SEVENTH – EIGHTH GRADE
OVERVIEW

In seventh grade, geography and civics are each taught as a one-semester course. In the one-semester seventh-grade geography course, students study world geography using a thematic approach. They focus on Earth as the subject matter that involves people, places, and environments and learn that geography seeks meaning in spatial patterns and processes that involve asking questions regarding where and why. Teachers select particular continents, countries, and regions to provide the geographic framework for classroom instruction and investigation.

The one-semester seventh-grade civics course addresses content regarding democracy; liberty; law; personal economics; and local, state, and national civic responsibility. This course provides students with information about how society works, including the role students play in the community and in the world.

The geographic knowledge of the world gained in Grade 7 helps eighth-grade students as they begin their study of world history. Students benefit by knowing where things are, how they got that way, and how the study of history applies to ways in which geography affected historical events. Course content incorporates the strands of economics, geography, history, and civics and government with an emphasis on the history and geography strands.

These courses emphasize the knowledge and skills necessary for developing a geographic perspective of the world and its people and events. Geography is a strong component of the content for these grades, as students are required to become knowledgeable about the spatial aspects of human existence. Students use geographic knowledge, tools, and technologies to pose and answer questions about spatial processes and to compare human and physical patterns on Earth. Real maps and mental maps are also utilized by students to answer geographic questions.

Effective teachers incorporate a variety of instructional techniques and assessment strategies into plans for student learning. The classroom environment, activities, assignments, and assessments foster the skills of acquiring information and manipulating data; developing and presenting policies, arguments, and stories; constructing new knowledge; and participating in groups. Technology, including Internet access, computer software, videos, and television programs, is used not only to provide opportunities for students to explore historical as well as geographic concepts, but also to enable students to compete in a rapidly changing world. Because understanding contemporary events and relating them to the past are essential to any social studies course, the incorporation of current events is a vital component of the social studies content for Grades 7 and 8.
EIGHTH GRADE
World History to 1500

Students in the eighth grade can be described as curious and independent learners, discovering who they are and determining their place in the world. As they begin to assert independence from adults and become more reliant on peers, they continue to need a great amount of guidance. Through instruction that includes various media and first-hand experiences, students become more aware of events on a global scale and learn how these events affect them.

The study of world history in Grade 8 addresses the time period from prehistoric man to the 1500s. Content standards for this grade incorporate the strands of economics, geography, history, and political science, with an emphasis on the history and geography strands. Course content focuses on the migrations of early peoples, the rise of civilizations, the establishment of governments and religions, the growth of economic systems, and ways in which these events shaped Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Unique to this course are experiences that provide for the study of the how human beings view themselves over time.

To address the independent and curious nature of eighth graders, instruction is designed to actively involve students in critical thinking and the exchange of ideas, including critical evaluation, interpretation, reasoning, and deduction. Instruction of this nature can best be accomplished through the use of electronic media such as the Internet, videos, and television as well as by participation in small-group and individual activities.

Abbreviated terms used in Grade 8 content standards include A.D. (abbreviation of anno Domini, Latin for “in the year of our Lord”) and B.C. (“before Christ”). These designations are used to label years on the Gregorian calendar. The terms C.E. (meaning “in the Common Era”) and B.C.E. (meaning “before the Common Era”) are beginning to be utilized by some schools of theology as well as appear in some publications such as state and national assessments and national history standards. The use of the abbreviated terms of C.E. and B.C.E., also based on the Gregorian calendar, does not in any way, diminish or negate the importance of the terms A.D. and B.C.