



Rennie Center

K-12 History Social Science Curricular Materials Guide

CONTEXT



Context

K-5 MATERIALS



K-5 Highlighted Core Materials



K-5 Highlighted Supplemental Materials

GRADE 8 MATERIALS



Grade 8 Civics Core Materials



Grade 8 Highlighted Supplemental Materials



Trends in Reviewed Grade 8 Core Materials

9-12 MATERIALS

 **9-12 Highlighted Core Materials**

 **9-12 Highlighted Supplemental Materials**

ABOUT THE REVIEW PROCESS

 **About the Review Process**

 **Defining Basic Expectations**

GUIDE TO CHOOSING AND USING MATERIALS

 **Guide to Choosing and Using Materials**

Context

 Rennie Center



This guide is intended to support Massachusetts educators who are selecting history/social science curricular materials by identifying promising materials worthy of further investigation by schools and districts. It contains information about history/social science curricular materials that meet baseline expectations for quality including alignment to Massachusetts standards, cultural responsiveness, and teacher usability; note that most materials in this guide have not been evaluated against the more [demanding criteria](#) used in other DESE curricular materials reviews (e.g. [CURATE](#) panels). Rather, the information here should be used as an initial step in the broader process of [identifying and selecting](#) curricular materials such as DESE's [IMplement MA](#).

This guide synthesizes the findings of several review projects conducted by the Rennie Center for Education Research and Policy in partnership with the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education:

- A review of Grade 8 curricular materials conducted in Spring 2021;
- A review of Grade K-5 curricular materials conducted in Summer 2021; and
- A review of Grade 9-12 curricular materials, as well as newly released or revised materials for Grades K-5 or Grade 8, conducted in Spring 2023.

(While none of these projects reviewed materials for Grades 6 and 7, the Department has published its own comprehensive, core curriculum, [Investigating History](#), which is intended to provide a free and standards-aligned resource for Grades 5-7.)

In total, 100+ materials were reviewed across these three phases of work. This guide highlights those that teacher reviewers found to be worthy of districts' consideration.

Download the K-12 History Social Science Curricular Materials Guide

Select the K-12 History Social Science Curricular Materials Guide below to view this report as an interactive PDF.



K-12 History Social Science Curricular Materials Guide (2).pdf
5.9 MB



K-5 Highlighted Core Materials

 Rennie Center

K-5 Core Curriculum Selection

Core curricular materials are comprehensive resources designed for use with all students to access grade-level content and standards in a given class over the course of a year or semester.

In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Rennie Center collected 100+ materials for review. In an effort to conduct as comprehensive a survey as possible, these materials were selected based upon a landscape scan conducted by the Rennie Center as well as survey data of materials in use in classrooms across the Commonwealth. Out of the 100+ materials that were part of a baseline review, the following were found to meet DESE’s basic expectations for preliminary evaluation. Each of these materials has unique strengths and challenges. It is important to note that these curricular materials require additional evaluation by schools and districts to determine if they are suitable for local context and student needs; the criteria used for this evaluation were only designed to ensure materials meet baseline Massachusetts expectations. Descriptions of each criterion are included in DESE's Social Studies Curricular Materials Rubric:



Social Science Curricular Materials Rubric.pdf
851.1 KB



Topic Alignment

Detailed descriptions of content standards for Grades K-5 can be found in DESE's [History and Social Science Framework](#). Select the Topic Alignment Matrix below to view an alignment guide illustrating which topics in the Grades K-5 content standards each material addresses.



K-5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix.pdf

194.9 KB



K-5 Highlighted Core Curriculum Review

Click the tabs below to learn more about the strengths and challenges of each selected core resource. *Criteria highlighted in green represent areas of particular strength. Programs are listed alphabetically.*

Cornerstones for Civic Engagement —

[Cornerstones for Civic Engagement](#) is a paid series of 12 curriculum units with corresponding professional development modules for Grades 3–5.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Cornerstones for Civic Engagement*, please review the [K-5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Cornerstones for Civic Engagement* curriculum for Grades 3–5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials engage all students with a variety of discipline-specific, grade-appropriate sources such as texts, images, and maps. Oral discussion and written comprehension activities often follow primary source readings to ensure students analyze the purpose of the source, conduct inquiries, and explain conclusions using evidence. Materials are well-aligned to practice standards and reinforce literacy standards. For instance, tasks require students to analyze multiple perspectives of the same historical event. They also ask students to write for a variety of purposes and audiences. Embedded activities provide opportunities for students to build upon their knowledge of a time period through independent research. Challenges: While units largely progress in a coherent manner, references to students' prior learning is inconsistent. There is also a lack of variation in the long form written assignments included in the materials.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Each reading is accompanied by questions to support student discourse. Materials provide teachers with multiple questions to choose from to tailor the line of inquiry to students. Materials include robust differentiation suggestions, guidance on lesson pacing, and correlations to MA standards. Directions for whole group, small group, and partner activities are clearly explained with repeated structures to increase student engagement and participation. Challenges: Materials do not provide guidance on how to group students. Although discussion routines and structures are present, some units have discussion

	components but lack guidance on how to support students to enter the discussion.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Materials include articles that highlight the lives and contributions of individuals representing diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds. Students are pushed to consider how different populations are represented in texts. Several activities provide students with the opportunity to do partner research on complicated aspects of American history, such as the transcontinental railroad. There are a range of lessons that ask students to connect the content and themes they learn about to lived experiences in their own communities. Challenges: Though lessons present some diverse perspectives, gaps remain. Teachers will need to supplement materials to ensure full inclusivity (e.g. across race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, dis/ability, and class). Additionally, the materials lack structures to support critical discussion on racism and discrimination in the past and present. Students have some opportunities to apply a critical lens to the past, but there are no meaningful conversations about power or oppression.

Democratic Knowledge Project —

[Democratic Knowledge Project](#) has co-created free digital resources for Grade 5 in collaboration with the Cambridge (MA) Public Schools (CPS).

[Massachusetts Standards Alignment](#)

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Democratic Knowledge Project*, please review the [K-5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Democratic Knowledge Project* curriculum for Grade 5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: All lessons embed tasks focused on student inquiry. Materials provide frequent opportunities for students to develop a stance, share their perspectives with others, discuss with their classmates, and express themselves in writing. Lessons include writing prompts with recommended times, guidance on Pair Share activities, and guidance on class discussions. Challenges: Materials are currently available for only one unit (“Expanding Liberty, Equality, and the Suffrage: 1776–1924”).
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Outlines detail the length, essential question, objective, and tasks for each lesson. Materials include rich facilitation directions for teachers. Guidance for teachers is embedded within lesson outlines on how to structure tasks and how to discuss difficult topics. Materials also include embedded assessments.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Students interact consistently with primary sources representing diverse perspectives. Materials contain primary source accounts from people of color; voices of people of color are centered within the materials. Students have the opportunity to learn about various perspectives of historical events. Materials provide opportunities in every lesson for students to apply a critical lens to the past. Materials include guidelines for teaching and learning about African American History & Enslavement that explicitly call out how the historical events impact life in the present day and within students' communities.



Challenges: Students have opportunities to connect their learning to their lived experiences in some, but not all, lessons.

Inquiry Journeys (inquirED) —

[Inquiry Journeys](#) is a paid, digital resource for Grades K–6 with professional development options available.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Inquiry Journeys*, please review the [K–5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Inquiry Journeys* curriculum for Grades K–5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials are driven by the inquiry process to engage students. Content is well-aligned to practice standards and addresses a majority of content standards. Materials include many opportunities for students to discuss, explain, and debate topics in order to form their own conclusions. Challenges: Some content is out of level across all grades (i.e., covered in different grade levels than it appears in the Massachusetts Framework).

Usability for Teachers

Strengths: All lesson plans include a clear purpose, basic instructions for classroom set up, and grouping recommendations. Embedded links to worksheets make it easy for teachers to navigate the materials.

Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness

Strengths: Students are asked to consider multiple perspectives and evaluate the validity of conflicting narratives. Lessons elevate a diversity of voices and experiences. Students use a critical lens to analyze the past through the inquiry process. There are many opportunities for students to connect their identity and experiences to their learning. Across all grade levels, there are opportunities for students to explore, affirm, and share their culture.

Into Social Studies (Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)

[Into Social Studies](#) is a paid digital and print resource for Grades K–6.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Into Social Studies*, please review the [K–5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Into Social Studies* curriculum for Grades K–5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials address most topics within the History and Social Science Framework in grades K, 1, 2, and 5. Materials include a wide array of reading

	content. Teaching activities and guiding questions are inquiry-based and address practice standards. Challenges: Content is not entirely aligned with Massachusetts-specific standards. While the materials include some examples of inquiry, they do not consistently address practice standards.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Teacher editions provide context for lessons, online resources, recommended readings, instructions for all learners, introduction ideas, assessment suggestions, and examples of activities for students to practice skills. Materials offer robust guidance for meeting the needs of all learners through differentiation instructions, teaching resources, and assessment adaptations. Challenges: Lesson plans are not included for teachers.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Some materials prompt students to learn and understand the vast cultural histories and customs of families across the country and world. Challenges: Materials primarily focus on stories from dominant groups; most content is written from a Eurocentric perspective. Materials lack stories from diverse perspectives or a variety of genders, religions, sexualities, classes, etc. Activities and teacher materials do not prompt discussion about prejudice, race, and bigotry.

