



STAFFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Curriculum Overview United States and Virginia Government

Course Description:

The United States and Virginia Constitutions will provide a framework from which this course will build. An understanding of the structure and operation of federal, state, and local governments will highlight a deeper comprehension of the process of policy-making; with emphasis on economics, foreign affairs, and civil rights issues.

Essential Skills/Processes:

- Students will develop an understanding of different systems of government and how they relate to individual freedoms and responsibilities as participating citizens.
- Students will examine the law and precedents related to the creation of the U.S. Constitution.
- Students will explore the roles various branches of government play in the creation, enforcement and interpretation of laws and how they interact.
- Students will examine the U.S. market system and the forces that move it, with emphasis on supply and demand and government controls.
- Students will identify a problem, weigh expected costs and benefits and possible solutions, and recommend solutions using a decision-making model.

Essential Knowledge:

1. The student will compare the US constitutional system in 1789 with forms of democracy developed in ancient Greece, ancient Rome, England, the American colonies and states in the 18th century.
2. The student will identify examples of fundamental American political principles contained in the Virginia Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers, and will compare them to principles of government and law developed by leading European political thinkers such as: Locke, Hobbes, Montesquieu, and Rousseau
3. The student will analyze the amendments to the United States Constitution in terms of the conflicts they addressed, the reasons for their adoption and how they apply in the present.
4. The student will summarize landmark Supreme Court interpretations of the United States Constitution and its amendments, with emphasis on: Basic freedoms, due process, equal protection of the law, and government powers.
5. The student will analyze the historical trends and contemporary patterns of United States Supreme Court decisions.
6. The student will identify and explain fundamental concepts of democracy, with emphasis placed on:
 - equality of all citizens under the law
 - the fundamental worth and dignity of the individual
 - majority rule and minority rights
 - the necessity of compromise
 - individual freedom, and the rule of law

7. The student will analyze and compare current issues confronting local, state, and national governments in terms of contemporary challenges to democracies using discussion, debate and writing activities.
 8. The student will explain how the United States and Virginia make public policy through the three branches of government. (Legislative, Executive, and Judicial institutions)
 9. The student will identify and distinguish among the units of local governments in Virginia, including counties, cities, towns, and regional authorities and will analyze a local public issue.
 10. The student will explain and give current examples of how political parties, interest groups, the media, and individuals influence the policy agenda and decision making of government institutions.
 11. The student will describe campaigns for national, state, and local elective office. Examine the role of the media, especially the Internet, on campaigns.
 12. The student will explain the rights, responsibilities, and benefits of citizenship in the United States and Virginia and the skills needed for informed participation in public affairs.
 13. The student will compare the United States political and economic systems with those of major democratic and authoritarian nations.
 14. The student will analyze the United States market economy and the role of government in the economy.
 15. The student will compare the governments of Mexico, Great Britain and the People's Republic of China with the United States government.
 16. The student will compare the characteristics of free market, command and mixed economics.
 17. The student will evaluate the effect of monetary and fiscal policies on personal economic well-being including: Employment opportunities, purchasing power, credit and interest rates, and opportunities for investment and savings
 18. The student will define common economic terms, concepts and indicators including: Productivity, factors of production, the circular flow, business cycle, inflation, entrepreneur, gross domestic product, consumer price index, unemployment rate, balance of trade, and stock market averages
 19. Identify and demonstrate character traits of good citizens and personal financial responsibility.
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Resources:

Virginia Standards of Learning for All Subject and Grade Levels:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/index.shtml

History and Social Science Curriculum Framework and Resources:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/testing/sol/standards_docs/history_socialscience/index.shtml