
History and Social Science *Standards of Learning* for Virginia Public Schools

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**Board of Education
Commonwealth of Virginia**

History and Social Science Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools

**Adopted in April 2023 by the
Board of Education**

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Guiding Principles

Introduction

Virginia’s History and Social Science Standards of Learning aim to raise our aspirations for history and social science instruction and restore excellence, curiosity, and excitement around teaching and learning history. The teaching of history should illuminate insights from the past and inspire current and future generations to lead lives that are informed and inspired by those who walked this journey before them.

Expectations For Virginia’s Students

Every graduate from Virginia’s K–12 schools will possess a robust understanding of the places, people, events, and ideas that comprise the history of Virginia, the United States, and the world. Our students will learn from the rise and fall of civilizations across time, so that we may pursue and maintain government and economic systems that have led to human achievement. The Virginia standards are grounded in the foundational principles and actions of individuals and institutions so that we may learn from them as we strive to maintain our political liberties and personal freedoms and thrive as a nation.

The United States, whose founding history is rooted in Virginia’s history, has led the world in political, social, and economic thought and action in ways that fundamentally changed the interactions and expectations of individual citizens with government. Students will know that the Declaration of Independence first stated that “all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” The standards will recognize the world impact of America’s ongoing quest for a “more perfect Union” and the optimism, ideals, and imagery captured by Ronald Reagan’s “shining city upon a hill” speech, Abraham Lincoln’s second inaugural address, and Frederick Douglas’ complicated love for America. Students will know our nation’s exceptional strengths, including individual innovation, moral character, ingenuity, and adventure, while learning from terrible periods and actions in direct conflict with these ideals.

Our students will also understand that our history encompasses a broad civilization beyond their neighborhood, Virginia, and the United States. They will learn that humankind has spanned continents, ethnicities, and religions, with common qualities that unite us and differences that enrich our society. The events of our history demonstrate that people have incredible ability to inspire, innovate, and improve lives, and this human story also shows that evil exists, and people are capable of destroying civilizations, communities, and individual lives.

The standards provide an unflinching and fact-based coverage of world, United States, and Virginia history. Students will study the horrors of wars and genocide, including the Holocaust and the ethnic cleansing campaigns that have occurred throughout history and continue today. They will better understand the abhorrent treatment of Indigenous peoples, the indelible stain of slavery, segregation, and racism in the United States and around the world, and the inhumanity and deprivations of totalitarian and communist regimes. Students also will study inspirational moments, including the achievements of Asian, African, Greek, and Roman governments and advancements in engineering, architecture, and art, the European Enlightenment, the American Revolution, the triumph of America’s Greatest Generation in World War II, the Marshall Plan, the Civil Rights Movement, the fall of the Berlin Wall, Project Apollo, progress against diseases, and the heroic sacrifice of Flight 93 passengers.

Students will have an in-depth understanding of the good and the bad in world, United States, and Virginia history. The standards will include an appreciation of the attributes and actions that have made America the world's exemplar of freedom, opportunity, and democratic ideals. This comprehensive story of Virginia, the United States, and the world will prepare every student for the rights, opportunities, and responsibilities of Americans. As noted by George Santayana over 100 years ago, "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."

Principles

The foundational principles for these History and Social Sciences learning standards include:

- Individual liberty and representative government are cornerstones of the American way of life.
- The Declaration of Independence and the Constitution are remarkable documents that provide the freedoms and framework for our constitutional republic.
- We aspire to live up to the ideals expressed but not fully realized by the Founders for a society that recognizes that all individuals are created equal.
- From thirteen diverse colonies to a unified nation, "E Pluribus Unum" ("Out of Many, One") has always been our strength. Immigrants from around the world continue to come to the United States seeking freedom and opportunity to build a better life and have contributed to our communities and added to the rich history of the United States.
- Free enterprise, property rights, and the rule of law enable an economic system that allocates assets through free markets and competition and fosters innovation, opportunity, and efficiency.
- Centralized government planning in the form of socialism or communist political systems, as well as fascism, totalitarianism, and other forms of government that preference state power or control over individual liberty and consent of the governed, are incompatible with democracy.
- America is both exceptional and imperfect.
- The rights codified in the United States and Virginia constitutions and the Bill of Rights provide for individual freedoms that place a responsibility on current and future generations of Americans to engage in the political process with civility and fulfill their civic obligations.
- Through the ages, civilizations have grown, prospered, and vanished. Every student should understand our Great American Experiment is not guaranteed forever. As Benjamin Franklin warned citizens over 200 years ago, "a republic, if you can keep it."