[Melrose Social Studies](#) is a free social studies curriculum for Grades K–5. While developed primarily for local use in–district, it is publicly available for broader access.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Melrose Social Studies*, please review the [K–5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Melrose Social Studies* curriculum for Grades K–5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials embed a strong inquiry orientation, both from C3 teachers and those developed by the district, though some meet this goal with higher quality than others. For example, Grade 5, Topic 2, includes the C3 Inquiry, "Is Betrayal Always Bad?". Lessons include a hook to grab students' attention and address the purpose of students' learning. Materials include clear rubrics to assess student skill mastery and regularly require students to develop arguments and explain their reasoning. Each Unit Overview includes a description of which Massachusetts English Language Arts standards are covered within the unit. Reading, writing, speaking, and listening tasks are embedded across units. Lessons regularly require students to develop arguments and explain their reasoning. Challenges: Materials could be improved by making stronger connections to what students learned in previous units and what they will learn in future units.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Unit planning templates for teachers include the length of the unit, a summary of what is covered, a summary of tasks, and other planning tools. The unit summary provides an overview of the unit so teachers understand the whole picture of what students should

	learn. Rubrics provide teachers with examples of where students should be for writing and idea development. Most lessons include clear step-by-step instructions for teachers. Every grade level includes an overarching theme and lesson plan that is focused on a primary question with a primary source to accompany each question. Questions included in speaker notes help teachers promote higher-order thinking and discussion. Links to lesson planning templates, standards and scoring criteria, and the Understanding by Design reflection tool help teachers prepare the content and materials provided. Challenges: While there are routines at the unit level, such as opening with a ‘hook’ and a Summative Assessment Task, the structure and format of lessons vary. Not all grades and lessons have consistently outlined plans of a specific template. Lessons would benefit from greater consistency in terms of structures and routines.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Embedded inquiries in materials, such as the Grade 4 US Expansion–Southeast Inquiry: "What voices are heard in our national monuments?" push students to apply a critical lens to the past. Zoom in activities allow students to take a look at of Plimouth plantation and compare life for the Wampanoags and Pilgrims to their own experiences to develop a stance on history. Texts present diverse perspectives with stories from various backgrounds and people. Materials represent the diversity of others and also provide an informational view. Lessons about immigration teach students that people immigrate for a myriad of push and pull reasons. Students are positioned to consider multiple historical perspectives through readings, inquiries, and classroom activities. Students are able to connect content and their identity to materials learning through activities. For example, students are asked to draw a picture of a

family tradition or celebration to answer the Grade 1 inquiry, “How can families be the same and different?”.

Challenges: The historical perspectives included in grade 5 materials overwhelmingly represent white men. There are missed opportunities for students to connect learning to their own identities and experiences. For example, when students learn about immigration and the contributions of immigrants in Grade 2, Unit 3, there are no opportunities for students to share their own or their families’ immigration stories.

Social Studies Alive! —

[*Social Studies Alive!*](#) is a paid social studies curriculum for Grades K–5 with print and digital student resources.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Social Studies Alive!*, please review the [K–5 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Social Studies Alive!* for Grades K–5.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials are well-aligned to practice standards and embed a strong focus on literacy within social studies instruction. Every lesson provides opportunities for students to make literal and inferential meaning across texts of varying structures. Materials prompt students to develop questions and demonstrate understanding through comprehension checkpoints, both in writing and orally. There are clear English

	Language Arts objectives stated for each lesson. Students are asked to apply previously taught concepts, such as culture and geographic variation across regions, to analyze new images and readings. The 3-2-1 reflection protocol embedded in materials has students develop supporting questions that lead to the generation of new ideas and contribute to the inquiry process. Tasks require students to synthesize what they have learned through activities. For instance, in Grade 3, Lesson 14 students leverage their understanding of core democratic principles from readings and discussions to plan an informational podcast about the government. Challenges: Teachers will need to use supplemental resources to cover some Massachusetts-specific content. Materials do not require students to evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of sources.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Repeated routines throughout units, such as analysis of primary and secondary sources, provide structure for discourse. Materials include a vocabulary preview protocol that is beneficial for all students, including English Learners. This protocol provides pictures and contextual support for students as they learn academic vocabulary. Every unit provides multiple modalities for teachers to utilize planning materials. This includes PDF outlines, lists of materials for each lesson, projectible slides, and access to student facing materials. Teacher resources are well organized and include pacing suggestions.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Materials include multiple opportunities for students to explore diverse perspectives, including those from historically marginalized populations. Students are asked to respond to these perspectives through oral and written tasks. There are multiple opportunities for students to discuss and write about their own identities. For instance, Grade

1, Lesson 5 asks students to draw and write about different groups they belong to within their school, family, and community. Extension projects allow students to follow a line of inquiry of their choice to create an action plan and slogan for a project that could solve a problem relevant to their community.

Challenges: Though there are a range of voices and perspectives represented throughout the materials, gaps remain. Teachers will need to supplement materials to ensure that students are exposed to primary and secondary sources that represent all forms of identity (race, gender, sexuality, religion, dis/ability, social class, etc.)

Two Other Promising Options

1

[Investigating History](#) is a free, comprehensive social studies curriculum published by DESE. Materials are aligned to Massachusetts content, practice, and literacy standards and are intentionally designed to center inquiry-based pedagogy, culturally responsive practices, and connections to civics and the current world. As of Fall 2023, materials are available for Grades 5-7 with materials in development for Grades 3 and 4. While it was not included as part of this review, Investigating History materials have gone through robust cycles of review from Massachusetts educators, students, and scholars as part of the development process.

2

[Great First Eight](#) is a set of comprehensive, integrated curricular materials designed to be used across all subject areas. In our review of the portions of the Kindergarten materials aligned to social studies content and practices, we found that they met baseline expectations. However, it is not included on the list above because the developers recommend against teaching any portion of the materials in isolation

and the remainder of the materials have not yet gone through a baseline review process.

CONTINUE

K-5 Highlighted Supplemental Materials

 Rennie Center

Supplemental Materials Overview

Supplemental materials are more limited in scope; rather than standing alone, these materials are intended to be used alongside other curricular resources over the course of a year or semester. For this report, reviewers examined supplemental materials that either covered at least 50% of the content standards from one topic in the Massachusetts History/Social Science Framework or that covered standards-aligned material across multiple topics and were intended to be used for at least three weeks of instruction. The following supplemental materials met all basic expectations for classroom use.



K-5 Supplemental Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix.pdf
181.4 KB



K-5 Highlighted Supplemental Curriculum Review

Click the tabs below to learn more about the strengths and challenges of each selected supplemental resource. Programs are listed alphabetically.

Children Discovering Justice

Overview	<u>Children Discovering Justice</u> is a free, Massachusetts standards-based social studies and civics supplemental curriculum for Grades K-5. Materials focus on topics such as community, rules, leadership, equity, and advocacy. The curricular materials for Grades 3-5 are in development and will be available after completing pilot phases.* *Please note: Since conducting this review, Children Discovering Justice has released curricular materials for Grade 3 and significantly revised the materials for Kindergarten.
Strengths	Materials focus on the development of students' opinions based on provided evidence. Opportunities for speaking and listening engage students in a variety of ways. Teacher guides for each grade level provide a rationale for content included, and training/orientation videos. Specific examples about justice and advocacy across grade levels feature diverse, Massachusetts-based experiences.
Challenges	Descriptions of classroom routines lack detail. Materials provide limited opportunities for students to engage with written tasks or apply a critical lens to the past.

Fishtank Learning

Overview	<u>Fishtank Learning</u> is a free, comprehensive English/Language Arts (ELA) curriculum for Grades K-12 that embeds social studies content. Texts within the ELA materials alternate focus on social studies and science topics. Materials are available digitally.
-----------------	---

Strengths	Materials provide robust guidance for teachers on structuring lessons, assessing learning, and differentiating instruction. Materials ask students to explore multiple perspectives of historical events. Materials provide teachers with discussion questions that allow students to connect their cultures and identities to their learning.
Challenges	Materials cover a relatively small subset of Massachusetts K–5 social studies standards. Materials align with some, but not all, practice standards.

Learning for Justice (Southern Poverty Law Center) —

Overview	<i>Learning for Justice</i> is a free digital resource for Grades K–12. Resources include a wide range of lessons, many of which address social studies topics. Learning for Justice also includes a searchable library of student texts and tasks.
Strengths	Many resources ask students to analyze historical documents and contribute to the inquiry process. Materials provide opportunities for students to connect their identities and lived experiences to their learning. Materials center diverse cultures, perspectives, and identities.
Challenges	Materials cover a relatively small subset of Massachusetts K–5 social studies standards.

Newsela Social Studies —

Overview	<u>Newsela Social Studies</u> is a paid, digital resource for Grades 3–5. The Newsela platform also offers free resources. Materials include primary sources and historic news articles from diverse perspectives alongside a series of C3 Inquiries that provide a recommended instructional pathway, curated content, and summative performance tasks.
Strengths	Materials present and center multiple perspectives of historical events. Newsela includes a C3 inquiry collection, which poses inquiry questions alongside a text set. Students have many opportunities to analyze primary sources through text sets. News articles are available at differentiated reading levels and in Spanish.
Challenges	Guidance for teachers on structuring lessons and assessing learning is not available for all resources.

