



INDIANA
DEPARTMENT *of*
EDUCATION

2026 Indiana Academic Standards

SOCIAL STUDIES

U.S. GOVERNMENT

Indiana Department of Education

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Indianapolis, IN 46204



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Indiana Academic Standards Context and Purpose

Introduction

The Indiana Academic Standards for U.S. Government are the result of a process designed to identify, evaluate, synthesize, and create high-quality, rigorous learning expectations for Indiana students.

Pursuant to Indiana Code [\(IC\) 20-31-3-3](#), the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) facilitated the formal revision of the Indiana Academic Standards for K-12 Social Studies. The standards are designed to ensure that all Indiana students, upon graduation, are prepared with essential knowledge and skills needed to access employment, enrollment, or enlistment leading to service. Select standards are identified as essential for mastery by the end of the grade level in alignment with IDOE's 2023 post-secondary essential skills study. "Essential" standards are indicated with grey shading and an "E."

What are the Indiana Academic Standards and how should they be used?

The Indiana Academic Standards are designed to help educators, parents, students, and a variety of stakeholders understand the appropriate content for each grade level or course, and within each content area domain. All standards are required to be taught and should form the basis for strong core instruction for every student enrolled in the designated grade level or course. The standards identify the minimum academic content or skills that Indiana students need in order to be prepared for success after graduation, but they are not an exhaustive list.

While the Indiana Academic Standards establish key expectations for knowledge and skills and should be used as the basis for curriculum, the standards by themselves do not constitute a curriculum. It is the responsibility of the local school corporation to select and formally adopt curricular tools that align with Indiana Academic Standards. Additionally, corporation and school leaders should consider the appropriate instructional sequence of the standards as well as the length of time needed to teach each standard. Every standard has a unique place in the continuum of learning, but each standard will not require the same amount of time and attention. A deep understanding of the vertical articulation of the standards will enable educators to make the best instructional decisions. These standards must also be complemented by robust, evidence-based instructional practices to support overall student development. By utilizing strategic and intentional instructional practices, other areas such as STEM, can be integrated with the content standards.

