



Independence School District  
Comprehensive Social Studies  
Plan:  
Birth to Grade 12

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>2</b>
Pillars of ISD.....	2
<b>Plan Organization.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Independence School District Literacy Philosophy.....</b>	<b>4</b>
Learning Beliefs.....	4
Guiding Principles.....	4
Accessibility for All.....	4
Curriculum.....	4
Teaching and Learning.....	4
Assessment and Feedback.....	4
Professional Development.....	4
<b>Leadership.....</b>	<b>5</b>
District and Building Leaders.....	5
Teachers.....	5
Family Partnership.....	6
<b>Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.....</b>	<b>7</b>
Curriculum.....	7
Instruction.....	7
Early Literacy: Birth to 5 years of age.....	9
Elementary Literacy: Kindergarten to 5th Grade Students.....	10
K-5 Curriculum Units by quarter.....	11
Secondary Literacy: 6th to 12th Grade Students.....	11
Sixth Grade.....	11
Seventh Grade.....	12
Eighth Grade.....	12
Ninth.....	12
Tenth.....	12
Eleventh.....	12
Assessment.....	13
Family Partnership.....	13
<b>Professional Development.....</b>	<b>14</b>
Timeline and Goals.....	14
Year Four Goals: 2024-2025.....	14
<b>References.....</b>	<b>15</b>

## Introduction

The Independence School District (ISD) Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) is a resource for parents, caregivers, teachers, and administrators throughout the birth to college and career continuum. The CLP addresses the crucial role that early education plays in a child's literacy development. The ISD CLP supports teachers and administrators with information and resources to guide instruction, coordination of staff support, and alignment of goals. The CLP provides guidance on the components of the ISD Literacy Model.

### Pillars of ISD

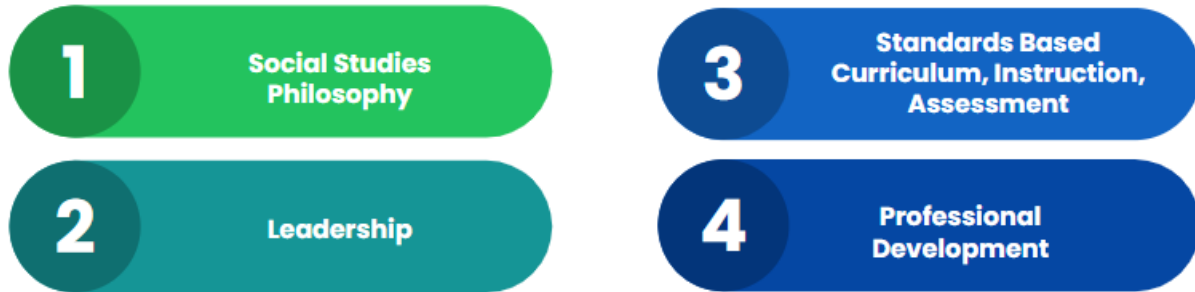
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The Independence School District has four pillars that are the district's focus. These include Literacy, Math Computation and Problem Solving, College and Career Readiness, and Increasing Student Attendance. The pillars are built upon the foundation of the Student and Family Experience.

## Plan Organization

The ISD Comprehensive Social Studies Plan is organized into four main components.



Overview of ISD Social Studies Plan Components:

- 1 Social Studies Philosophy:** The ISD has outlined beliefs and practices ensuring all students have equitable access to high-quality instruction.
- 2 Leadership:** Leaders at the district, building, and classroom levels collaborate to build shared ownership and direction toward social studies success.
- 3 Standards-based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment:** The ISD has clear expectations for what all students will know and be able to do. The curriculum is aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards. Educators bring the ISD curriculum to life by designing high-quality instruction for the students served. The Backward Design model by Wiggins and McTighe (2005) helps ensure that the curriculum, instruction, and assessments are aligned.
- 4 Professional Development:** The ISD provides ongoing, job-embedded professional development, including research-based practices. Instructional coaches provide ongoing support to meet the needs of each educator.

## **Independence School District Social Studies Philosophy**

### **Learning Beliefs**

The Independence School District has the following learning beliefs to guide our work.