Open Social Studies (UMASS Boston and Boston University) —

Overview	<u>Open Social Studies</u> is a free, open resource meant to supplement Grades K–6 social studies curriculum. Materials are intended to support culturally relevant, inquiry-based social studies instruction. Every grade level includes downloadable instructor manuals, student workbooks, and student sourcebooks.
Strengths	Students have many opportunities to analyze primary and secondary sources to learn about a diverse range of individuals who contributed to American and World history. Exercises have students consider the lived experiences of marginalized communities throughout history. The start of each teacher manual clearly states the amount of time suggested for each lesson, where materials are located, and expectations for the

	use of materials. All grades include a long-term project to extend and develop student learning over time.
Challenges	Students are not challenged to consider the credibility or accuracy of a source. Exercises to build critical reading skills are missing and sources do not include graphs or charts.

Private i History Detectives —

Overview	<i>Private i History Detectives</i> is a free, digital resource intended to supplement social studies curriculum for Grades K-5. Content is aligned to state standards and organized by grade level and topic with whole class mystery-themed units that are intended to make learning social studies fun.
Strengths	The inquiry-based nature of each unit embeds opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past. Across a variety of units and lessons, students have the opportunity to take the perspectives of individuals and groups representing a diversity of cultures. Materials provide detailed teacher guidance with a lesson plan, presentation, student handouts, objectives, and optional transcript for each mystery-themed unit. All history and social science practices are covered to some extent within each grade level.
Challenges	Materials lack formal routines to support analysis and discourse.

CONTINUE

Grade 8 Civics Core Materials



Year-Long Civics Resources

In partnership with the Rennie Center, DESE has conducted two reviews of Grade 8 civics curricular materials.

In **2021**, the Rennie Center and DESE convened nine civics teachers from across Massachusetts to assess Grade 8 civics core materials based upon a [DESE-created rubric](#). Materials reviewed in 2021 were subject to a rigorous, teacher-led review process.

In **2023**, the Rennie Center partnered with DESE to conduct a baseline review of K-12 history and social science curricula. Grade 8 civics materials that were not reviewed in 2021 were included in this review. Note that these curricula may not necessarily be high-quality materials; the criteria used for evaluation were designed to ensure materials meet baseline Massachusetts expectations. Descriptions of each criterion are included in the DESE Social Studies Rubric below.

Core curricular materials are comprehensive resources designed for use with all students to access grade-level content and standards in a given class over the course of a year or semester.

In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Rennie Center collected 100+ materials for review. In an effort to conduct as comprehensive a survey as possible, these materials were selected based upon a landscape scan conducted by the Rennie Center as well as survey data of materials in use in classrooms across the Commonwealth. Out of the 100+ materials that were part of a baseline review, the following were found to meet

DESE’s basic expectations for preliminary evaluation. Each of these materials has unique strengths and challenges. It is important to note that these curricular materials require additional evaluation by schools and districts to determine if they are suitable for local context and student needs; the criteria used for this evaluation were only designed to ensure materials meet baseline Massachusetts expectations. Descriptions of each criterion are included in DESE's Social Studies Curricular Materials Rubric:



Social Science Curricular Materials Rubric.pdf
232.6 KB



Topic Alignment

Detailed descriptions of content standards for Grade 8 can can be found in DESE's [History and Social Science Framework](#). Select the Topic Alignment Matrix below to view an alignment guide illustrating which topics in the Grade 8 content standards each material addresses.



Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix.pdf
137.3 KB



Grade 8 Highlighted Civics Core Curriculum Review

Out of nearly 100 materials reviewed, the following materials were found to either meet or exceed DESE’s baseline expectations for quality Grade 8 civics core curricular materials. While there were some [broad trends in the materials reviewed](#), each of these materials has unique strengths and challenges. The table below identifies the particular strengths of each of the highlighted core materials.

Click the tabs below to learn more about the strengths and challenges of each selected core resource. Criteria highlighted in green represent areas of particular strength. Programs are listed alphabetically.

*Asterisk indicates materials included in 2021 teacher review using a more stringent rubric.

Actively Learn: United States & Massachusetts Government and Civic Life

[Actively Learn: United States & Massachusetts Government and Civic Life](#) is a paid digital resource that covers most topics included in the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Actively Learn*, please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of *Actively Learn* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials are in alignment with every topic for the Grade 8 U.S. and Massachusetts Government and Civic Life standards. Lessons include a range of materials, inquiry-based "decision-making" activities, group projects, and writing assessments. Readings and videos develop content-based civics knowledge alongside inquiry-driven lessons. Units include lessons around sourcing, biases, annotation, and the use of sources for research purposes. Challenges: Materials lack strong practice standard alignment.

Usability for Teachers

Strengths: All unit and lesson plans include a Lexile level for the texts and assignments. Detailed unit guides give an at-a-glance look at all the lessons included, how lessons fit into each week of the unit, structured pacing suggestions, and how the different skills involved interact with one another. Lessons are broken down by weeks to show patterns in practice over time.

Challenges: Materials could be strengthened by making stronger connections to what students learned in past units and will learn in future units.

Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness

Strengths: Content, particularly in units on the Civil Rights movement or early feminist movements, addresses non-White or female authors, leaders, and revolutionaries. Lessons provide ample opportunities for students to take a critical lens to the past. Contradicting resources are provided so that students can see multiple sides of an issue. Interactive projects and "decision-making" activities, such as the "Connecting to Today" sections, push students to take an interactive look at historical events to develop their own opinion-based responses.

Challenges: Materials have limited perspectives from historically marginalized groups. Content in earlier units does not explore the Indigenous experience before colonization and there is limited mention of women and slavery in earlier units.

Civics for All*

[*Civics for All*](#) is a free digital resource that covers most topics included in the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards.

[Massachusetts Standards Alignment](#)

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Civics for All*, please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of *Civics for All* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Authentic, Meaningful Tasks	Strengths: Materials authentically connect students' civic learning to their lived experiences. Civics for All includes a wealth of project-based learning activities that support student inquiry and the development of civic dispositions. Challenges: Materials are designed for students living in New York City, and will need to be modified to include Massachusetts connections.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Strengths: Materials intentionally weave cultural responsiveness throughout all tasks and activities, particularly sections on immigration and citizenship and power in politics. Civics for All centers a diversity of perspectives and encourages critical thinking on issues facing students' lives and communities.
Support for All Students	Challenges: Materials do not offer specific scaffolds or adaptations for students with disabilities, English learners, or students struggling to access grade-level content. Without modifications, texts included in the materials will not be accessible for all students.
Usability	Strengths: Civics for All offers integrated planners and resources to support teachers in developing their subject-matter knowledge. Teacher notes and rubrics offer helpful guidance for classroom

	discussions.
	Challenges: Materials lack exemplars or answer keys to set expectations for student work.

Topics Covered
Materials cover topics 2, 3, 4 and 7 of the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards. They partially cover topic 5.

Suggested Areas for Adapting/Supplementing Materials
Teachers should expect to adapt materials to integrate Massachusetts-specific content and support students with disabilities and English learners in accessing content. Teachers will need to create their own exemplars to set expectations for student work.

Democratic Knowledge Project* —

[*Democratic Knowledge Project’s*](#) free, digital, year-long curriculum, [*“Civic Engagement in Our Democracy,”*](#) covers all topics of the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Civic Engagement in Our Democracy*, please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Civic Engagement in Our Democracy* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Authentic, Meaningful Tasks	Strengths: Materials provide a project-based model, offering sustained investigation of primary sources and ongoing opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning. Materials provide frequent opportunities for students to connect their historical learning to present-day issues (e.g.

	writing a petition or op-ed about an issue that matters to them).
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Strengths: Materials make an effort to center non-dominant voices and provide students with opportunities to explore different points of view. For example, a unit on the philosophical foundations of democracy features a case study of abolitionist Prince Hall. Challenges: Materials would benefit from more consistent inclusion of diverse voices.
Support for All Students	Strengths: Materials provide resources (e.g. color-coded readings, chunking) to make difficult primary source documents accessible for Grade 8 students. Challenges: Specific supports for students with disabilities and English learners are minimal. Teachers should expect to supplement materials in this area.
Usability	Strengths: Materials include strong exemplars to set high expectations for student work. The scope and sequence provided to teachers features a clear rationale for decisions on content included. Challenges: Materials include strong summative assessments, but lack a clear connection between formative and summative assessments.

Topics Covered

Materials cover all 7 topics of the Massachusetts Grade 8 standards. They also align with Massachusetts expectations for the student-led civics project.

Suggested Areas for Adapting/Supplementing Materials

Teachers can make these materials stronger by supplementing resources with more diverse voices and perspectives. Teachers will also need to identify scaffolds and adaptations to make

materials accessible for students with disabilities and English learners.