Implementation of Virginia’s History and Social Science Standards

Human history is complex and evolving as new technologies emerge and old stories are uncovered. We update our standards every seven years, because we continue to learn more about the multiple facets of historic events through new discoveries and expanded research.

The virtues and flaws of Virginia, the United States, and other world civilizations will be taught in an objective, factual, and age-appropriate way by balancing fact and inquiry-based learning opportunities. These standards lay out the achievements and progress of our story and where Americans and Virginians have fallen short. Virginia’s history and social science education will highlight our shared humanity and the opportunity to work together in our constitutional republic to improve our own lives as well as the lives of our families and communities. The study of history and civics through these standards will provide the foundation for students to be engaged and deeply informed citizens who will continue to strengthen our communities, our economy, and our republic.

The success of Virginia’s 2023 History and Social Science standards depends on the sound judgment and strong preparation of teachers and informed engagement by parents and communities. The standards and state-developed curriculum frameworks will serve as guides for best-in-class teaching and learning. While the immense responsibility of defining curriculum and texts used in classrooms across Virginia rests with local school boards, these standards should be implemented in the following ways:

- Students should be exposed to the facts of our past in a content-rich and engaging way, even when those facts are uncomfortable.
- Teachers, whether they are new to the profession or are veteran educators, should utilize these standards in their classrooms as a mechanism to support their content knowledge and the important work they do each day in classrooms as they teach students across the Commonwealth.
- Every local school board has the responsibility to select and fully implement curricula that are aligned with the core History and Social Science standards for every grade level and course.
- The curriculum selected by local school boards should provide a level of guidance, consistency, high quality instructional materials, and professional development so that teachers, especially less experienced teachers, are not *required* to develop materials on their own.
- The Virginia Department of Education will provide our teachers with excellent instructional tools and training so they will be able to teach *all* of our history in an objective, fair, empathetic, nonjudgmental, and developmentally appropriate manner in accordance with Title IV and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.
- Teachers must facilitate open and balanced discussions on difficult topics, including discrimination and racism, and present learning opportunities without personal or political bias.
- Teachers should engage students in fact-based, non-ideological, and age-appropriate ways that do not imply students today are culpable for past events. Teachers should not expose students to embarrassment or disparagement or restrict student access to varying points of view.
- Teachers, students, and parents should insist on dignity and respect for each other as part of civil society.
- Parents should have access to all instructional materials utilized in any Virginia public school. Division policies and practices should reflect this commitment.

Background and Context for the History and Social Science Standards Revisions

In 1995, the Virginia Board of Education published Standards of Learning in English, mathematics, science, and history and social science for kindergarten through grade 12. Subsequently, Standards of Learning were developed for all academic content areas. The Standards of Learning are designed to raise the academic achievement for all students in Virginia by providing clear and specific benchmarks at each grade level about what students should know and be able to do.

Pursuant to legislation from the 2000 Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Board of Education established a seven-year cycle for review of the Standards of Learning. Thus, the 1995 History and Social Science Standards of Learning were reviewed in 2001, 2008, and 2015. The Virginia Department of Education convened review committees in 2021–2022 to review and revise the 2015 History and Social Science Standards of Learning. The feedback of the committees, exceptional work by department staff, and extensive public comment are reflected in these standards.

Curriculum, on the other hand, created at the division or local level, should prescribe a specific sequence of coherent units or modules that combine instructional strategies with resources and a sequence of student activities to help students meet the standards. A locally developed curriculum should specify how resources, instructional strategies, content vocabulary, student activities, formative and summative assessments, and evaluation procedures may be combined into those coherent units.

