

Social Studies Department

Philosophy Statement

The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. The Social Studies Department in West Orange is dedicated to working collaboratively to engage our students in authentic learning experiences that will prepare them for the worlds of work, college, and civil life. In this age of information, emphasis is placed not only on content, but on deep understanding of concepts that enable students to think critically, and to systematically make connections to real world experiences. Further, literacy strategies and skills are applied as students acquire information and communicate their learning and understanding. Thus, a social studies education in West Orange will develop learners with the knowledge, skills, and perspectives needed to become active, informed citizens and contributing members of local, state, national, and global communities in the digital age.

To accomplish this, the curriculum will...

- Be aligned to NJ Student Learning Standards in Social Studies K-12.
- Provide a comprehensive program that meets the needs of our diverse learners.
- Engage students in processes that develop their abilities to think, reason, conduct research and attain understanding as they encounter new concepts, principles, and issues.
- Provide students with the democratic dispositions, values, and attitudes needed for civic engagement.
- Provide students with an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills from various disciplines—civics, economics, geography, and history--to daily life.
- Integrate literacy and skill instruction that is purposefully and appropriately embedded within social studies content.
- Promote an awareness of the historical, political, social and economic development of human achievement, beliefs, cultures, and experiences so that students can become informed and concerned citizens.
- Incorporate technology to enhance student learning and develop 21st century skills.

We will know we have accomplished this when our students will...

- Demonstrate the ability to solve problems, make decisions, and analyze issues from various viewpoints, as well as to read, write, listen, and communicate ideas to others.
- Be equipped with historical knowledge to analyze change and understand history as a key to their future.
- Consider multiple perspectives, value diversity, and promote cultural understanding.
- Understand and appreciate American traditions and values based on knowledge of history, and of the development and function of American constitutional government.
- Develop 21st Century skills which enable them to function as lifelong learners and to examine and evaluate issues of importance to all Americans.
- Impart information and experiences to develop attitudes and ideas enabling them to become responsible and contributing citizens in a democratic society.
- Recognize the common human qualities that unite people, cultures, societies and economic systems that prevail in other parts of the world, and recognize the political and cultural barriers that impede dialogue.
- Understand world history as the context for United States history, and as a record of the great civilizations and cultures of the past and present.