- Learning is our core purpose.
- Trusting relationships and commitment to our core values will foster learning at all levels.
- Effective teaching is the most essential factor in student learning.
- Effective leaders support continuous learner growth at all levels.
- ISD is committed to ensuring that every student learns and succeeds, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, language proficiency, or disability.

### **Guiding Principles**

#### ***Accessibility for All***

In the ISD, excellence in social studies education requires accessibility for all. All children have access to high-quality, grade-level appropriate social studies curriculum and instruction, with high expectations for all learners. Accommodations are made for learning differences, and all classrooms and students are given the resources and support to be successful. Academic safety is at the core of classroom culture, with opportunities for all students to see themselves as a critical thinker.

#### ***Curriculum***

In the ISD, teachers develop a focused social studies curriculum that aligns with the Missouri Learning Standards, emphasizing the ISD priority standards. The curriculum is well articulated and includes a coherent progression from birth to grade 12. Social Studies themes are integrated into literacy curriculum units in the elementary grades. In middle school, all social studies courses are thematically organized.

#### ***Teaching and Learning***

In the ISD, teaching and learning is driven by essential questions to promote deeper understanding and exploration of topics. By weaving literacy, history, geography, government, economics, and social inquiry together, the curriculum develops critical thinkers that connect our past with the present. Students engage in authentic source evaluation in order to evaluate cause and effect which drives history, while drawing conclusions about how citizens can actively shape the future. The ultimate goal of Social Studies learning is to empower students to be active citizens in their communities and society. The focus of Social Studies instruction is, therefore, on critical thinking as opposed to rote memorization of facts and dates. While there is a place for historical context, the goal is to help students produce arguments and draw conclusions about the world around them. This teaching and learning cultivate critical thinking by encouraging students to analyze, evaluate, and interpret information from various sources and multiple perspectives.

#### ***Assessment and Feedback***

In the ISD, assessment supports the learning of essential social studies concepts and provides feedback for student and teacher improvement.

#### ***Professional Development***

In the ISD, each educator has access to high-quality professional learning so they can cultivate the strengths and address the needs of each student they serve.

## Leadership

The Independence School District Comprehensive Social Studies Plan aims to foster a community-wide approach to supporting and enhancing literacy outcomes. Leadership within the ISD community includes district leaders, building leaders, teachers, and families. The following outlines how each leader contributes to helping students become skilled readers.

### District and Building Leaders

District and building leaders are instrumental in developing a successful literacy environment. The approach requires a common vision and coordination at all levels of the Independence School District. Areas of focus for district and building leaders include:

- **Goals and Vision:** A common understanding and shared commitment to the desired future vision and the milestones towards the goals.
- **Policies & Procedures:** Ensure compliance with federal and state mandates and policies about literacy.
- **Funding & Resources:** Commit guidance, support, and resources to ensure a cohesive curriculum is delivered to all students from birth through college and career readiness.
- **Assessment and Data:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by providing constructive feedback on teacher effectiveness and identifying students' strengths and weaknesses.
- **Professional Development & Instructional Practices:** Provide continuous social studies professional development for all staff and ample time and resources for ongoing professional learning in research-based strategies.
- **Tier One Core Curriculum & Supplemental Materials:** Understand the importance of social studies instruction and the processes, plans, and support necessary for student success. The Tier One core curriculum is accessible to all students.

### Teachers

Improving social studies understanding through literacy is heavily reliant on the pivotal role of teachers. The Independence School District Comprehensive Social Studies Plan is crafted to provide support to educators through curriculum, resources, collaboration, and professional development. Emphasizing social studies and literacy integration underscores its significance as a collective vision. Areas of focus for teachers include:

- **Goals and Vision:** A common understanding and shared commitment to the desired future vision and the milestones towards building and student goals.
- **Policies & Procedures:** Comply with federal and state mandates and policies about social studies.
- **Assessment and Data:** Foster a culture of continuous improvement by providing specific and effective feedback on identifying students' strengths and areas for growth through assessment and data analysis.
- **Professional Development & Instructional Practices:** Engage in continuous social studies professional development and utilize research-based practices to support ongoing learning.
- **Tier One Core Curriculum & Supplemental Materials:** Understand the importance of social studies instruction and the processes, plans, and supports necessary for student success. The Tier One core curriculum is accessible to all students.