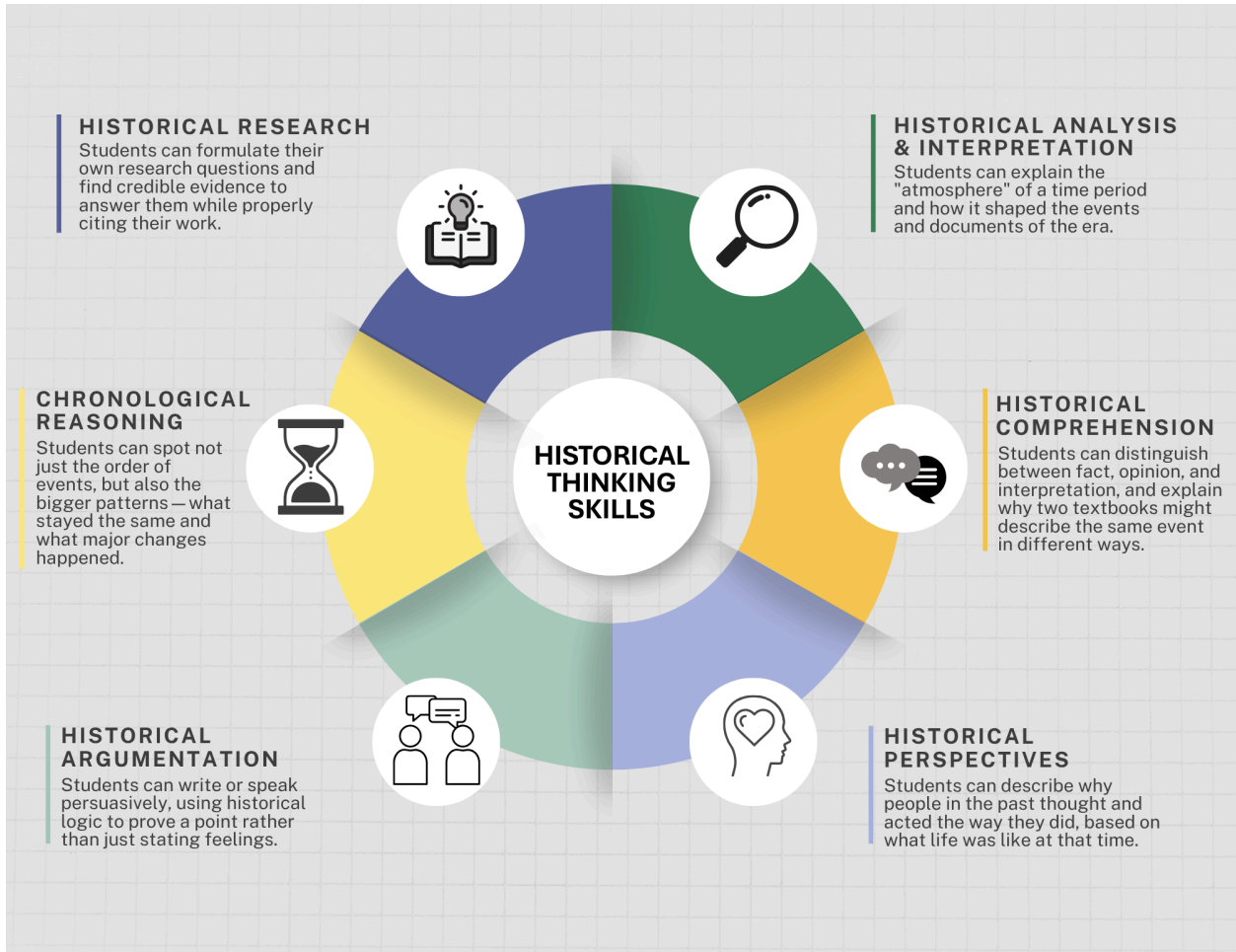
Content-Specific Considerations

The Indiana Academic Standards for U.S. Government indicate what students should know and be able to do by the end of the course, including those designated as "essential" for student mastery.

The National Council for the Social Studies' College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework emphasizes the acquisition and application of knowledge to prepare students for college, career, and civic life. IDOE's formal review process incorporated principles of the C3 Framework to enhance critical thinking skills, increase rigor, and promote literacy skills within the standards.

Historical Thinking Skills

Historical thinking skills enable students to analyze, interpret, and understand the past through evidence-based reasoning and contextual understanding. The six skills featured here underpin all of Indiana's social studies standards and should be a primary consideration for schools when implementing developmentally appropriate social studies instruction for all K-12 students. All thinking skills have equal value but are addressed differently depending on a student's grade level and ability. Schools have considerable flexibility when providing students opportunities to develop these thinking skills, as there is no prescribed starting point or sequence.



Acknowledgments

IDOE appreciates the time, dedication, and expertise offered by Indiana’s K-12 educators, higher education professors, representatives from business and industry, families, and other stakeholders who contributed to the development of the Indiana Academic Standards. We wish to especially acknowledge the committee members, as well as participants in the public comment period, who dedicated many hours to the review and evaluation of these standards designed to prepare Indiana students for success after graduation.

U.S. Government

Standards identified as essential for mastery by the end of the course are indicated with gray shading and an “E.” The learning outcome statement for the course immediately precedes the first domain.

Learning Outcome: Students understand the nature of citizenship, politics, and governments, understanding the rights and responsibilities of citizens and how these are part of local, state, and federal government. Students examine how the United States Constitution protects rights and provides the structure and functions of various levels of government. Students examine how the United States interacts with other nations as well as the government’s role in world affairs.	
Domain 1: Nature of Politics and Government	
USG.1.1	Define and distinguish between civic life, political life, and private life, and describe the activities of individuals in each of these spheres.
USG.1.2	Define the terms and explain the relationship between politics, government, and public policy.
USG.1.3	Interpret and analyze the constitutional purposes and functions of government found in the Preamble of the United States Constitution. (E)
USG.1.4	Compare and contrast types of government including representative democracy, monarchy, oligarchy, totalitarianism, and anarchy.
USG.1.5	Compare and contrast unitary, confederate, and federal systems of government.
USG.1.6	Define and provide historical and contemporary examples of constitutionalism, rule of law, limited government, and popular sovereignty in the United States Constitution, and explain the relationship of these constitutional principles to the protection of the rights of individuals. (E)
USG.1.7	Evaluate how the United States Constitution establishes majority rule while protecting minority rights and balances the common good with individual liberties. (E)
Domain 2: Foundations of Government in the United States	
USG.2.1	Analyze how colonial, revolutionary, and Founding Era events helped to inform the Framers on the design, ratification, and implementation of the United States Constitution (1787) and the Bill of Rights (1791).
USG.2.2	Explain the concept of compromise and evaluate its application during the Constitutional Convention.
USG.2.3	Analyze and interpret central ideas on government, individual rights, and the common good in founding documents of the United States. (E)