To assist school divisions with the creation of the local curricula, the Virginia Department of Education will separately issue Curriculum Frameworks for the History and Social Science Standards of Learning. The Curriculum Frameworks will suggest instructional resources (print and non-print), student activities, formative and summative assessment and evaluation materials, and pacing. They will also include scaffolding and differentiation suggestions to help curriculum developers address the needs of struggling learners and those who need challenges. The Curriculum Frameworks will offer important instructional guidance to ensure that students are learning and applying the skills of historical analysis, such as being an active listener, looking at events and issues from various perspectives, analyzing primary and secondary sources, evaluating, and developing arguments, and citing evidence in support of one’s opinion both orally and in writing. Finally, the suggested student activities will encourage students to wrestle with complex texts and ideas, including the important and transcendent themes associated with the study of history, such as liberty, democracy, self-government, truth, and citizenship. In short, Curriculum Frameworks will be issued to further enrich and clarify the concepts set forth in the History and Social Science Standards of Learning.

Organization and Prescribed Order of History and Social Science Courses

Historically, Virginia has offered flexibility around the grades at which some of these courses are taught; in this configuration, the standards are presented in the Board of Education’s recommended grade level sequence. School divisions are strongly encouraged to adopt this sequence, but it is not required. Local school boards that authorize alternative approaches must ensure that gaps in student learning are avoided, make accommodations for students who transfer from other divisions, and ensure that students satisfy Board-prescribed graduation requirements.

Skills

Preceding the standards at each grade level is a skills standard. The development of these skills at each grade level is important as students develop academically in all content areas. The skills will not be assessed in isolation; rather, they will be assessed as part of the content in the History and Social Science Standards of Learning.

Grades K–3

Standards are organized into the four core strands of social studies: history, geography, civics, and economics.

- The history strand offers opportunities for students to read, hear, learn about, research, and explore the lives of people and events in the local community, Virginia, the United States, and the world.
- The geography strand entails the study of both basic geographic skills and specific geography standards that align with and enhance students’ understanding of the history taught at each grade.
- The civics strand builds students’ knowledge of citizenship, patriotism, and the establishment of the Constitution of the United States. The strand includes specific expectations for students’ knowledge of how the U.S. government is structured (i.e., the three branches of government) and confirms a nascent understanding of the basic rights and responsibilities of U.S. citizenship.
- In the economics strand, students in grades K–3 acquire an understanding of the most basic principles of economics on which the grades 6–12 standards will build.

Additionally, the students in grades K–3 are introduced to basic history and social science skills.

- Kindergarteners learn about their community and focus on patriotism, citizenship, and history.
- First graders learn about the Commonwealth of Virginia through the lives of changemakers and events in Virginia history. They also learn more about patriotism, civics, and citizenship, develop map skills, and explore basic economic concepts.
- Second graders are introduced to U.S. history through the lives of changemakers and events. They focus on civics education, with an introduction to key aspects of the U.S. constitutional democracy, and learn more about citizenship, patriotism, geography, and economics.
- Third graders study the world by learning about ancient China, Egypt, Rome, Greece, and Mali. They also continue to develop skills and knowledge about maps, civics, and economics.

Grades 4–6

- Grade 4: Virginia Studies, chronological story of the history of Virginia
- Grade 5: United States History to 1865, America’s history from its earliest days to the Civil War
- Grade 6: United States History 1865 to the Present, the story of the United States from the Civil War to the present

Grades 7–8

Students refocus their attention on three strands of social studies content in preparation for a more in-depth look at world and American history in grades 9–12.

- Grade 7: Civics and Economics
- Grade 8: World Geography

Grades 9–12

Students trace closely the causes, course of events, and effects of the most essential aspects of world and American history, culminating in one last immersion in U.S. government, solidifying students’ knowledge of the rights and obligations of U.S. citizenship.

