



# Sioux Falls School District

## Social Studies Curriculum Guide First Grade

Updated: August 2025

**Vision, Mission & Goals**

### Course Description:

The SFSD uses *Studies Weekly* as the core resource for teaching Social Studies in grades K–5. This curriculum is designed to engage students through an interactive, standards-based approach that blends print and digital materials. Each grade level receives weekly periodicals that introduce important social studies concepts—such as history, geography, economics, and civics—through age-appropriate articles, activities, and discussions.

*Studies Weekly* supports critical thinking, reading comprehension, and inquiry-based learning. It aligns with our state standards and promotes deeper understanding by connecting content to students' lives and current events.

Parents can expect their child to bring home their completed periodicals at the end of each unit, allowing families to review and discuss what was learned in class. Our goal is to help students become lifelong learners who lead, contribute, and thrive in an interconnected global society.



## COURSE AT A GLANCE - 1st Grade Social Studies

### Unit 1: Geography

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will begin learning about geography by exploring maps, globes, and the features of our physical world. They'll discover why we use maps and how tools like map keys, symbols, and compasses aid in their understanding.

Students will practice creating and reading maps, and they'll learn to recognize important landforms and bodies of water. They'll also locate the United States on a map and identify our state, along with other places across the country and around the world.

This unit helps students build a strong foundation in geography and encourages them to become curious explorers of the world around them!

### Unit 2: History

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will begin learning how we study the past and why it matters. They'll be introduced to the idea that we use various types of sources, such as photos, letters, or books, to help us learn about history and answer questions about what life was like long ago.

Students will explore how people, communities, ideas, and technology have changed over time. They'll compare everyday life in the past to the way we live now, helping them see how things have evolved over time.

Your child will also learn about timelines, how they help us put events in order. Students will create a simple timeline of their own lives.

This unit will build a strong foundation for historical thinking and spark curiosity about how the past has shaped the world we live in today.

### Unit 3: Civics and Government

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will be learning about key parts of American history and what it means to be a good citizen. They'll be introduced to essential documents, such as the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Students will also explore what it means to be a responsible citizen by learning about traits such as wisdom, character, and problem-solving. They'll take a closer look at some famous buildings in Washington, D.C., discovering their unique designs and why each one is important.

To connect this learning to our state, students will learn about the symbols of South Dakota, including the state flag, seal, motto, and nickname.

This unit will help students build a deeper understanding of both our nation's history and our state's identity, while developing pride in their heritage and curiosity about the world around them.

#### Unit 4: Economics

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will begin learning about basic economic concepts that help them understand how people make choices in everyday life. They'll review the difference between needs (things we must have) and wants (things we'd like to have), and explore what goods and services are.

Students will learn how money is used to purchase goods and services and where these goods originate. They'll also begin to understand how people get the things they need by buying, selling, and trading. An essential part of this unit is learning that people have to make choices about how they spend their money and that every choice means giving up something else (a concept called a trade-off).

This unit builds a strong foundation for financial literacy in the years to come.

#### Unit 5: Ancient Civilizations

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will take a journey back in time to explore the world of ancient civilizations. They'll learn about the cultures, stories, and lasting contributions of five major civilizations: China, India, Babylon, Egypt, and Greece.

Through engaging stories and hands-on activities, students will discover what daily life was like in these early societies and how their ideas, inventions, and traditions have shaped the world we live in today.

The unit will also introduce your child to the rich mythology of ancient Greece. They'll hear memorable stories about gods and goddesses like Zeus, Athena, Poseidon, Hera, Hermes, and Icarus, sparking curiosity and imagination while making connections to history.

This unit will help students develop a deeper understanding of the past and its ongoing influence on the present.

#### Unit 6: Founding of Rome

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will explore the history of ancient Rome and the Roman Empire. They'll start by learning about how Rome was founded and how the Roman Republic was formed.

Students will dive into Roman culture and discover essential contributions in areas like farming, building (engineering), and government, many of which still influence our world today. They'll also learn about the Punic Wars and how those events helped Rome grow stronger and expand.

As the unit progresses, your child will explore the rise of the Roman Empire, including the Roman Civil Wars and the leadership of influential figures such as Julius Caesar and other key emperors. The unit will conclude with an examination of the events that contributed to the fall of the Roman Empire.

This unit helps students gain a deeper understanding of how ancient Rome helped shape the modern world.

### Unit 7: Life in the Americas and European Exploration

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will begin by learning about the early cultures and daily lives of the Lakota and Mandan Native American tribes here in South Dakota. They'll explore the unique traditions, values, and ways of life of these communities.

Next, the unit shifts to the Age of Exploration, focusing on explorers such as Christopher Columbus and the motivations that drove them to set sail. Students will learn why these explorations took place and what the explorers hoped to discover.

Students will explore the lasting impact of these early encounters between Native Americans and Europeans. They'll learn about the Columbian Exchange—how goods, animals, and ideas were shared, and also about the conflicts that sometimes arose. The concept of triangular trade will be introduced simply to help explain how people and resources were exchanged between Europe, Africa, and the Americas.

This unit builds a strong foundation for understanding the early connections between Native American tribes and European explorers.

### Unit 8: Colonization

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will explore the beginnings of European settlements in America. They'll start by learning about Jamestown and then move on to the story of the pilgrims and the founding of Plymouth Colony.

Students will dive into what daily life was like in the early colonies while learning about homes, schools, work, and the values that shaped these communities. They'll also explore essential ideas such as owning property, religious freedom, and how colonists began to govern themselves with minimal interference from England.

To wrap up the unit, students will learn about the French and Indian War, including why it started, what happened, and how it affected the colonies' relationship with Great Britain.

This unit gives students a strong foundation for understanding how the early colonies grew and why the seeds of independence were beginning to form while setting the stage for future learning about the American Revolution.

### Unit 9: American Revolution

**Unit Summary:** In this unit, your child will learn about the American Revolution. They'll begin by learning about the British laws and taxes that upset the colonists and sparked tension between the colonies and Great Britain.

Students will explore how colonists stood up for their rights through events like the Boston Tea Party and by forming groups like the Sons of Liberty. They'll learn about the Declaration of Independence and how it gave voice to the colonists' desire for freedom.

Students will study key battles of the Revolutionary War and how the colonists eventually won their independence. They'll also learn about important leaders like George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and why these figures are still remembered today.

This unit will help your child build a strong understanding of how the United States was formed and why the American Revolution remains such a significant chapter in our nation's history.