## Family Partnership

The family plays a paramount role as the primary partnership in their students' education. As stated in the Comprehensive School Improvement Plan (CSIP), posted on the ISD website, the ISD takes steps to ensure families are involved and have access to schools in the following ways:

- **Strategy 4.1.1:** Improve and streamline communication with parents and the community through teachers, buildings, and the district.
  - Increase social media presence.
  - Survey families' preferred communication methods and streamline based on the results
  - District and Building Leaders review professional development in proactive communication.
  - Provide education on where to access school district communication/information.
- **Strategy 4.1.2:** Increase parental and patron involvement in the schools and district.
  - Track and grow parent involvement at the building level.
  - Actively recruit and retain parent and community partnerships.
  - Offer information/resources to families to improve their knowledge of district initiatives.
- **Strategy 4.2.1: Deepen customer service at all levels.**
  - Provide resources annually to frontline staff.
  - Provide Building Leaders training on communication methods for customer service.
- **Strategy 4.2.2:** Improve the transition of new students and families and those transitioning between ISD schools.
  - Welcome and engage new and transitioning students and families and a follow up.
  - New students and families are welcomed and acclimated to the ISD through the admissions office and a follow-up.
- **Strategy 4.3.1:** Deepen community engagement through ISD Academies, AVID, and Leader in Me.
  - Increase partnerships with the ISD academies.
  - Increase service learning opportunities and contact available with community partners to support Leader in Me.
  - Increase college and community partnerships to support AVID.
  - Communicate volunteer opportunities and celebrate volunteer participation through the ISD Foundation.
  - Highlight social media, media, e-newsletter, and other communication channels.

## Standards-Based Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment

### Curriculum

The ISD social studies curriculum is aligned with the Missouri Learning Standards. Clear standards help improve teaching, inform planning, and maintain cohesiveness across the district. Curriculum development is ongoing, organized by the instructional leadership team, and designed by teachers. The curriculum is research-driven and continually evaluated through the lens of data analysis as well as a continuous cycle of feedback from all stakeholders. Using district and state priority standards, item specifications, performance level descriptors, and feedback from stakeholders, teacher leaders work together with the instructional leadership team to revise and edit the curriculum annually.

The curriculum is available to all staff through the employee portal. In addition, curriculum overviews are available to parents through the district website.

### Instruction

Elementary social studies instruction is based on essential questions and tools of social science inquiry. ISD instruction follows the following DESE instructional framework:

#### Kindergarten: Self, Family, and School

In Kindergarten, students engage in the study of themselves, their families, and their schools. They will learn how to participate and use effective citizenship skills. They will explore their families, their classrooms, and their schools through an interdisciplinary approach including history, civics, economics, and geography. The study of themselves, their families, and their schools requires that students generate and research compelling questions:

What is my role in my family and school? What is “history” and how is the past different from the present? How do citizens show patriotism? How do we use maps and globes to learn about places? How do we make choices?

#### First Grade: School & Community

In first grade, students explore their place in the world around them building on their work in kindergarten and expanding perspective beyond themselves. Through comparison of family, school, and community, students will explore multiple perspectives from the past and today. The study of how students fit into society requires that students generate and research compelling questions: How do my school and community influence each other? How can you use maps and globes to help you find things? How do we get things we need or want in our school and community? How do we describe our region? How are community wants and needs met?

#### Second Grade: Regions

In Grade 2 students engage in the study of Geography as it relates to the cultural, economic, and political characteristics of the regions of both Missouri and the United States. This approach supports in-depth inquiry through the examination and evaluation of multiple sources and allows students to explore various regions through the disciplines of history, civics, and economics. The study of geography requires that students generate and research compelling questions:

What does it mean to act as a responsible citizen in our community and nation? What are some inventions that helped change the way people live? What are the responsibilities of government leaders? How have the lives of Native Americans changed over time? How do we describe our region? How are community wants and needs met?

#### Third Grade: Missouri Past and Present (1600-present)

In third grade, students will engage in a yearlong study of our state of Missouri. They will analyze the impact of geography, economics, and governmental structures to study both the



history and contemporary society of Missouri. The study of Missouri requires that students generate and research compelling questions. Such questions may include: How has Missouri changed over time? How is Missouri similar to and different from other states? How has Missouri impacted the nation? How are governmental decisions made at the state level? How do Missouri's resources support the state and national economy?