History Alive* —

[*History Alive!*](#) is a paid, year-long resource that covers topics 1–4 of the Grade 8 civics standards. *History Alive!* is designed as a history course rather than a civics course and requires modification to address all Grade 8 topics.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *History Alive!*, please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of *History Alive!* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Authentic, Meaningful Tasks	Strengths: Materials include a range of activities that support students in developing civic skills. Units are built around connected big and small picture concepts. Challenges: Given that materials focus on history rather than civics, they lack sufficient opportunities for students to connect their civic learning to the present day.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Strengths: Materials feature some diverse voices. Challenges: Materials provide few opportunities for students to challenge the dominant narrative of US history. Though they feature some diverse voices,

	non-dominant perspectives are primarily included as an "add-on."
Support for All Students	Strengths: Materials provide a wealth of resources for teachers to differentiate content based on student needs. For example, teachers have the ability to change the reading level of texts assigned to students in the digital materials. Read-alouds and vocabulary previews support English learners in accessing content. Materials also feature a Spanish translation.
Usability	Strengths: Teacher resources are interactive and easy-to-navigate. They provide teachers with the ability to edit instructional materials. Rubrics and answer keys support teachers in scoring student assignments.

Topics Covered

Materials cover topics 1, 2, and 4 of the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards. They partially cover topic 3.

Suggested Areas for Adapting/Supplementing Materials

Teachers should expect to supplement materials to cover all topics of the Grade 8 standards, including the student-led civics project. Materials should also be adapted to center non-dominant voices and provide students with opportunities to challenge dominant narratives.

iCivics* —

[iCivics](#) is a free digital resource that covers all topics of the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of [iCivics](#), please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of *iCivics* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Authentic, Meaningful Tasks	Strengths: <i>iCivics</i> is well-aligned to Massachusetts standards and supports student engagement through interactive games and activities. Materials present complex content in an accessible way and provide opportunities for students to take action based upon their learning. A combination of lessons plans, mini-lessons, and online games are included to build students' civic knowledge. Challenges: Not all lessons support students in developing higher-order thinking skills like evaluation, analysis, and application.
Culturally Responsive Pedagogy	Challenges: Diverse voices are presented as stand-alone examples, and are not centered throughout the materials. Where diverse narratives are included, they are not presented in a way that allows students to question the dominant narrative of the nation's past.
Support for All Students	Strengths: Online games and supporting materials provide WIDA correlations and English learner supports. Game resources are available in English and Spanish. Challenges: Lessons and activities provide few modifications to meet the needs of students with disabilities.
Usability	Strengths: Materials integrate with Google Classroom and include strong professional development content. Materials provide resources



to support both new and veteran teachers in effectively implementing the resources.

Topics Covered

Materials cover all 7 topics of the Massachusetts Grade 8 standards. The supplementary iCivics Workbook aligns with Massachusetts expectations for the student-led civics project.

Suggested Areas for Adapting/Supplementing Materials

Teachers should expect to supplement materials to center diverse, non-dominant narratives. Teachers will also need to adapt many materials to provide access for students with disabilities and English learners who speak a native language other than Spanish.

Networks: United States & Massachusetts Government and Civic Life

[Networks: United States & Massachusetts Government and Civic Life](#) is a paid digital resource that covers all topics of the Massachusetts Grade 8 civics standards.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Networks*, please review the [Grade 8 Civics Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of *Networks* curriculum for Grade 8.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Multiple formative and summative assessment options are available to ensure that state literacy standards are being met. Materials include suggested guiding questions, main ideas for notes, and activities to build skills. For writing activities, scaffolds such as graphic organizers are provided through the text. Each chapter is organized to include ongoing questions for understanding and reflection on the content. Digital resources go beyond class activities for independent and extension assignments.

	Challenges: Student inquiry is embedded to some degree but does not drive learning in a meaningful way. However, materials include an Inquiry Journal resource aligned to each chapter that follows the inquiry process. Teachers will need to be attentive to all teacher edition activities and teaching instructions as not every Massachusetts-specific topic standard is covered in the core student text.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Consistent support resources allow for differentiation to strengthen learning for all students. Multiple formative and summative assessment options are included to ensure state literacy standards are met. Assessments are divided by skill area so teachers can build structures around the relevant skills in each and every unit. Challenges: Differentiation options are not present to support English Learners. Materials include an English Learner Handbook with recommendations for supporting ELs in social studies, but suggested supports are not specific to each lesson or activity.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Resources for research and assessment allow students to take an interactive approach to their learning and demonstrate criticality. Students have regular opportunities to connect their learning with their lived experiences. Application-based tasks help students connect their lived experiences to what they have learned. Challenges: Many of the questions and assignments allow for surface-level answers, rather than provide for deeper exploration of primary sources from the past. Students are not asked to formulate opinions. Materials lack opportunities for students to share their diverse

identities with peers or educators and connect these identities to their learning.

CONTINUE

Grade 8 Highlighted Supplemental Materials

Supplemental Materials Overview

Supplemental materials are more limited in scope; rather than standing alone, these materials are intended to be used alongside other curricular resources over the course of a year or semester. For this report, reviewers examined supplemental materials that either covered at least 50% of the content standards from one topic in the Massachusetts History/Social Science Framework or that covered standards-aligned material across multiple topics and were intended to be used for at least three weeks of instruction. The following supplemental materials met all basic expectations for classroom use.

Three primary areas where many Grade 8 core curricular materials require supplementation are:

- The student-led civics project
- Culturally responsive pedagogy
- Media literacy

The materials listed on this page represent the strongest supplemental materials identified during the review process. None of these materials is designed to serve as a full-year, comprehensive set of curricular materials. Instead, they can be used to supplement core materials in the areas listed above.

Student-Led Civics Project Materials

The following resources focus on the student-led civics project required by law and described in detail in DESE's [Civics Project Guidebook](#).

GENERATION CITIZEN	ICIVICS WORKBOOK	LOCAL CIVICS	SRVCE
Overview	Generation Citizen's student-led civics project is aligned to the civics project component of the Grade 8 course. It supports teachers and students in selecting an issue of importance to the community, researching the issue, and taking action on the issue.		
Format	<i>Generation Citizen</i> is a paid resource. The organization provides substantial support for educators implementing the student-led civics project, including ongoing individualized <i>Generation Citizen</i> staff support during the program implementation period.		
Strengths	Materials contain meaningful, engaging tasks which are designed to amplify student voice. They provide high-quality teacher-facing resources and exceptional supports for English learners. Materials are well-aligned to Massachusetts standards and expectations for student-led civics projects.		
Challenges	Materials do not address historical inequities which led to structural issues facing communities today. They do not provide resources for teachers to facilitate discussions on complex political issues and systems of power.		

GENERATION CITIZEN	ICIVICS WORKBOOK	LOCAL CIVICS	SRVCE
Overview	<i>Civics Projects: A Workbook for Civic Engagement</i> guides students and teachers through each step of the student-led civics project. This includes examining community needs, selecting an issue, researching the issue, developing a plan, and taking action. It also includes lessons focused on civics content.		
Format	The workbook is a paid resource available digitally and in print.		
Strengths	This comprehensive resource effectively guides students and teachers through the civics project. It provides meaningful and engaging tasks that inspire students to take action. It is well-aligned to Massachusetts standards and expectations for student-led civics projects.		
Challenges	The resource does not adequately support culturally responsive pedagogy. During the action stage of the project, it lacks opportunities for students to examine the nature of power, who has access to power, and ways to interrogate power. It relies on teachers to identify opportunities and make space for discussing how race, class, and immigration status influence individual and community experience with government entities.		

GENERATION CITIZEN	ICIVICS WORKBOOK	LOCAL CIVICS	SRVCE
Overview	<i>Local Civics: Civic Impact Project Curriculum</i> is aligned with DESE's Civic Project Guidebook, MA content and practice standards,		

	Common Core State Standards, and the C3 Framework from the National Council for Social Studies. Materials are designed to prepare students for active citizenship, social impact, and visionary leadership.
Format	<i>Local Civics</i> is a paid digital resource available through Google Workspace. <i>Local Civics</i> offers professional development and curricular coaching for educators, schools, and districts.
Strengths	Materials clearly and explicitly address all aspects of the Grade 8 Massachusetts standards and expectations for student-led civics projects. Students gain both knowledge of steps in the action civics process and practice implementing those steps to prepare an action-based “prototype” for change. Each lesson includes worksheets for notetaking and processing, with reflective questions integrated throughout.
Challenges	Representation of diverse stories and experiences is highly dependent on student choice and teacher facilitation. Student learning is focused on present civics issues, rather than a critical analysis of past events.

GENERATION CITIZEN	ICIVICS WORKBOOK	LOCAL CIVICS	SRVCE
Overview	<u>Supporting Readiness Through Vital Civic Empowerment (SRVCE)</u> , developed by Education Development Center, blends inquiry-based civic learning, media literacy education, and exploration of public service careers to prepare high school students to be active citizens and participate in the workforce.		

Format	SRVCE is a free digital resource. SRVCE offers five downloadable 3-week civics curriculum modules that may be taught individually or in sequence.
Strengths	Materials provide students with opportunities to use their learning to take action on current issues. Students have ownership of their learning as they drive the exploration of issues they care about, choose the focus of their research, and make their own plans to take action. Students have regular opportunities to connect their identities to their learning. For example, in the My Civic Identity lesson, students explore communities with which they identify, share their identity through collage art, and connect their identity to the civic inquiry and action process. Materials include a student-facing civics project rubric as well as a range of student reflection tools and planning resources to set clear expectations and support students.
Challenges	Materials lack differentiation suggestions for students who struggle to access grade-appropriate content and specific support for ELs.