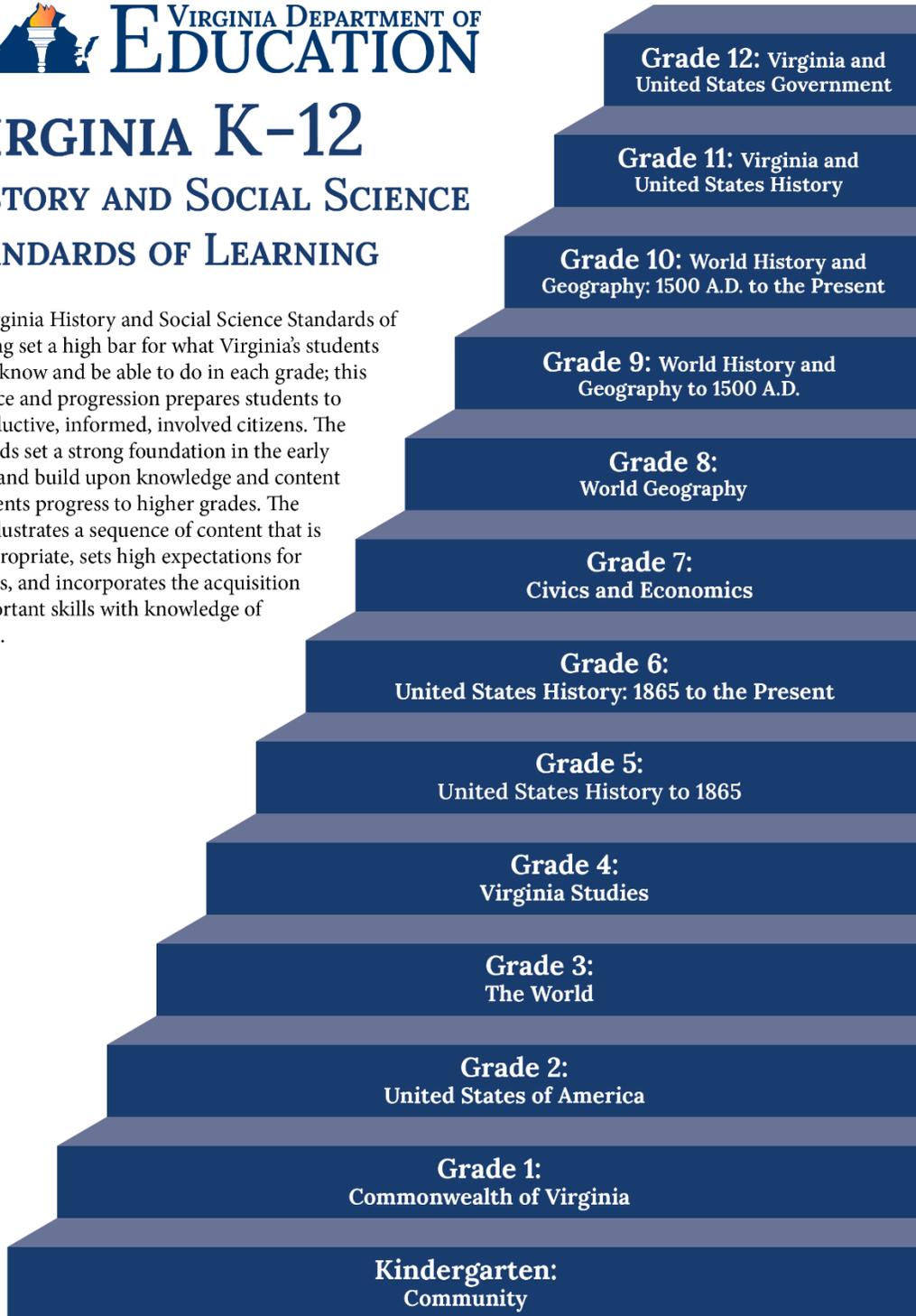
- Grade 9: World History to 1500 A.D.

- Grade 10: World History 1500 A.D. to the Present
- Grade 11: Virginia and United States History
- Grade 12: Virginia and United States Government



VIRGINIA K-12 HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE STANDARDS OF LEARNING

The Virginia History and Social Science Standards of Learning set a high bar for what Virginia's students should know and be able to do in each grade; this sequence and progression prepares students to be productive, informed, involved citizens. The standards set a strong foundation in the early grades and build upon knowledge and content as students progress to higher grades. The chart illustrates a sequence of content that is age appropriate, sets high expectations for students, and incorporates the acquisition of important skills with knowledge of content.