Fourth Grade: Our Nation (Up to 1799)

In Grade 4, students engage in the study of events early in United States history ranging from indigenous peoples here prior to colonization through the American Revolution. An emphasis is placed on analyzing and evaluating a variety of documents, sources, and perspectives. The survey of early American history requires that students generate and research compelling questions: Why do people migrate from one place to another? What factors influence conflict past and present? How did the founders balance freedom with rule of law?

Fifth Grade: Our Nation (1800 – 2000)

In fifth grade, students engage in the study of events, documents, movements, and people emphasizing the time period between 1800 and 2000 in America with a focus on inquiry into the continuing development of the United States as a nation. This survey of U.S. History between 1800 and 2000 requires that students generate and research compelling questions: Why should we be able to name, identify, and analyze major locations, regions and landforms of the United States? What were the costs and the benefits of territorial expansion? How did The Civil War change the United States? How has immigration shaped our nation? What were the causes and the outcomes of the Great Depression? How have economic, political, and social rights of individuals and groups changed over time in the United States? How did the United States change between 1970 – 2000?

### ***Early Social Studies: Birth to Five Years of Age***

Young children show a natural interest in the world around them as they engage in their play and daily activities. According to the National Council for the Social Studies [NCSS], “Early childhood educators may capitalize on these interests and carefully plan a variety of experiences with social studies in mind, cultivating and extending young children’s diverse skills and abilities to form and voice opinions, identify and solve problems, negotiate roles, perceive diversity and inequality, and recognize the consequences of their decisions and behaviors on others” (2019). Social studies is a vital part of the early childhood curriculum since children’s formative experiences shape their attitudes as “citizens of their classroom, their schools, and of the larger community” (Mardell, 2011).

Early childhood education is built upon the foundation of relationships that children develop in their homes, communities, and schools. Children meet new friends in these settings as well as how to get along with others, share their opinions, make decisions, and contribute as a member of a group. Young children develop an understanding of the roles that they enact as citizens of a democratic society as they participate in activities that allow them to express their compassion, caring, and desire to help others (Project Zero, 2016). Numerous examples showcase the capacity of young children to discuss, debate, and think critically to solve important problems as they interact with others to accomplish goals together (Haywoode, 2018; Ardalan, 2017; Krechevsky et al., 2016; Krechevsky, Mardell, & Reese, 2015; Mardell & Carpenter, 2012; Hall & Rudkin, 2011).

Teachers in our district serve a direct role in how young children are exposed to social studies, both the systems and concepts, including providing a nurturing environment as well as intentional topics focusing on self, the family, the center or school, and the local community (Mindes, 2015). Best practices include providing learning opportunities that are developmentally appropriate (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009); offering contributions to the school/program culture; and supporting specific skills reflective of social emotional expectations, approaches to learning, and social skills as appropriate (Mindes, 2015). All of this is done through the use of **Creative Curriculum** and the **Project Approach** in the Independence School District’s Early Education programming.

In the early childhood classroom, social studies content is best presented as part of inquiry-based learning experiences that put children’s interests at the heart of learning. Inquiry-based learning is a common instructional practice that capitalizes on opportunities supportive of social system and social concept learning. This includes offering topics of study that focus on child interest, social context, and real-world problems in an effort to connect learning to authentic experiences that engage children.

Project-based learning offers such an opportunity (Helm & Katz, 2000). A project is an in-depth study of a real-world topic that typically occurs over a period of weeks or even months. Projects provide a context for young learners to apply their growing academic knowledge and skills in authentic ways (Katz, Chard, and Kogan, 2014). “Through engagement in inquiry-based learning, young children are provided opportunities to explore and interact, which both influence and shape their knowledge and skills across social studies domains as well as other integrated curricular areas” (NCSS, 2019). Children represent what they are learning in a variety of ways (e.g., writing, drawing, painting, dramatic play, 3-dimensional construction, music and movement, and graphics) as they share their receptive and expressive understandings of the social context. Inquiry-based learning also provides group learning opportunities that serve a common goal and purpose, which offers children ownership and belonging through a collaborative situation (Mindes, 2005).

***Elementary Social Studies: Kindergarten to Fifth Grade Students***

Elementary Social Studies curriculum provides study trips for ALL K-5 students. This allows students the opportunity to explore their community.

