

NOAH WEBSTER EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION MODEL POLICY

TO: TBD
FROM: Noah Webster Educational Foundation
RE: Implementing Primary Sources for Reading in Social Studies Curriculum
DATE: TBD

This model policy aims to improve the quality of the social studies curriculum by requiring district students to read primary source documents from America's founding before graduating high school. Reading and analyzing these documents encourages students to build civic knowledge and strengthen critical thinking skills.

Implementing Primary Sources for Reading in Social Studies Curriculum

AUTHORS:

- Noah Webster Educational Foundation

BACKGROUND: School Districts receive funding from local, state, and federal governments, which school boards are responsible for stewarding appropriately. Effective stewardship of the district budget includes ensuring that all funded programs and resources are high-quality and benefit students' learning. This policy helps school boards better assess and implement learning programs and resources, as well as other funded programs, such as social-emotional learning (SEL) programs. This model policy directly corresponds to NWEF's '[Managing Waste in Your District's Budget](#)' training series for school board members.

LEGAL ADVISORY: Noah Webster Educational Foundation is not a law firm and does not claim legal expertise. Please consult your school district's attorney and applicable state laws and codes when evaluating model policies from Noah Webster Educational Foundation.

Subject: Implementing Primary Sources for Reading in Social Studies Curriculum

I. Description of Policy

This School Board/School Division is responsible for approving specific curriculum used in the classroom, including, but not limited to, textbooks, reading lists, instructional materials, and other resources essential to classroom instruction. To fulfill this responsibility, this School Board/Division will now require specific primary sources to be used as instructional materials and be included on reading lists for middle and high school social studies and civics education courses.

II. Requirements for Social Studies Curriculum

The purpose of schools within the [schoolboard district] is to ensure that all students receive high-quality instruction. To do so, the [schoolboard district] will improve social studies and civics education by requiring students to read primary sources as a graduation requirement. The following primary sources should be read and discussed in their entirety as a condition of high school graduation requirements within the district:

- A. The United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights and all Amendments.
- B. The Declaration of Independence
- C. The Gettysburg Address¹

Each of the following primary source documents will be read in its entirety between grades 7-12 as they become relevant to each grade's social studies topics according to the state's curriculum standards.

III. Requirements for Implementation

School board members will ensure these primary source documents are available and easily accessible to teachers by adding them to the district learning repository, along with relevant resources and lesson plans to support classroom instruction.

Teachers will ensure all students can access the necessary primary documents by directing students to either an appropriate digital resource with the full required text or physical materials. Teachers are not required to provide these resources using their personal resources, but should use the district learning repository, school or public library, or other reasonable means to make the necessary documents available to students.²

¹ The School Board should alter this subsection C to replace or add onto the Gettysburg Address if it feels so inclined. Other relevant primary source documents that contributed to the United States' foundational period include The Articles of Confederation, The Federalist Papers (special significant articles should be chosen), Washington's Farewell Address, Lincoln's Second Inaugural Address, and different presidential doctrines.

² The full text of both the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence are available through the National Archives. The full text of other relevant primary source documents can be found online through the Library of Congress and other trustworthy federal websites.

Teachers will also ensure students read the required primary source documents in full before classroom discussion by incorporating these requirements into their lesson plans. Teachers should integrate these documents into lesson plans aligned with curriculum standards set by the state board of education and the local school district.