Grade 4: Virginia Studies

The standards for Virginia Studies allow students to develop a greater understanding of Virginia’s rich history, from the contributions and cultures of its Indigenous People and the founding of Jamestown to the present. Geographic, economic, and civic concepts are presented within this historical context. Students will use geographic tools to examine the influence of physical and cultural geography on Virginia history. Students will develop the skills needed to analyze, interpret, and demonstrate knowledge of important events and ideas in our history and will understand the contributions made by people of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. Ideas that form the foundation for political institutions in Virginia and the United States will be included as part of the story of Virginia.

Skills

- Skills VS The student will apply history and social science skills to the content by
- analyzing and interpreting information sources including, but not limited to artifacts, primary and secondary sources, charts, graphs, and diagrams;
 - applying geographic skills to identify and understand geographic features and connections;
 - developing questions, enhancing curiosity, and engaging in critical thinking and analysis;
 - using evidence to construct timelines, classify events, and distinguish fact from opinion;
 - comparing and contrasting people, places, and events;
 - identifying cause-and-effect relationships to clarify and explain content;
 - using economic decision-making models to make informed economic decisions and to explain the incentives and consequences of a specific choice;
 - practicing civility, respect, hard work, honesty, trustworthiness, and responsible citizenship skills; and
 - developing products that reflect an understanding of content.

Physical Geography

- VS.1 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the relationship between physical geography and the lives of Virginia’s peoples, past and present by
- locating Virginia and its bordering states on maps of the United States and North America;
 - locating and describing the relative location and physical characteristics of Virginia's five geographic regions on a map; and
 - locating, identifying, and describing the impact of Virginia’s bodies of water on its history, economy, and culture.

Virginia’s Indigenous People

- VS.2 The student will apply history and social science skills to describe the Indigenous nations of Virginia past and present by
- describing how archaeologists have recovered artifacts from important places in the history of Indigenous people including, but not limited to Werowocomoco;
 - describing Virginia’s three most prominent Indigenous language groups (i.e., the Algonquian, the Siouan, and the Iroquoian);
 - describing the diversity among the Indigenous nations;
 - describing the relationships and interactions of Virginia’s Indigenous People and their environment, circa 1600; and
 - describing the lives and cultures of Virginia’s Indigenous People leading to the present day.

1607 through the American Revolution

- VS.3 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the causes and effects of events associated with the first permanent English settlement in North America by
- explaining the reasons for English colonization;
 - describing the economic and geographic influences on the decision to settle at Jamestown;
 - describing the importance of the Virginia Company of London Charter (April 10, 1606) in establishing the Jamestown colony;
 - describing the interactions between the English colonists and the Indigenous people, including the role of the Powhatan in the survival of the colonists;
 - describing the hardships faced by settlers at Jamestown and the changes that took place to ensure survival including, but not limited to trade with the Powhatan, the leadership of Captain John Smith, land ownership, and the successful commercial cultivation of tobacco;
 - analyzing the impact of the arrival of Africans and women to the Jamestown settlement; and
 - identifying the significance of establishing the General Assembly (1619), the first representative legislative body in English America.
- VS.4 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand life in the Virginia colony by
- explaining the importance and influence of agriculture;
 - examining how colonial Virginia reflected the culture of Virginia’s Indigenous People, European (English, Scots-Irish, German) immigrants, and Africans;
 - distinguishing between indentured servants and enslaved people, including how European countries traded for, transported, and sold Africans to be enslaved in British North America beginning in the 17th century;
 - describing the laws that established race-based enslavement;
 - explaining the reasons for the relocation of Virginia’s capital from Jamestown to Williamsburg; and
 - describing ways people exchanged goods and services in colonial Virginia.
- VS.5 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain Virginia and Virginians’ role during the American Revolution by
- explaining the principles and events that convinced the colonists to declare independence and go to war with Great Britain, as expressed in the Declaration of Independence;
 - examining the important contributions, leadership, and experiences of Virginians during the war including, but not limited to George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, George Mason, James Madison, James Armistead Lafayette, Indigenous people, women, and free and enslaved Blacks;
 - identifying the reasons for the relocation of Virginia’s capital from Williamsburg to Richmond; and
 - identifying the importance of the American victory at Yorktown.

