

## New York State Social Studies Learning Standards Standard 5 – Civics and Government



In SIRS' study of the New York core academic content standards, we see a direct correlation between the goals and objectives that are emphasized and the framework upon which SIRS Interactive Citizenship has been developed. Civics, Citizenship, and Government emphasizes the following:

- ❖ understanding the necessity for establishing governments
- ❖ governmental systems of the United States and other nations
- ❖ United States Constitution
- ❖ basic civic values of American constitutional democracy
- ❖ roles, rights, and responsibilities of citizenship

SIRS Interactive Citizenship's content emphasizes the generalizations and concepts that act as the framework for understanding the aforementioned topics, while the Discovery and Inquiry activities and related chapter lessons exemplify our commitment to critical thinking skills.

*What Citizens Need to Know About Government* addresses the American democracy concepts that must be addressed by commencement. It presents a framework for understanding America's ongoing struggle to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution and each citizen's role in this democracy. Through this framework, students are able to make the connection between the past and the present by accessing primary sources, such as documents, diaries, letters, legends and speeches and links to related articles and web sites while focusing on the basic concepts of government. Thus, students are developing the intellectual skills deemed necessary by the New York Learning Standards.

<<http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/ciai/social.html>> [2001, September 10]



**2. The state and federal governments established by the Constitutions of the United States and the State of New York embody basic civic values (such as justice, honesty, self-discipline, due process, equality, majority rule with respect for minority rights, and respect for self, other, and property), principles, and practices establish a system of shared and limited government. (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government*, 1994)**

Students:

- trace the evolution of American values, beliefs, and institutions
- analyze the disparities between civic values expressed in the United States Constitution and the United Nation Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the realities as evidenced in the political, social, and economic life in the United States and throughout the world
- identify, respect, and model those core civic values inherent in our founding documents that have been forces for unity in American society
- compare and contrast the Constitutions of the United States and New York State
- understand the dynamic relationship between federalism and state's rights.

This is evident for example, when students:

- analyze how core American civic values are expressed in those documents that provide the basis for our democratic form of government, including the Magna Carta, the Mayflower Compact, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Albany Plan of Union, the Federalist papers, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, and other amendments
- using the Declaration of Independence, find evidence of the influence of Locke and other Enlightenment philosophers on a political leader like Thomas Jefferson.
- analyze key Supreme Court decisions (e.g., Marbury v. Madison), McCulloch v. Maryland, Dred Scott v. Sanford, Plessy v. Ferguson, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Miranda v. Arizona, and Roe v. Wade) in terms of the ongoing struggle to realize democratic ideals; explore how these decisions embody constitutional civic *values* and the evolution and application of constitutional values within American political, economic, and social life
- present dramatic readings of key excerpts from speeches and writings of Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun, Henry David Thoreau, Frederick Douglass, and Abraham Lincoln
- analyze the United States Constitution, the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Charter of Amnesty International, and other civil/human rights documents to identify and explain the significance of the fundamental values and principles which they espouse.

- *In Chapters 1 and 2 the student can trace the evolution of American values by reading the Magna Carta, English Bill of Rights, Articles of Confederation and the Federalist papers.*
- *In Chapter 10, students can link to the New York State Constitution and learn about the relationship between federalism and state's rights.*
- *The U.S. Constitution is found in Chapter 3.*
- *Key U.S. Supreme Court decisions are available in Chapter 7, The Justice System.*

**3. Central to civics and citizenship is an understanding of the roles of the citizens within American constitutional democracy and the scope of a citizen's rights and responsibilities.**

Students:

- understand how citizenship includes the exercise of certain personal responsibilities, including voting, considering the rights and interests of others, behaving in a civil manner, and accepting responsibility for the consequences of one's actions. (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government*, 1994)
- analyze issues at the local, state, and national levels and prescribe responses that promote the public interest or general welfare, such as planning and carrying out a voter registration campaign.
- describe how citizenship is defined by the Constitution and important laws
- explore how citizens influence public policy in a representative democracy.

This is evident, for example, when students:

- compare basic British political documents with the United States Constitution, identifying how each system defines leadership, a citizen's rights and responsibilities, and powers of the government
- outline how one can become a citizen and analyze the rights and responsibilities of citizenship
- plan and implement a voter registration campaign or other voluntary activity in the community
- implement a student court to adjudicate in-school offenses
- volunteer and support conflict mediation programs within *the* school
- investigate local environmental issues and propose solutions on state and federal environmental laws.

***- By providing a link to the British Parliament Web site in Chapter 1, students can compare parliamentary documents to the U.S. Constitution found in Chapter 3.  
- Chapters 14 and 15 detail voting rights and the responsibilities of citizenship.  
- Chapter 18 discusses the environment and provides students with background knowledge to make informed decisions about current environmental issues.***

**4. The study of civics and citizenship requires the ability to probe ideas and assumptions, ask and answer analytical questions, take a skeptical attitude toward questionable arguments, evaluate evidence, formulate rational conclusions, and develop and refine participatory skills.**

Students:

- participate as informed citizens in the political justice system and processes of the United States, including voting
- evaluate, take, and defend positions on what the fundamental values and principles of American political life are and their importance to the maintenance of constitutional democracy (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government*, 1994)

- take, defend, and evaluate positions about attitudes that facilitate thoughtful and effective participation in public affairs
- consider the need to respect the rights of others, to respect others' point of view (Adapted from *The National Standards for Civics and Government*, 1994)
- participate in school-classroom/community activities that focus on an issue or problem
- prepare a plan of action that defines an issue or problem, suggests an alternative solution or course of action, prioritizes the solutions based on established criteria, and proposes an action plan to address the issue or to resolve the problem
- explain how democratic principles have been used in resolving an issue or problem.

This is evident, for example, when students:

- use trade books to sharpen critical thinking skills to analyze issues of citizenship when defending a stance on controversial issues
- analyze issues at the local, state, national, and international levels and prescribe responses that promote the public interest of general welfare, such as planning and carrying out a voter registration campaign
- select a state, regional, national, or international environmental problem or issue. Propose several alternative solutions to the problem. Assess the ethical implications as well as the comparative costs and benefits for each alternative approach to resolving the issue or problem. Defend a solution
- participate in a voter registration campaign
- study current international disputes and apply principles of international law in formulating a proposed course of action
- critically analyze historic Supreme Court cases to determine how well they reflect the intent and spirit of the Constitution then and now.

***- Chapter 15, The Vote, discusses all aspects of the voting process and links to the Electoral College Web site.***  
***- Part II, Problems of Government, identifies current issues pertaining to Education, Poverty, Health Care, Business, Transportation, Cities, National Defense and Foreign Policy. Students gather vital information in each one while reading current related articles.***