<b>Elementary Social Studies Study Trips</b>	
<b>Grade</b>	<b>Study Trip</b>
Kindergarten	Puppetry Arts Institute
First Grade	1859 Jail Museum and Marshall's Home
Second Grade	Harry S. Truman Library and Museum "Reading Like a Historian" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Citizenship</li> <li>● National symbols</li> <li>● Branches of government</li> <li>● Truman's office</li> </ul>
Third Grade	Harry S. Truman Library and Museum "Reading Like a Historian" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Truman's character</li> <li>● Truman's values</li> <li>● Truman's artifacts</li> </ul>
Fourth Grade	Nelson-Atkins Museum "The Making of America"
Fifth Grade	Harry S. Truman Library and Museum "Reading Like a Historian" <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Truman as a leader</li> <li>● The Cold War</li> <li>● Truman's Legacy</li> </ul>

## Grades K-5 Curriculum Units

	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4
Kindergarten	Me and My School	Me and My Family	Me and My Country	Me and My Choices Me and My Neighborhood
1st Grade	School & Community Citizenship	Symbols of My Community & Country	Navigating My Community	School & Community Needs & Wants
2nd Grade	Citizenship & Government	Native Americans Across North America	Economy Inventors	Communication & Transportation Regions of the World
3rd Grade	Geography and Our State	Missouri History	Government Famous Missourians	Economics
4th Grade	Maps & Regions Early Explorers	Early Explorers Early Colonies	The American Revolution	Documents that Shaped US History Economics
5th Grade	Launching SS Westward Expansion & Native Americans	Civil War & Industrial Revolution	WWI, Great Depression, WWII	Civil Rights Modern America States & Capitals

### ***Secondary Studies: 6th to 12th Grade Students***

Traditional Social Studies instruction follows a chronological model in which students begin at a date and then end as far as the curriculum and calendar allows. The Independence School District has adopted the thematic model of instruction loosely following the outline as published by Dr. Rosalie Metro in her books *“Teaching US History Thematically”* and *“Teaching World History Thematically”*. ISD instructors have adapted her model to our own approach and to better fit our district goals and objectives for learners. Thematic instruction allows students to form arguments about history as opposed to hearing a litany of cause and effect that does not allow for ease in synthesizing. The driving goal is to better inform the present and future by learning about the past. Dr. Metro states this well by saying “If we want students to make these connections, let us structure our curriculum in a way that facilitates comparison and discovery, rather than burying these relationships under a landslide of facts.” (Metro, 2020)

6th grade Social Studies explores geography and Eastern world history from the earliest written record to the classical world. Cultures such as ancient China, Egypt, Hebrews, Persians, and Indus River Valleys are represented in the scope and sequence. Students use primary and secondary sources in order to answer unit questions such as: How have rivers influenced society?, What are the rights and responsibilities of rulers and the ruled? and What are the roles and belief systems in society? Students conclude the course with an exploratory project of the role of women in world history in creating their own source collection in order to answer an overarching question.

7th grade Social Studies explores geography and Western world history from the classical era to the Renaissance. Students use both primary and secondary sources to answer questions about society. Many of the questions are similar to those presented in sixth grade which provides a unique opportunity for students to see different perspectives between civilizations and how those questions change over both time and space. Students conclude the course by evaluating the role of technology in society and present an argument for the most significant invention to impact human history.

8th grade Social Studies focuses on United States history from colonization to the Civil War. Students utilize primary sources to form arguments about the earlier half of US history. Students evaluate and attempt to answer questions such as: What is American Democracy and what should it be?, What does equality mean?, and How should power be distributed among state and federal governments? Throughout the course, students are repeatedly brought back to the foundations of the US government and use the US Constitution and Bill of Rights as well as other founding documents in order to base their argumentation.

9th grade World History circles back to the learning in 6th and 7th grade to expand on geography and cultures from the Renaissance to the present day. This course takes on the enormous task of exposing students to over 400 years of history and cultures representing every corner of the globe. In order to undertake this tremendous task, units are built on a core question that allows students to explore representative samples. The first two units of the course introduce students to different types of governments and dominant religions in world history in order to build a foundation on which societies then begin to interact. Some of the core questions include: What is worth fighting for?, How should people get the resources they need?, and How should people bring about political and social change? Students conclude the course by evaluating gender roles in society and creating a compelling argument about who to add to the course curriculum using skills they have learned in the course. Students have the opportunity to take Honors World History as opposed to on-level which infuses more reading and writing skills including preparation for students who wish to take AP US History as their next course.