Political Growth and Western Expansion: 1775 to the Mid-1800s

- VS.6 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the establishment and growth of the new American nation with emphasis on the role of Virginians and events in Virginia during the 18th and 19th centuries by
- explaining the roles of George Washington (known as the “Father of Our Country”), James Madison (known as the “Father of the Constitution”), and Patrick Henry (known for his “Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death” speech);

- b. explaining the development of founding Virginia documents, including the Virginia Declaration of Rights (written by George Mason) and the Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (written by Thomas Jefferson);
- c. describing how principles of these founding Virginia documents inspired the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution of Virginia, the Constitution of the United States, and the Bill of Rights;
- d. explaining how geographical features and technological advances impacted the western movement in the first half of the 1800s; and
- e. explaining the causes and events of Nat Turner’s Rebellion and how it impacted the institution of slavery.

Civil War and Postwar Eras

VS.7 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the key people, events, and issues of the Civil War and Virginia’s role by

- a. explaining the role of John Brown and the impact of the raid at Harper’s Ferry;
- b. describing how the institution of slavery was the cause of the Civil War, and secondary factors that contributed to the secession of the southern states;
- c. explaining the significance of the Underground Railroad and the contributions of Harriet Tubman;
- d. explaining major events and issues that divided Virginians and led to secession, war, and the creation of West Virginia;
- e. identifying major battles that took place in Virginia;
- f. identifying and explaining the leadership roles of Virginians including, but not limited to Thomas “Stonewall” Jackson, Robert E. Lee, William Harvey Carney, Winfield Scott, and Powhatan Beaty; and
- g. evaluating the experiences and contributions of Indigenous people and enslaved and free Blacks and their allies during the war including, but not limited to Elizabeth Van Lew and Mary Bowser.

VS.8 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain the reconstruction of Virginia following the Civil War by

- a. describing what the Thirteenth, Fourteenth, and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution accomplished;
- b. examining the effects of Reconstruction on life in Virginia;
- c. describing the role that the Freedmen’s Schools played in the lives of African Americans in Virginia after the Civil War;
- d. discussing the election of African American leader John Mercer Langston to Congress in 1890;
- e. describing the effect of the Supreme Court’s decision in *Plessy v. Ferguson*; and
- f. analyzing the effects of segregation and “Jim Crow” laws on life in Virginia.

VS.9 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the ways in which Virginia became interconnected and diverse by

- a. explaining the importance of railroads, waterways, new industries, and the growth of cities to Virginia’s economic development in the late 1800s; and
- b. explaining the economic and social transition from a rural society to a more urban society.

Virginia: 1900 to Present

- VS.10 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the role Virginians played in American history during World War I and World War II by
- examining how key leaders and citizens prepared for wartime; and
 - describing the contributions made by military veterans and Medal of Honor recipients.
- VS.11 The student will apply history and social science skills to understand the Civil Rights Movement in Virginia by
- explaining the social and political events connected to disenfranchisement of African American voters in Virginia in the early 20th century, desegregation, court decisions, and Massive Resistance, with emphasis on the role of Virginians in the Supreme Court cases including, but not limited to *Brown v. Board of Education*; and
 - investigating the political, social, and economic effects of choices made during the Civil Rights Era by Virginians including, but not limited to Maggie Walker, Robert Russa Moton, Barbara Johns, Samuel Wilbert Tucker, Oliver W. Hill, Sr., Irene Morgan, Arthur R. Ashe, A. Linwood Holton, Jr., and L. Douglas Wilder.
- VS.12 The student will use history and social science skills to recognize why Virginia is known as the “Mother of Presidents.”
- VS.13 The student will apply history and social science skills to explain Virginia’s role in the global economy in the 21st century by
- examining major products and industries important to Virginia; and
 - examining the impact of the ideas, innovations, and advancements of Virginians on a global market.