Culturally Responsive Supplemental Materials

The following materials can support culturally responsive pedagogy due to their particular focus on including diverse voices and experiences and/or developing students’ critical understanding of the past.

BECOMING US	BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL	LEARNING FOR JUSTICE	NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY	TEACH T
--------------------	---	---------------------------------	--	--------------------

Overview	<i>Becoming Us</i> is an online resource provided by the National Museum of American History. It is designed to teach immigration history in an accurate and inclusive manner. The resource is designed for high school students, but can be modified to meet the needs of Grade 8 students.
Format	<i>Becoming Us</i> is a free online resource.
Strengths	Materials include meaningful tasks that include a rich diversity of voices, perspectives, and narratives. Topics covered include the fight for desegregation, Chinese Exclusion, DACA, Islamophobia, Native resistance, and many others. Resources provide many opportunities for students to explore how identity and social position shape people's perceptions of events. <i>Becoming Us</i> offers strong resources to build teachers' subject-matter knowledge.
Challenges	Materials do not fully support students in building civic skills and dispositions. They lack scaffolding and differentiation for English learners and students with disabilities. Materials focus largely on oppression and could do a better job including more empowering stories.

BECOMING US	BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL	LEARNING FOR JUSTICE	NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY	TEACH T
-------------	----------------------------------	-------------------------	-----------------------------------	------------

Overview	<i>Building Democracy for All</i> is a digital textbook with embedded links. The resource curates materials from a range of external sources.
-----------------	---

Format	<i>Building Democracy for All</i> is a free online resource.
Strengths	Materials offer engaging activities that center diverse voices and perspectives. Lessons provide nuance when discussing complex topics. The materials address important conversations, including one focused on how slavery is embedded within the Constitution. Many lessons connect to current events including the Black Lives Matter movement.
Challenges	<i>Building Democracy for All</i> lacks guidance on pedagogical techniques to effectively deliver the curricular materials. Materials do not include assessments to measure student learning or exemplars to set expectations for students.

BECOMING US	BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL	LEARNING FOR JUSTICE	NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY	TEACH T
Overview	<i>Learning for Justice</i> , a project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, provides free lesson plans, student texts, student tasks, and other instructional resources focused on anti-bias and anti-racist education. Resources include a range of civics-focused materials on topics including elections, voting rights, legislation and civic action.			
Format	<i>Learning for Justice</i> is a free online resource.			
Strengths	Materials include a wide range of authentic and meaningful tasks. The materials are engaging and help develop students' civic dispositions. Lessons include frequent opportunities for students to connect their learning with their identity and lived experience (e.g. preparing to register to vote or talking to their parents about			

	voting). All <i>Learning for Justice</i> resources prioritize anti-racist teaching and intentionally address issues of equity.
Challenges	While materials include some general supports, they include no specific scaffolds for English learners or students with disabilities. They lack assessments to monitor student learning.

BECOMING US	BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL	LEARNING FOR JUSTICE	NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY	TEACH T
Overview	The New-York Historical Society offers a library of civics-focused curricular materials. Though these resources were created to align with New York state standards, many address Massachusetts standards as well. They are designed to promote cultural understanding and empower students to strengthen democracy.			
Format	<i>New-York Historical Society</i> is an open-source, online resource.			
Strengths	Materials support historical inquiry and give students ownership over the learning process, rather than guiding them towards any predetermined conclusions. They provide a range of opportunities to connect historical learning to the present day through topics such as voting rights. Materials take an intersectional approach to exploring historical and present day events, including exploring how race and gender intersect. Lessons offer students and teachers an opportunity to explore issues of power, race, and class. Teacher resources provide adult-level explanations to build teachers' content knowledge.			
Challenges	Materials do not adequately support the development of civic skills and dispositions. They lack scaffolding for students			

struggling to access complex content. Materials do not provide comprehensive assessments, rubrics, or exemplars.

BECOMING US	BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL	LEARNING FOR JUSTICE	NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY	TEACHING CIVICS THROUGH HISTORY
Overview	<i>Teaching Civics Through History</i> is a middle and high school resource developed by The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History. It is designed to "provide students with a foundational knowledge centered on the historic roots of current civic and social issues facing the nation and their community" (Gilder Lehrman).			
Format	<i>Teaching Civics Through History</i> resources are only available to educators participating in a free professional development program through Gilder Lehrman. The program is offered several times per year, depending on grant funding. To find out when the next program will be offered, email pd@gilderlehrman.org.			
Strengths	Materials center a diversity of voices and perspectives throughout every resource and unit. They include an analysis of primary sources, with discussion prompts focused on topics including prejudice and systemic racism. Guidelines for civil discourse are included, though students do not have an opportunity to develop these guidelines.			
Challenges	Materials are not accessible for all students, including English learners, students with disabilities, and those struggling to access grade-level content. Lessons repeat similar tasks and activities to analyze primary sources and may not be engaging for grade 8 students. Very few activities are student-led.			

Media Literacy Materials

The following materials focus on the media literacy component of the Grade 8 course (Topic 7).

DIGITAL CIVICS TOOLKIT	CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY AND CIVIC LEARNING	NEWSEUM
Overview	Digital Civics Toolkit provides 5 modules that explore civic issues in the digital world. Topics include, but are not limited to, analyzing civic information online, finding information you can trust, and engaging in productive online dialogue about civic issues.	
Format	<i>Digital Civics Toolkit</i> is a free online resource.	
Strengths	Materials are easy-to-navigate and provide an abundance of meaningful tasks for students focused on contemporary digital media topics like online activism, social media consumption, and reading online comments. Activities provide multiple opportunities for students to use their learning to take action. The toolkit curates content from a range of sources, many of which intentionally focus on cultural responsiveness.	
Challenges	Materials lack meaningful supports for English learners and students with disabilities (e.g. no summaries or transcripts of videos). Many lesson plans rely upon class discussion without providing adequate guidance for teachers on what the discussion should look like. Materials do not include formal assessments.	

DIGITAL CIVICS TOOLKIT

CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY AND CIVIC LEARNING

NEWSEUM

Overview

[Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning](#) is an interactive, multimodal, open-access eBook for teaching key topics in United States Government and Civic Life. Materials include over 100 interactive media literacy learning activities for students organized around key topics in civics, government, and history education derived from the Massachusetts 8th Grade Civics and Government curriculum framework.

Format

Critical Media Literacy and Civic Learning is a free online resource.

Strengths

Students practice persuasive writing, analyzing the purpose and credibility of sources, and working towards informed action in activities embedded in lessons. Materials present a diversity of stories and experiences with opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past. For example, in Lesson 2.3, 'Representations of Racism Toward Black Americans in the Media,' students discuss the causes and effects of stereotypes in media, including social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube, and Snapchat.

Challenges

Materials do not include lesson plans, presentation materials, pacing, or speaking instructions for teachers. There are minimal supports available to make materials accessible for English learners. Materials do not include support for teachers with suggested classroom routines or structures for discourse.

DIGITAL CIVICS TOOLKIT

CRITICAL MEDIA LITERACY AND CIVIC LEARNING

NEWSEUM

Overview

[NewseumED](#) provides a large collection of lesson plans, primary source digital artifacts, videos, historical events, interactives and other tools that support the media literacy component of the Grade 8 standards.

Format

NewseumED is a free online resource. Teachers can sign up for a free account for access to additional resources [here](#).

Strengths

Materials provide a range of engaging resources focused on media literacy and the First Amendment. Topics include freedom of speech, identifying facts, and the role of media in elections. They offer significant student choice and provide opportunities to connect learning about the past to the present day and students' own values and experiences.

Challenges

The *NewseumED* website provides a large volume of resources and teachers may find it difficult to identify those that connect to Grade 8 civics standards. Though materials make an attempt to include diverse voices, important perspectives are left out of lessons, including lessons focused on women's rights and civil rights. There are minimal supports available to make materials accessible for English learners and students with disabilities.

CONTINUE

Trends in Reviewed Grade 8 Core Materials

This section describes strengths of reviewed materials and areas where materials need to be improved to better serve students and educators.

Strengths of Available Materials

Authentic, meaningful tasks emerged as a strength of many materials reviewed by teacher advisors. Many materials support inquiry-based, hands-on civic learning, providing students with opportunities to collaboratively analyze primary sources, engage in civil discourse, connect their civic learning to the real world, and take action on issues in their community.

Areas in Need of Improvement

Culturally responsive pedagogy and support for all students were identified as challenges in many materials. Many materials undervalue the contributions of people of color to United States democracy, reinforcing a Eurocentric view of America's past. Other materials ignore issues of racism and historical inequities that led to structural issues facing U.S. society today. Too few materials provide opportunities for students to connect their civic learning to their own identities and lived experiences. In order to meet the needs of Massachusetts students and

educators, the majority of resources reviewed by the panel need to be adapted to better support culturally responsive pedagogy.

Very few materials reviewed by teacher advisors provide adaptations and scaffolds that allow English learners and students with disabilities to meaningfully access grade-level content. Only a handful of resources provide vocabulary supports or make connections to students' home language to support English learners. Most materials provide no recommended adaptations or scaffolds for students struggling to access complex texts and rigorous tasks. Massachusetts educators will need to partner with their special education and English learner colleagues to make materials accessible for all students.

