fall of 2025

Adopted by BOE in May 2023 as Core Resource for Fourth Grade

Includes digital and print editions

Purchased annually so consumable newspaper can be written on and sent home with students



Considering Multiple Lenses:

Promotes critical thinking

Builds connections across disciplines

Encourages empathy and perspective taking

Improves inquiry

Makes learning relevant



LENSES OF SOCIAL STUDIES

You can use each lens of thinking to develop supporting questions to support your compelling question.

01. HISTORIAN

A historian is a detective who studies the past based on clues that were left behind.



02. ECONOMIST

Economists are experts on money and the cost of different resources.



03. GEOGRAPHER

A detective who studies the Earth and its landscapes.



04. POLITICAL SCIENTIST

A political scientist studies how countries are run and how people make decisions together.



05. SOCIAL SCIENTIST

A social scientist is a world detective who studies how people behave or interact in groups.



Example of Compelling Question: *What causes people to change where they live?*

Thinking Lenses:

A historian may think...

An economist may think...

A geographer may think...

A political scientist may think...

A social scientist may think...

Supporting Questions:

What historical events influenced people to change where they live?

What economic factors influence how people meet their needs?

What natural resources are available to help people meet their needs?

Can laws influence people's decisions and change where people live?

How do changes in people's physical environment impact them physically and emotionally?



Intermediate School

WIS Social Studies Department



Common resources: Kids Discover & [Optimal Learning Environment](#)

Common Focus: Inquiry: Primary sources, artifacts, quotes, images

5th Grade	Current Focus/Goals	6th Grade
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Thinking Like a Historian• Colonial Regions• Revolutionary War• Civil War• Government• Moving West: The Troublesome Path• Maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploring historical perspectives• Incorporating Technology• Act 31 (American Indian Studies)• Act 30 (Teaching the Holocaust and other Genocides)• Incorporate more Asian Studies• Reading, writing, and collaborative discussions to support our reading goal at WIS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Geography• Civics• Immigration• World War I• Roaring 20's/Great Depression• World War II• Civil Rights Movement• Vietnam War

5th Grade Making Learning Meaningful!



Daughters of the American Revolution Play provide a glimpse of the role women played in the Revolution.



The 1st Brigade Band provides a musical immersion of Wisconsin Civil War history in conjunction with music.



Students use technology to examine self-image and identity as we create a class Identity Book.



At Civil War Living History Days in Milton, students explore the times of the Civil War: including technology, culture, economics, professions, and other hands on activities.

6th Grade Making Learning Meaningful



Hosting Vietnam Day:

- Volunteers to run
- Teacher-led learning stations for every 6th grade class
- Guest speakers as primary sources
- Card making, music, artifacts, boot camp



Holocaust Survivor Speakers

Understanding the resilience of individuals surviving the Holocaust and the lasting effects on the world



WWI Warfare and Technology:

- Working with building technology integrator
- Students collaboratively building trenches with authentic layouts from World War I
- Using Minecraft Education Software

Middle School



Middle School: 7th and 8th Grade

7th Grade:

- **Geography, the study of earth and its people**
Units/Areas of study in 7th grade:

- ❑ Our World
- ❑ Geographic Tools
- ❑ Human Geography
- ❑ Europe
- ❑ Middle East North Africa
- ❑ Sub-Saharan Africa
- ❑ Globalization
- ❑ Asia
- ❑ South America, Middle America, Caribbean
- ❑ Australia and Oceania

- **Current Events all year**

8th Grade:

- **American History ~ $\frac{2}{3}$ year:**
 - Pre-Columbian→
 - Exploration→
 - →1800
 - Writing of the Constitution leads into...
- **Civics ~ $\frac{1}{3}$ year:**
 - Bill of Rights
 - and other of the 27 Amendments
 - Breakdown of the 3 Branches of Government
- **Current Events All Year**