10th grade United States History builds on the learning from 8th grade US History. In the high school curriculum, students pick up from the Civil War and follow US history through the present day. While the 150 years is not as enormous of a task as World History, the scope still presents a huge task for instructors to best represent the intended learning goals. The curriculum is again divided into core questions. Some of these questions are repeated from their 8th grade course allowing for comparison. Additional questions include: Under what circumstances should the US intervene in world events? and Under what circumstances, if any, should citizens' freedoms be restricted? Students have the opportunity to take AP US History which follows the AP College Board Curriculum with the opportunity for the AP test at the end of the course.

11th grade United States Government seeks to teach both the historical foundations of the formation of US government as well as civics and the duties of citizenship in this country. Students begin the course by exploring different types of government and their qualities, then focus into the formation of US democracy, and finally spend the second half of the course engaging with civics and citizenship. Students also fulfill the Missouri requirements for economics and MO history. Students end the course with the EOC exam.

## Assessment

In the ISD, teachers use a variety of formative and summative assessments that factor into a child's grade. Students who are not meeting proficiency on the intended standard or learning goal will have the opportunity to relearn and reassess until they gain a solid understanding of the grade level standard.

Families receive quarterly progress reports to monitor student growth. Proficiency scores are not and cannot be related to a traditional grade. When reviewing a child's proficiency scores on a report, the primary goal is to provide insight into how well a child meets specific content standards. At the elementary level, students' proficiency is shared based on the following grading scale:

- M= Meets
  - Consistently meets the requirement of proficient work
  - Independently demonstrates an acceptable level of knowledge and understanding
- A= Approaching
  - Meets some requirements for proficient work
  - Demonstrates some knowledge and understanding
- E= Emerging
  - With support, beginning to meet some of the requirements for proficient work
  - Demonstrates little knowledge of understanding
- B= Below Expectation
  - Unable to meet requirements for proficient work, even with support
  - Demonstrates little or no knowledge and understanding

District-wide, common unit assessments are built and administered to align with the Missouri Learning Standards, State Item Specifications, and the Performance Level Descriptors.

[The ISD Comprehensive Assessment Plan](#) outlines all assessments and the purpose for each.

## Professional Development

In the ISD, each educator has access to high-quality professional learning in order to cultivate their strengths and address the needs of each student they serve. Additionally, every new teacher entering the district receives training on current district practices based on the science of reading.

Professional development (PD) in literacy instruction, spanning from birth through grade 12, includes the following components:

- Annual literacy-focused professional development is offered throughout the school year during cross-district professional development days led by district instructional coaches.
- Weekly collaboration with grade-level colleagues allows teachers to review literacy data and adjust instruction accordingly. The building principal and coaches provide ongoing support, including regular assistance through planning, co-teaching, modeling lessons, and small group instruction as needed.
- Summer literacy-focused professional development is required of all new teachers joining the Independence School District.
- Feedback is collected each year to support curriculum updates and additional professional development needed.
  - **Classroom Self-Assessment:** Teachers provide feedback on Tier One curriculum and resources. The feedback provided is used to guide curriculum adjustments needed for the upcoming school year.
  - **Building Self-Assessment:** Buildings collect and use feedback to help guide professional development needs for the upcoming school year.
  - **District Self-Assessment:** District leaders collect and use classroom and building feedback to guide professional development needs for the upcoming school year. The annual Professional Development Survey given to all staff is also used to make professional development decisions.

### Timeline and Goals

#### *Goal: 2023-2024*

- Transition secondary courses to reflect thematic approach vs chronological approach to teaching historical events.
- Implementation of NewsELA resource for 6-12 teachers

#### *Goals: 2024-2025*

- Transition from semester Government as seniors to year-long Government as juniors.
  - Implement student data tracking utilizing learning target quizzes in semester one to promote student ownership of learning.
- Continue to infuse AP and college-ready writing skills into Honors World History at the freshman level.
- Expand source topic lessons at all thematic levels (6-10) to provide a more diverse range of options for instructors to better fit the interests and needs of their student population.

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