9-12 Highlighted Core Materials

9-12 Core Curriculum Selection

Core curricular materials are comprehensive resources designed for use with all students to access grade-level content and standards in a given class over the course of a year or semester.

In partnership with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the Rennie Center collected 100+ materials for review. In an effort to conduct as comprehensive a survey as possible, these materials were selected based upon a landscape scan conducted by the Rennie Center as well as survey data of materials in use in classrooms across the Commonwealth. Out of the 100+ materials that were part of a baseline review, the following were found to meet DESE's basic expectations for preliminary evaluation. Each of these materials has unique strengths and challenges. It is important to note that these curricular materials require additional evaluation by schools and districts to determine if they are suitable for local context and student needs; the criteria used for this evaluation were only designed to ensure materials meet baseline Massachusetts expectations. Descriptions of each criterion are included in DESE's Social Studies Curricular Materials Rubric:



Social Science Curricular Materials Rubric 9-12.pdf
852.2 KB



Topic Alignment

Detailed descriptions of content standards for Grades 9–12 can be found in DESE's [History and Social Science Framework](#). Select the Topic Alignment Matrix below to view an alignment guide illustrating which topics in the Grades 9–12 content standards each material addresses.



9-12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix.pdf
158.8 KB



9-12 Highlighted Core Curriculum Review

Click the tabs below to learn more about the strengths and challenges of each selected core resource. *Criteria highlighted in green represent areas of particular strength. Programs are listed alphabetically.*

Actively Learn Social Studies —

[Actively Learn Social Studies](#) is a paid resource that covers a full year of instruction for middle and high school social studies courses.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Actively Learn Social Studies*, please review the [9-12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *Actively Learn Social Studies* curriculum for United States History I & II and World History I & II.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials have students navigate inquiry, make decisions, analyze primary and secondary sources, and form arguments in a variety of ways. Units progress from the initial introduction of content to deeper analysis of specific aspects of the time period, prompting increasingly complex thinking. Most courses introduce content in detail through readings, maps, and videos before students process and analyze information. Many structures are intentionally repeated across units. Consistent throughout all of the courses are document-based reading, writing, and speaking lessons aligned to grade level literacy standards. Students also participate in a variety of writing assessments that are both explanatory as well as argumentative.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Teacher's Guides for each lesson present background information, suggested pacing, student-facing materials, and directions to implement curriculum within the classroom. Guides have example responses for text analyses as well as suggestions for questions. Classroom tasks include a brief summary, lexile level, focus skills, suggested time, and assessment guidance. Many tasks have multiple levels of text complexity that teachers can use to differentiate and build skills over time. Some lessons provide options for teachers to use structured academic controversies for student debates. Challenges: Materials lack guidance for teachers to extend learning for students in need of additional challenge.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Sources provided in investigations and inquiries include a variety of perspectives. For example, the US History II curriculum includes diverse perspectives focused on the 1920s Harlem Renaissance, the effects of WWII on African Americans, and the Civil

Rights Era. Tasks are structured to encourage students to grapple with and challenge historical generalizations.

Challenges: Materials overrepresent Eurocentric perspectives. For example, in World History, materials focused on the Age of Revolution predominantly feature France and America. There are missed opportunities for students to connect their learning to their own identity without significant teacher support.

iCivics: U.S. History 1 —

[*iCivics: U.S. History 1 \(Working Title\)*](#) is currently in development and limited to pilot teachers. It is intended to be released as a free digital resource with professional development opportunities available to support educators.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *iCivics: U.S. History 1 (Working Title)*, please review the [9–12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *iCivics: U.S. History 1 (Working Title)* curriculum for the U.S. History Program (Units 5–8).

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials ground each lesson in student inquiry. Lessons incorporate history and social science practices with a strong emphasis on gathering and summarizing data from multiple primary and secondary sources. Students build skills through practice over the course of each module. Lessons include language objectives, vocabulary routines to introduce new words, and grade-appropriate speaking, listening, and writing

	tasks. Materials provide supports to ensure that readings, particularly primary sources, are accessible to all students. Note catching documents and other tools guide students to organize information for resource analysis. Materials engage students through multiple modes of accessing content and demonstrating knowledge. Challenges: Materials do not incorporate tasks and activities that direct students to take informed civic action to apply what they have learned.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Detailed lesson plans guide teachers through content delivery and classroom routines. Detailed scaffolding instructions for reading and writing assignments support differentiation. Suggestions for how teachers can respond to student questions are included for class discussions. The user-friendly format of this curriculum makes it easy for teachers to navigate. Additionally, the depth of lesson plans supports strong curriculum implementation.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Materials include primary sources from historically marginalized communities to show a diversity of voices in U.S. history. Lessons guide students to develop their own opinion through the analysis of sources. Topics such as the Civil War and Reconstruction are presented through a critical lens. Materials include asset-based questions at the start of lessons that offer students opportunities to connect their learning to their identity and lived experience.

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) —

Jefferson County Public Schools (JCPS) is a free digital resource for Grades 9–12. While developed primarily for local use in-district, it is publicly available for broader access.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *JCPS*, please review the [9–12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the *JCPS* curriculum for Grades 9–12.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Most lessons consist of an open-ended question generally aligned to the content standards. Broad, compelling questions allow students to develop more focused questions or problem statements to effectively conduct inquiries. Large text sets require students to organize information from multiple primary and secondary sources. Multiple perspectives are represented and students must analyze the purpose and point of view of different sources. Materials include opportunities for students to evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of each source. Sequential units logically build upon one another. For example, World History Unit 3: When is a Revolution Successful? (1750–1850) progresses from analyzing causes, to comparing processes, to discussing change and continuities for Atlantic Revolutions. Additionally, the generally consistent structure of each lesson facilitates the intentional development of historical skills and practices.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Curricular materials provide a broad structure that teachers can use to turn supporting questions and documents into actionable lessons. Materials focus on teacher planning and preparation with clear frameworks to follow, explanations of the standards, potential tasks or routines, and assessment options. Resources have some suggestions for all modalities.

	Challenges: Materials do not include example responses to open-ended inquiry questions for teachers to reference. There are no suggested routines or structures for any individual lesson. Select structures and named resources are not yet fully built out.
Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness	Strengths: Materials include a number of sources from a variety of viewpoints and arguments, including secondary sources combined with open-ended questions. Suggested structures focus on developing students' critical analysis. Question-based inquiry provides teachers with the opportunity to structure lessons and document sets in a way that supports critical discussion. Routines to engage with supporting questions are focused on students developing questions and curiosity to engage deeper in the learning. Structures rely on students connecting the content and their analysis to their own identity and experiences. Challenges: Most of the supporting questions in World History come from a Euro- and American-centric viewpoint of world history. While many of the supporting questions in the U.S. History lessons present stories and experiences of White Americans, Black Americans, and women, representation of other identity markers are limited.

Savvas: US History Interactive 9-12

[*Savvas: US History Interactive 9-12*](#) is a paid digital and print resource for Grades 9-12.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *Savvas: US History Interactive 9–12*, please review the [9–12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the curriculum for *Savvas: US History Interactive 9–12*.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Content is aligned to grade level expectations and incorporates all history and social science practices. Assessments generally align with grade level expectations and most tasks represent an appropriate level of complexity. Materials consistently engage students in activities that require them to argue conclusions using valid reasoning. For example, primary source analysis of the Federalist Papers in Topic 4, Lesson 3 asks students to explain an argument, assess the position, and evaluate the validity of the argument. Content builds chronologically in a logical manner with skills that are spiraled and assessed using the same rubrics. Support is provided, through video and text, to help students as they practice skills. Challenges: Some assignments are not appropriately rigorous for high school students.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Lessons are reasonably paced for a 50-minute course block. Teacher resources include guiding questions with sample student responses, suggestions for differentiation, and guidance to support teachers in implementing classroom routines. Within the teacher-facing materials there are clear differentiation recommendations for English learners and students with disabilities. Additionally, historical context is provided for teachers to support their content knowledge and planning.

**Baseline
Expectations for
Cultural
Responsiveness**

Challenges: Quality varies significantly across the units.

Strengths: Throughout the materials, there are clear attempts to incorporate diverse stories and perspectives. For example, Topic 1 starts with Indigenous and West African stories with the goal of centering those two identities within the course instruction. The "Project Imagine" series provides students with interactive opportunities to connect their learning to their own thinking and decision-making. The "Creating Inclusive Classrooms" discussion questions provide opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past as well as a critical lens to historiography. Each topic ends with a "Connections to Today" section where students connect the content from the topic to current issues to take action. Discussion questions provided for teachers regularly lead students to think critically about the past. For instance, Topic 1, Lesson 3, 'The Peoples of the Americas: Europeans Make Contact,' advises teachers to ask students, "Do the positive benefits of European exploration outweigh the negative aspects for the people of the Americas? Explain."

Challenges: Diverse perspectives are primarily incorporated in exercises and activities rather than featured in the core student text.

TCI: History Alive! The U.S. Through Industrialism, U.S. Through Modern Times —

[*History Alive!: The U.S. Through Industrialism, U.S. Through Modern Times*](#) is a paid digital and print resource for Grades 9–12.