Middle School: **GEO Bee**

- Used to be organized by National Geographic
- We make our own now
- We also offer our finalists a chance to try out for further competitions in Geography or History

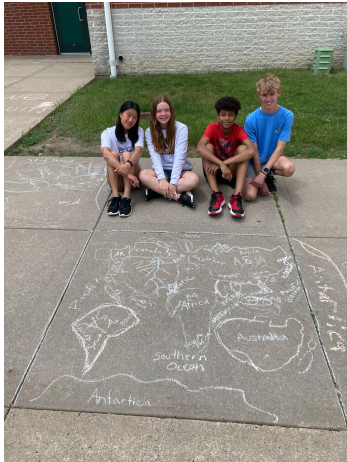


International Academic
Competitions
UNITED STATES DIVISION

7th Grade Social Studies

End of the Year Geo Olympics

Students apply their knowledge of Geography in some fun activities to round out their 7th grade year.



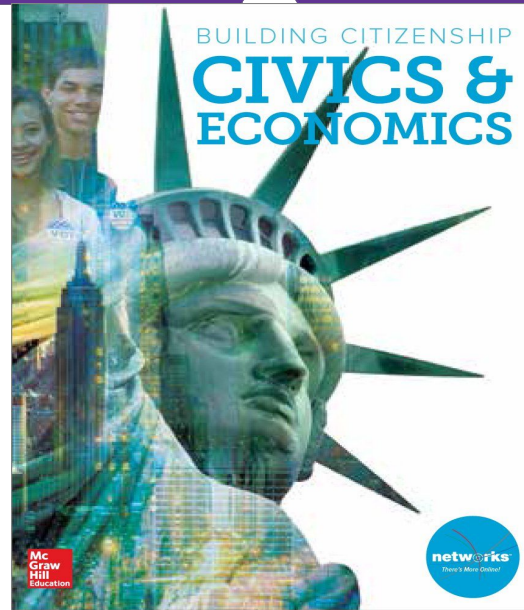
The Great European Union Chocolate Debate

Students represented as ministers/countries of the Council of the European Union cooperate to create a new law that will make both sides of the chocolate debate happy.



8th Grade Textbook

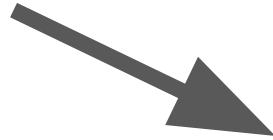
Classroom Set + digital
version for each student



History

TextStudio

However....



Primary Source Docs when available or a better option
Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, Hobbes and Locke, Thomas Paine, Declaration, Constitution, various letters, auto-bios., diary segments, etc.

Schedule last year: 44 mins → 59 mins--Allowed +time to go deeper and do more read.

Youth County Government Day

- Partnership with the Waunakee Legion 360
- Paid by Legion
- Guest Speakers: County Exec., Parks and Rec., Sheriff's Dept, K-9 Unit



8th Grade Washington, ~~DC~~ Trip → “East Coast” Trip Boston, NYC, Philadelphia, Mount Vernon AND DC!

Since 2015 (with 2 years off--Covid)

Started with 1 bus, ~44 Students

Got up to: 3 busses, over 100 Students!

Now: **Flying!** (this will be year 2) (~90 Ss)

This year: U.S.250th AND World Cup!



High School

High School Four Year Social Studies Plan

9th Grade	10th Grade
World History - Year Long (1 credit)	US History <u>OR</u> AP US History - Year Long (1 credit) <u>Optional Elective(s):</u> Issues in Psychology, Modern Global Studies, Social Problems, or Sociology
11th Grade	12th Grade
<u>Optional Elective(s):</u> Any	Law - Semester Long - Fall/Spring (.5 credit) <u>Optional Elective(s):</u> Any

In order to graduate, students must have **3 social studies credits**.

World History, US History/APUSH, Law, and **ONE** other semester elective are mandatory.

