

FIFTH – SIXTH GRADE OVERVIEW

Students in fifth and sixth grades are interested in ways different groups of people developed and in cultures represented in American society. Students begin to examine and question the nature of culture and its influence on human belief systems. While not yet skilled in abstract reasoning, fifth and sixth graders are beginning to formulate more focused questions about the world around them. This curiosity can be utilized to help them identify important concepts and ideas embedded in the history of the United States.

Effective instruction is critical in guiding students to reach their full potential in understanding and applying economic concepts, patterns of historical change and continuity, and the use of land. Fifth- and sixth-grade content standards require students to examine and explain interactions between states and nations and their cultural complexities. These learners are able to think about themselves as persons in civic roles as they grow in the recognition of their rights and responsibilities as citizens.

The main focus of social studies in Grades 5 and 6 is a study of the chronological development of the United States. Through an integrated approach that includes economic, geographic, historical, political, social, and cultural perspectives, content in these grades emphasizes roles various groups played in the development of American society. The key concepts of chronology, change, conflict, complexity, and increased globalization are addressed to show connections among the strands of economics, geography, history, and civics and government. Effective teachers utilize a variety of instructional strategies and assessment tools to address various learning styles. They consistently incorporate best practices into instruction, introduce and make use of primary sources integral to the teaching of history, and utilize current technology on a regular basis in classroom instruction. Rather than providing all the answers, innovative teachers help students develop critical-thinking skills by encouraging them to evaluate their own opinions as well as those of others. In addition, effective teachers recognize the strong need for a sense of belonging characterized by this age group and therefore provide cooperative learning experiences where students develop a sense of personal identity as well as a sense of responsibility to the group.