Massachusetts Standards Alignment

For detailed information about the topic alignment of *History Alive!: The U.S. Through Industrialism, U.S. Through Modern Times*, please review the [9–12 Core Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix](#) attached above.

Overview of Findings:

The table below presents areas of particular strength of the TCI curriculum for *History Alive!: The U.S. Through Industrialism, U.S. Through Modern Times* for Grades 9–12.

Criterion	Key Findings
Standards Alignment	Strengths: Materials are well-aligned to Massachusetts content and practice standards for US History. Each unit includes a geography challenge and inquiry project that supports students to develop writing skills over the course of the school year. "Applying Themes Through Writing" sections further support reflective and analytical writing skills. Materials embed rigorous, grade-appropriate tasks that are engaging for high school students. Materials embed literacy objectives for each lesson. Students are encouraged to analyze perspectives, evaluate credibility, and explain conclusions through both writing and speaking tasks. Students build skills over time through intentional repetition of practices across each unit. For example, skills in geography and mapping, research, and analytical writing are consistently incorporated at the beginning or end of each unit.
Usability for Teachers	Strengths: Each lesson includes an overview for teachers to support planning. Overviews include flexible lesson options, additional activities to deepen student understanding, and assessments. Unit materials are clearly organized with student and teacher resources, assessments, discussion questions, and supplemental resources to support differentiation. Lesson components are sequenced in a pattern that helps students build skills and helps teachers develop their own practice.

**Baseline
Expectations for
Cultural
Responsiveness**

Strengths: Materials include an "Exploring Perspectives" section that highlights diverse perspectives of historical events. There are some opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past. Materials embed some opportunities for students to make connections between course content and their own lived experience. Inquiry projects are guided by an overarching question that includes self-reflection. For example, questions ask students to compare historical inventions to inventions in modernity to highlight ways in which historical processes are still relevant to them today.

Challenges: Materials do not sufficiently incorporate diverse perspectives. Historical accounts representing marginalized backgrounds are only found in narrow areas of focus. Teachers will need to supplement resources to ensure that a range of diverse cultures and perspectives are included in US History instruction.

9-12 Highlighted Supplemental Materials

 Rennie Center

Supplemental Materials Overview

Supplemental materials are more limited in scope; rather than standing alone, these materials are intended to be used alongside other curricular resources over the course of a year or semester. For this report, reviewers examined supplemental materials that either covered at least 50% of the content standards from one topic in the Massachusetts History/Social Science Framework or that covered standards-aligned material across multiple topics and were intended to be used for at least three weeks of instruction. The following supplemental materials met all basic expectations for classroom use.



9-12 Supplemental Curriculum Topic Alignment Matrix.pdf
161.2 KB



9-12 Highlighted Supplemental Curriculum Review

Click the tabs below to learn more about the strengths and challenges of each selected supplemental resource.

Culturally Responsive Supplemental Materials

The following materials can support culturally responsive pedagogy due to their particular focus on including diverse voices and experiences and/or developing students' critical understanding of the past.

CHOICES PROGRAM - WORLD HISTORY		CIVIL RIGHTS: A GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE	EVERFI 306: BLACK HISTORY
Overview	<i>Choices Program</i> is a paid, digital and print resource for Grades 9–12. The inquiry-based World History curricula resources engages students in the difficult, often controversial decisions that people have faced throughout history. <i>Choices Program</i> offers virtual and in-person professional development opportunities.		
Strengths	Each unit follows an inquiry method and starts with student-driven context building. Students engage in well-sequenced tasks to advance the questions and perspectives that drive the inquiry process. Student materials are appropriately challenging secondary source texts that include primary source quotes, maps, and images. Each unit starts with contextualization and then builds to synthesis and primary source analysis. Materials require students to consider the deep complexities of historical situations and decisions. Each unit incorporates a diverse range of perspectives, identities, and stories. Through inquiry-based instruction, students grapple with multiple facets of historical decisions by actors at all levels of socio-political power. Every unit begins with a note to teachers providing some historical context and framing how to use the <i>Choices</i> materials in the classroom. Teachers are provided directions for routines, suggestions for discussions, and options to make content more challenging for students. Lessons are effectively scaffolded with clarifications, key definitions, and other necessary information.		
Challenges	While the resources are highly structured, they do not include support for teachers to analyze student work in order to adjust		

instruction as needed.

CHOICES PROGRAM - WORLD
HISTORY

CIVIL RIGHTS: A GLOBAL
PERSPECTIVE

EVERFI 306: BLACK HISTORY

Overview

[Civil Rights: A Global Perspective](#) is a paid, digital resource for Grades 9–12. The materials are designed to help students build an understanding of the global struggle for civil rights while learning how they can make a difference.

Strengths

Materials engage students in inquiry-based learning designed to build civic knowledge and skills. They expose students to a diversity of sources (primary, secondary, written, audio, visual) and incorporate robust speaking and listening tasks.

Lesson routines require students to compare and develop connections between different people, movements, and time periods. They encourage students to take a critical lens to the past by engaging students in the complexity of human rights discussions. Classroom structures, such as routine journaling, push students to connect content to their own identity and experiences.

Challenges

There is limited guidance for teachers about how to effectively engage students in classroom routines. Additionally, teacher preparation guides lack necessary detail and do not clearly describe intended outcomes for each task. Pacing is ambitious and teachers will likely need to allot more time than the publisher recommends.

CHOICES PROGRAM - WORLD
HISTORY

CIVIL RIGHTS: A GLOBAL
PERSPECTIVE

EVERFI 306: BLACK HISTORY

Overview

The [EVERFI 306: Black History](#) free digital course explores the lives, stories, and lessons of Black Americans throughout history. 306 brings history to life for students through immersive learning content that highlights the themes, narratives, and geographic concepts that provide important context and frameworks for learners to analyze historical events.

Strengths

Included lesson plans, teacher scripts, pacing guides, materials lists, and note sheets support teachers in the planning and implementation of materials. Pre- and post-course assessments are included for teachers to gauge student learning over time. Materials support students to make connections between their learning and their own identity. The essential question for the capstone project asks students how understanding Black History provides insights into their personal experiences or the history of their community.

Challenges

Materials do not significantly feature the ideas of women or address issues of intersectionality.

Genocide Education Supplemental Materials

The following materials can be used to support genocide education for Grades 9–12.

Overview

[*Echoes & Reflections*](#) is a free, digital library of Holocaust content. The materials provide teachers with a range of educational entry points to examine critical themes of the Holocaust. *Echoes & Reflections* offers virtual and in-person professional development opportunities.

Strengths

Echoes & Reflections features lesson plans for middle and high school educators focused on the Holocaust and genocide. Lessons feature case studies, survivor testimony, and text analysis. They encourage students to learn about and grapple with complex and difficult topics, including Jewish life before Nazi invasion, the impact of antisemitic propaganda, Jewish resistance to the Holocaust, and the complicity of individuals, groups and nations in the Holocaust. Materials incorporate grade-appropriate reading, speaking, listening, and writing tasks. Each lesson includes a wide variety of primary and secondary sources for analysis. Materials feature detailed teacher implementation guidance, including pacing recommendations.

While the focus is heavily on the Jewish experience during the Holocaust, the materials show the broad diversity of European Jewish experiences as well as stories from non-Jewish victims of the Holocaust. This resource covers historical information and pressing issues of modern-day antisemitism. Class discussion questions prompt students to draw connections between what they are learning and how they think, feel, and live today.

Challenges

Although there are similar tasks throughout each unit, there is no specific focus on developing skills over time.

ECHOES & REFLECTIONS	FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES	IWITNESS	U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
Overview	<i>Facing History</i> is a free digital resource for Grades 6–12. The materials center the experiences and voices of groups who have been historically marginalized and harmed by their governments through actions of discrimination and genocide. <i>Facing History</i> offers virtual and in-person professional development opportunities for educators.		
Strengths	Units and lessons provide robust opportunities for students to connect their lived experiences and identities to historical content. They encourage students to grapple with the impact of historical and societal decisions, and the ways in which marginalized groups continue to experience discrimination in the present day. Lesson plans incorporate engaging tasks that represent appropriate rigor for high school students. Students participate in a range of speaking, listening, and writing tasks alongside regular opportunities to collaborate with peers. Lesson plans incorporate clear classroom routines to engage students in productive classroom discourse. Discussion guides provide guidance to help students and educators confront difficult topics.		
Challenges	Materials include a combination of structured units and resource collections. Structured units feature well-sequenced tasks leading towards clear learning outcomes. Resource collections do not include clear learning outcomes or pacing suggestions.		

ECHOES & REFLECTIONS	FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES	IWITNESS	U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
----------------------	----------------------------	----------	--------------------------------

Overview	<i>iWitness</i> is a free educational website developed by the USC Shoah Foundation. The curriculum integrates testimony-based education with the development of digital literacy and other 21st-century competencies. <i>iWitness</i> activities boost students' knowledge of subject matter while developing their critical-thinking skills and empathy for others.
Strengths	Though resources are specific to the history of genocide and the Holocaust, the discussion and writing prompts heavily prioritize students developing connections between content and their own experiences. The comprehension and reflection questions throughout the materials are complex and rigorous. Discussion, reading and writing prompts are embedded strategically throughout each lesson.
Challenges	There are limited explicit opportunities for students to evaluate the credibility and accuracy of historical sources. Materials offer few opportunities for longer form writing.

ECHOES & REFLECTIONS	FACING HISTORY & OURSELVES	IWITNESS	U.S. HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM
Overview	<i>The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum</i> is a free, digital resource to teach about the Holocaust and other mass atrocities. Lesson plans leverage museum resources and texts to deliver sequenced content. The <i>U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum</i> offers virtual professional development opportunities.		
Strengths	Materials use a variety of approaches to help students build literacy, writing, and argumentation skills. Rather than simply retelling a narrative, resources provides stories from survivors,		

	images, primary sources from political texts and newspapers, and propaganda for students to analyze and ask critical questions. Each lesson plan includes questions for discussion or writing that allow students to both build on included texts and engage in personal reflection. Materials include teacher preparation guidance, assessment options, and extension options. Diverse stories and experiences are included. In addition to providing a close look at the stories of individuals impacted by the Holocaust in Europe, the materials draw connections to the history of segregation and discrimination in the U.S. on the basis of race. Resources reference the shared history of oppression globally by highlighting members of groups that continue to seek justice.
Challenges	The total number of lessons included is small; the resources cover approximately seven to eight days of instruction. Student activities are primarily focused on discourse with little direction provided to teachers regarding writing practices or project-based learning.

About the Review Process

Since the beginning of 2021, DESE has engaged in successive rounds of landscape analysis to review curricular materials that are available for History/Social Science education. Past landscape analyses have included a review of Grade 8 and Grade K-5 curricular materials in the Spring and Summer of 2021, respectively. In the future, DESE may evaluate materials in accordance with a more demanding rubric. These more rigorous reviews will likely be similar to [those currently conducted](#) in other subject areas.

The [Rennie Center for Education Research & Policy](#) conducted a landscape review of Grade 9-12 curricular materials, as well as newly released or revised materials for Grades K-5 or Grade 8, in partnership with DESE in the Spring of 2023. Materials were identified for the landscape review based on a survey of Massachusetts educators and an independent search of curricular resources by Rennie Center staff. Identified materials that satisfied baseline eligibility requirements were advanced for review by Massachusetts social studies teacher advisors.

Teacher advisors used a rubric developed by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to assess curricular materials on the following basic criteria:

1

Standards Alignment: Materials are aligned to grade-level expectations for content standards, social science practices, and literacy standards.

2

Usability for Teachers: Materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures for reading, writing, analysis, and discourse; and support teacher planning and preparation in order to use materials skillfully.



3

Baseline Expectations for Cultural Responsiveness: Materials present a diversity of stories and experiences; provide opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past; and provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to their own identity and experiences.

The complete rubric can be downloaded here:



Social Science Curricular Materials Rubric.pdf

232.6 KB



If you would like more information on the review process or any reviewed materials, please email HistoryCivicsDESE@mass.gov.



Note to Publishers: If you have curricular materials you would like to submit for review, please contact HistoryCivicsDESE@mass.gov. We will periodically conduct additional reviews of the elementary social studies landscape to evaluate other submitted materials.

Reference in this website to any specific commercial products, processes, or services, or the use of any trade, firm, or corporation name is for the information and convenience of the public, and does not constitute endorsement or recommendation by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE). DESE is not responsible for and does not in any way guarantee the accuracy of information in other sites accessible through links herein. DESE may supplement this list with other services and products that meet the specified criteria. For more information contact: HistoryCivicsDESE@mass.gov.

Defining Basic Expectations

This review only evaluated materials against a small number of relatively basic expectations, rather than the more demanding criteria used in other DESE curricular material reviews (e.g. [CURATE panels](#)). It is intended to set a minimal bar to identify promising materials worthy of further investigation by schools and districts.

This table illustrates the difference between the basic criteria used in this review and the more extensive criteria DESE uses to define “high quality” materials; both sets of criteria are described in more detail in the curricular materials rubric.

	Basic Expectations for HSS Materials	Expectations for High Quality HSS Materials
Standards Alignment	- Materials are aligned to grade-level standards for content. - Materials are aligned to grade-level expectations for history and social science practices. - Materials are aligned to grade-level	- Materials include coherent tasks and sequences of lessons that help students build knowledge and understanding systematically. - Materials support students’ abilities to engage in history and social science practices

	standards for literacy. • <i>For core materials only:</i> Materials are designed to build students' knowledge and skills over time.	with increasing levels of complexity. • Materials engage students in grade-appropriate historical inquiry and analysis. • Materials develop students' civic skills and dispositions. • Materials are designed to center student thinking and agency.
Usability for Teachers	• Materials support teachers with suggested classroom routines and structures for reading, writing, analysis, and discourse. • Materials support teacher planning and preparation in order to use materials skillfully.	• Materials include informal and formal assessments that help teachers measure learning and adjust instruction. • Materials include rubrics, exemplars, or other resources to help teachers set clear and high expectations for students. • Materials include guidance and resources designed specifically to build teachers' subject matter knowledge. • Materials include resources to support implementation in

		teachers' particular context.
Cultural Responsiveness	• Materials present a diversity of stories and experiences. • Materials provide opportunities for students to apply a critical lens to the past. • Materials provide opportunities for students to connect their learning to their own identity and experiences.	• Materials center a diversity of perspectives, voices, and narratives. • Materials challenge students to consider how identity and social position shape people's perceptions of events, and encourage honest and informed discussions about power, prejudice, and oppression. • Materials offer all students opportunities to connect their multiple identities and experiences to their study of the past.
Accessibility for Students	<i>Not included in baseline review</i>	• Materials provide for varied means of accessing content, helping teachers meet the diverse needs and abilities of students with disabilities and those working above or below grade level. • Materials provide for varied means of demonstrating learning, helping teachers meet the diverse needs and

		abilities of students with disabilities and those working above or below grade level. • Materials help teachers ensure that students at various levels of English proficiency have access to grade-level content, cognitively demanding tasks, and opportunities to develop academic language in English.
Impact on Learning	<i>Not included in baseline review</i>	• Research demonstrates that the materials have a positive impact on student learning.

Guide to Choosing and Using Materials



Rennie Center

The following Steps were adapted from [DESE's IMplement MA Process Guide](#) with adjustments made to support educators in explicitly considering the use of supplemental materials, given the specific History and Social Science context.

Step 0

Define Your Vision, Priorities, and Parameters

Before you adopt new curricular materials, it's important to gain clarity about the goals and constraints that will guide your choice. Consider:

- **Instructional Vision:** What are your school or district's expectations for teaching and learning? What does effective instruction look like? What do you want students to be able to do as a result of their learning?
- **Parameters:** What are the non-negotiables for your curricular materials? This may include budget, technology requirements, etc.
- **Priorities:** What are the essential elements that curricular materials must contain in order to facilitate the realization of your instructional vision?

The adoption of high-quality instructional materials is a complex process that should be grounded in equity. For the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE's) inclusive and robust four-phase process to select and well implement high-quality instructional materials (HQIM), grounded in equity for students and aligned to the DESE Educational Vision, please see the [IMplement MA Process Guide](#).

Step 1

Choose Core Curricular Materials

Start with comprehensive, core curricular materials. [The Quick Reference Guide: Evaluating and Selecting High Quality Materials](#) includes recommendations for choosing the right curricular materials for your students.

If you are selecting new materials, the core materials highlighted in this guide offer a place to start. Use the information in the Highlighted Core Materials section of the guide, alongside the topic alignment matrix, to determine which core materials might be a good fit for your needs. In selecting from among these materials, you may also want to evaluate them using Gateway 2 of DESE's history/social science curricular materials rubric, which lays out a more rigorous bar for quality and can help you identify materials' additional strengths and challenges.

If you are starting with existing materials, use Gateway 1 and 2 of DESE's history/social science curricular materials rubric to determine the degree to which your current curricular materials meet expectations for high quality.

Step 2

Identify Gaps

No curricular materials are perfect. Additionally, all materials rely on skillful implementation from teachers who need to consider their local contexts and student needs.

If you are using one of the four core materials included in this report, use the findings in the Highlighted Core Materials section, as well as any additional evaluation done at a local level, to identify gaps. Consider your local priorities, vision, and parameters since the challenges reported may impact different schools and districts differently.

If you are using different curricular materials, you can use the evaluation process described in Step 1 to identify areas that require supplementation.

Step 3

Adapt and Supplement Materials for Your Context

Using your findings from Step 2, adapt and supplement materials to your context. The Highlighted Supplemental Materials section includes a number of strong resources that can be used to help supplement common gaps in core curricular materials.

Skillful adaptation is a critical component of a social studies teacher's role on a day-to-day basis. Teachers must use differentiation and scaffolding to meet the needs of all students, adjust materials and practices to be responsive to their particular students' experiences and identities, and take advantage of opportunities to connect students' social studies learning to current events.

Step 4

Engage in Ongoing Professional Learning

Quality materials alone do not make for an engaging social studies experience. Engage in regular professional development to build your content knowledge, strengthen your skills to deliver instruction in a culturally responsive manner, and adapt materials to your students' unique needs.

DESE's database of [registered PD providers](#) can help you find history/social science PD providers who are authorized to award professional development points (PDPs) to Massachusetts educators.