USG.2.4	Explain and analyze historical and contemporary examples of Founding Era principles of American government including natural rights, federalism, social contract, constitutionalism, representative democracy, political factions, liberty, security, justice, equality, the common good, and individual rights. (E)
USG.2.5	Explain how a shared American civic identity is grounded in Founding Era principles and values such as liberty, equality, justice, popular sovereignty, individual rights, and representative democracy.
Domain 3: Purposes, Principles, and Institutions of the Government of the United States	
USG.3.1	Analyze the United States Constitution, and explain characteristics of government in the United States, which define it as a federal, presidential, constitutional, and representative democracy. (E)
USG.3.2	Explain the constitutional principles of federalism, separation of powers, the system of checks and balances, and republican government. Provide examples of these principles in the governments of the United States and Indiana. (E)
USG.3.3	Compare and contrast the enumerated, implied, and denied powers of legislatures in both the United States Constitution and the Indiana Constitution.
USG.3.4	Explain the relationships among branches of the United States government and Indiana government, which involve separation and sharing of powers as a means to limited government. (E)
USG.3.5	Explain how a bill becomes law in the legislative process of the United States and the state of Indiana. (E)
USG.3.6	Describe the procedures for amending the United States and Indiana Constitutions, and analyze why it is so difficult to amend these Constitutions.
USG.3.7	Analyze the functions of the judicial branch of the United States and Indiana governments with emphasis on the principles of due process, judicial review, and an independent judiciary. (E)
USG.3.8	Explain the electoral process in terms of election laws and election systems on the national, state, and local level. (E)
USG.3.9	Explain presidential elections and executive power by examining the presidency, including, but not limited to, election, exercise of presidential powers, and the President's relationship with Congress and influence over implementation of their laws through the Cabinet and executive agencies. (E)
USG.3.10	Examine the progression of political parties and their ideologies and the broad political spectrum in the American governmental system, and analyze their functions in elections and government at federal, state, and local levels.

USG.3.11	Analyze the functions of political parties in elections and government at national, state, and local levels of the federal system. (E)
USG.3.12	Explain and evaluate the original purpose and role of the Electoral College and its relevance today. (E)
USG.3.13	Explain the organization of state and local governments in Indiana and analyze how they affect the lives of citizens.
USG.3.14	Describe the influence of the media and technology on public opinion and public policy.
Domain 4: Relationship of the United States to Other Nations in World Affairs	
USG.4.1	Analyze powers the United States Constitution gives to the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government in the area of foreign affairs and how they have changed over time. (E)
USG.4.2	Identify and explain world issues, including political, cultural, demographic, economic, and environmental challenges that affect the United States foreign policy in specific regions of the world.
USG.4.3	Discuss specific foreign policy issues that impact local community and state interests.
Domain 5: Roles of Citizens in the United States	
USG.5.1	Define the legal meaning of citizenship in the United States and identify the requirements for citizenship in the United States. (E)
USG.5.2	Analyze the roles and responsibilities of citizens in Indiana and the United States.
USG.5.3	Identify and describe the civil and constitutional rights found in the United States Constitution and Bill of Rights, and describe how they are expanded by decisions of the United States Supreme Court. (E)
USG.5.4	Explain when and why the Constitution allows the government to limit individual rights, focusing on how such limits must balance individual liberty with public safety, order, and the common good. (E)
USG.5.5	Explain and give examples of important citizen actions that can impact local, state, and federal government as individuals and members of interest groups.
USG.5.6	Explain how and why citizens in the United States participate in public elections as voters and supporters of candidates for public office. (E)
USG.5.7	Describe opportunities available to individuals to contribute to the well-being of their communities and participate responsibly in the political process at local, state, and federal levels of government.

USG.5.8	Use information from a variety of credible sources to analyze and discuss current American political issues, evaluating the reliability, perspective, and purpose of the information.
USG.5.9	Analyze and evaluate landmark Supreme Court opinions concerning civil rights and civil liberties, and explain their constitutional foundations, historical context, and development over time. (E)