Social Studies Elective Course Offerings

Issues in Psychology	Semester Fall & Spring		Modern Global Studies** <u>Offered Next:</u> 2027-2028	Semester Fall
AP Psychology	Year		AP US Government & Politics** <u>Offered Next:</u> 2027-2028	Year
Sports Psychology* *Required to take Issues in Psych or AP Psychology first	Semester Fall & Spring		AP European History** <u>Offered Next:</u> 2026-2027	Year
Social Problems	Semester Fall		America in Conflict** <u>Offered Next:</u> 2026-2027	Semester Fall
Sociology	Semester Spring		Exploring Wisconsin	Semester Spring
Economics	Semester Fall		AP Macroeconomics	Semester Fall
U.S. Indigenous Studies	Semester Fall		African American Studies	Semester Spring

** - Indicates that the course is offered every other year





AP Courses - % of scores 3 or Higher (considered “passing”)

AP US History	
25-26 enrollment: 139	
2024	85.1% (101)
2025	86.8% (129)

AP Psychology	
25-26 enrollment: 250	
2024	96.4% (192)
2025	93.3% (149)

AP Macro	
25-26 enrollment: 55	
2024	70.6% (48)
2025	65.6% (32)

AP Euro History*	
25-26 enrollment: N/A	
2023	53.6% (28)
2025	90.3% (31)

AP Government*	
25-26 enrollment: 49	
2022	62.2% (45)
2024	89.2% (37)

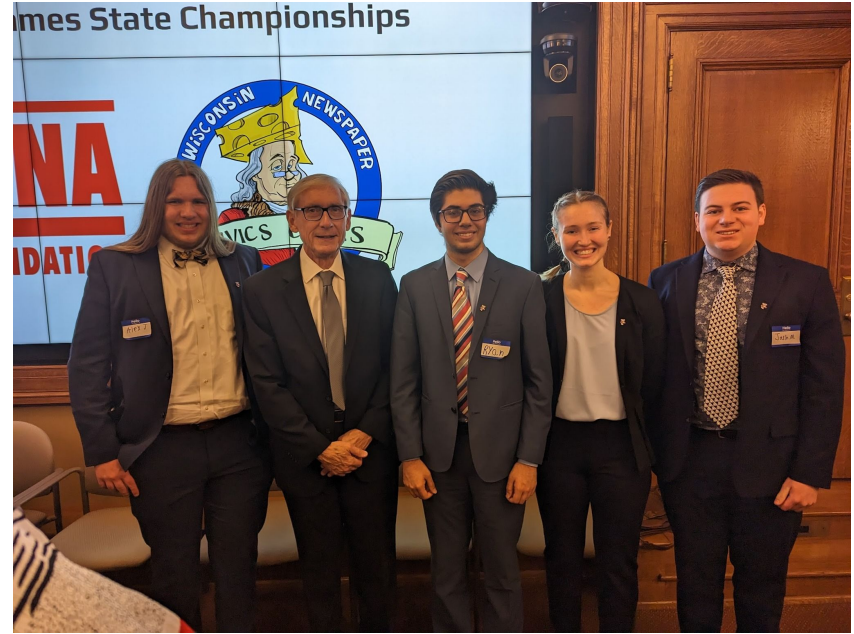
Other High School Social Studies Successes Include:

- Co-Taught World History (9th Grade) and US History (10th grade) sections are going really well and all involved (Josh Cash, Heather McCumber, and Bryan Barfknecht) (Lauren Michiels and Dan Esparza) have had a good experience
- Freshman Academy sections of World History (Alex Jelacic) have also been going well and there have been successes in attendance, behavior, and skills



Extra Curricular Opportunities and Clubs at the High School

- Future Liberal Leaders (*Lauren Michiels*)
- Turning Point USA (*Christina Raemisch*)
- Mock Trial (*Bryan Barfknecht & Heather McCumber*)
- Model UN (*Corina Rogers*)
- WI Civics Games (*Corina Rogers*)
- Investment Club (*Aaron McDonough*)



May 2023 - Civics Games
students took 2nd place at State



*Are there any questions for
the team?*





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COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT