Maine Semiquincentennial 1776-2026 COMMISSION

CIVICS ON THE ROAD

EDUCATOR'S GUIDE

2025-2026

Maine Department of Education

***CIVICS ON THE ROAD* EDUCATOR'S GUIDE**

PRE-VISIT DOCUMENT

This guide is for teachers at host schools. It is intended to provide you with materials to prepare students for their time with MDOE staff and volunteers and ultimately to prepare them to vote with confidence and context on the Guiding Question, *"Is the Declaration of Independence, written 250 years ago, still relevant today?"*

Interdisciplinary Instruction "empowers students with a holistic approach to problem-solving. It enhances their critical thinking skills and supports their academic understanding while preparing them for success in a rapidly changing world." The resources below offer ways that this material may contribute to learning across the curriculum. We hope that teachers employ an interdisciplinary approach in order to prepare students for the *Civics on the Road* site visit experience.

This Teacher's Guide is organized into five sections:

1. A list of concepts that students should be familiar with and links for teachers to use as they prepare to share this material with students.
2. A curated list of digital maps to introduce the concept that boundaries are malleable and can change over time.
3. A selection of resources that teachers can use to introduce the concepts or scaffold student learning.
4. Resources for integrating Wabanaki, African American and other diverse perspectives.
5. Post-Visit materials to extend students' experiences of civic learning beyond the site visit throughout the curriculum.

PART ONE: ESSENTIAL CONCEPTS: Participation in the site visit activities will be richer for students who have an understanding of the political and historical context of the following events. Mastery of all concepts is not required, but familiarity with them would increase students 'experience.

- The United States is approaching the 250th anniversary of its founding. The origin of the United States was a process rather than a single event. Beginning with the "shot heard 'round the world" at Lexington and Concord in 1775, to the Declaration of Independence in 1776, through the Revolutionary War years until 1781, and concluding with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the birth of the United States is itself a lesson in resilience, struggle, and idealism. For more information on this process, teachers can access the in-depth timeline and linked sources at American Revolution Timeline | American Battlefield Trust.

- The United States is a unique constitutional democracy, deriving in part from Classical traditions such as the Athenian democracies and systems of the Roman Republic, as well as drawing heavily upon living democracies the Founding Fathers observed around them in the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy. The original guiding documents of the young United States were the relatively ineffective *Articles of Confederation*. This governing structure was replaced with the *Constitution of the United States*, drafted in 1777 and ratified in 1778. The Constitution achieved the form we recognize today with the addition of the first ten amendments, the *Bill of Rights*, in 1791. Some excellent materials for teaching the Constitution can be accessed at Lesson Plans | National Archives.

- The area that we call the United States has changed over time, and this growth has increased opportunities for some while divesting indigenous Americans and others of their lands and opportunities. Students should be familiar with the growth of the United States over time and how Maine fits into this expansion. Teachers can illustrate the expansion of the United States graphically using period-specific maps and by sharing a video such as https://youtu.be/dVJxKis7_zo?si=tPMWEijMdnF9jWuX.

- The United States is governed by laws, and the Constitution is the "supreme law of the land." Students should be aware that laws reflect the choices we make as informed citizens. Extensive teaching materials about law and the courts in our Constitutional system can be found at the ABA Teacher's Portal – Educate | Empower | Engage.

- The United States is a representative democracy in which citizens vote for their elected officials. To learn more about who represents us and how our elected officials work, check out these curated lessons from the Civics Renewal Network, which includes civics lessons with interdisciplinary math and reading skills.

- At the local level, people have more direct control over the decisions that the government makes, while at the federal level, most decisions are made by our elected representatives. Students should be aware that Maine has a tradition of local control, including aspects of both direct and indirect democracy. The Maine Secretary of State's office hosts some short accessible video lessons on the process of registering to vote and voting in Maine at Information About Voting | SOS.

- The people of the United States enjoy "inalienable rights," including the rights of free speech and freedom of the press. Many of our rights are described in the first ten

amendments to the Constitution, known as the Bill of Rights. History for Kids offers a series of free lessons and printables for sharing the Bill of Rights with elementary students.

- Many people's ability to exercise their rights, including the right to vote, was limited in the past. One of the successes of the American system has been increasing inclusivity and access to democratic processes through the passage of amendments to the Constitution (e.g. the 14th Amendment), and through the enactment and enforcement of civil rights laws.

PART TWO: VISUAL RESOURCES: These resources may be used by teachers prior to the site visit to help students understand the geographic context of the site visit activities.

In addition to the essential concepts, students should be familiar with historical and contemporary maps of the United States and Maine so that they have a visual context for their learning. The Osher Map Library at the University of Southern Maine has a number of free educational resources for teachers related to mapping change over time in the United States. However, it is not necessary for students to memorize placenames prior to engaging in this program. As long as students understand that the area of the United States (and Maine) has changed over time and that these changes reflect political choices, they will be prepared to engage in the site visit activities.

Quick Map Resources:

- North America topographic
- Original 13 Colonies
- Westward Expansion
- Modern United States
- Maine 1820
- Webster-Ashburton Treaty
- Modern Maine

PART THREE: SITE VIST ENRICHMENT MATERIALS: These resources may be employed to enrich the student experience and to make connections across the curriculum and content areas.

Sample of Instructional Modalities:

Sample Essential Concept	Sample Resources	Sample Student Activity

The geography of the United States (and Maine) has changed over time	Comparative maps	Students create Annotated maps or Story-Maps of the changing boundaries of the United States and Maine
The United States is approaching its 250th anniversary	Detailed timelines	Kid-Reporter eye-witness news report of an historic event
At the local level people have more direct control in our democracy	Voting information from the Maine Secretary of State's office	Students petition to teacher or principal about a school or local issue
In the past people's right to vote was limited, voting rights have changed (expanded) over time	Voting Rights information from the ACLU	Socratic seminar on voting rights and the historical limitations to participation in American democracy
The role of non-governmental institutions, such as the role of a free press, are essential to American democracy	Resources from the American Press Association	Mock press conference with a celebrity guest (building or district admin, e.g.)
The United States is governed by laws that apply to all citizens, and the Constitution is the Supreme Law of the Land	The American Bar Association provides educational resources that specifically address the Rule of Law	Student created tri-fold describing an issue, a proposed law, and resolution
The inspiration for many of the founding principles of the US was drawn from Classical examples and the living democracy of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederacy	Descriptions of Classical and indigenous influences on American democracy, for example The Ancient Greek Ideals that Inspired American Independence - GreekReporter.com and Influence On Democracy - Haudenosaunee Confederacy	Venn Diagram or other visual analysis of concurrent ideas in Classical, indigenous and American democracies.

Here are some links to materials to make our site visit more fun and immersive:

How to Make a Paper Wig

33 Colonial Activities for Kids

Elementary Curriculum: Colonial America to Reconstruction | Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

You may choose to have your class and school participate in Maine's Mock Election, scheduled for October 28,2025. Registration and classroom activities are located at State of Maine Mock Elections | Maine Secretary of State Kids' Page

PART FOUR: RESOURCES ON INDIGENOUS AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES: The perspectives of the Wabanaki and other disenfranchised groups on the events surrounding America's semi-quincentennial and the founding of the United States are nuanced and diverse. These resources are included to help teachers understand and navigate these perspectives.

There are many perspectives on how fairly laws have been made and implemented in Maine and across the United States. For teachers, here is an alternative perspective on the power and propriety of laws in Maine: Eli-Tpitahatomek Tpaskuwakonol Waponahkik (How We, Native People, Reflect on the Law in the Dawnland).

Wabanaki participation in the American Revolution was crucial on the Colonial northern frontier and in other theaters of the war. This paper discusses a variety of ways that the Wabanaki participated in the military contest between the American colonies and the British Empire: Native Allies "cannot be too highly appreciated:" Wabanaki Confederacy Contributions during the American Revolutionary War – Washington College Review.

The Maine Department of Education develops and maintains extensive resources for teaching about the Wabanaki and about African Americans of Maine. Of particular interest in this context are the Wabanaki Studies Grade Level Educator Guides, which can be found at: Wabanaki Studies - Resources | Department of Education and the African American and Ethnic Studies resources found at: African American and Ethnic Studies | Department of Education .

The Founding Fathers and Enslaved Populations: Some of the federal parks dedicated to the homes of some of our country's first presidents have online resources related to the enslaved men, women, and children who lived there and found ways to survive in a world that denied their freedom.

- Slavery at George Washington's Mount Vernon
- Slavery at Thomas Jefferson's Monticello

Similar to the diverse responses of indigenous Americans to the American Revolution, Black Americans had various perspectives on American independence. These ideas were inextricably tied to the enslavement and dispossession of Black Americans by some colonial authorities and their perspectives on the promise of liberty in a land where slavery and exploitation remained legal. The primary documents curated in this resource may help shed light on the hard choices that many Black Americans had to make in the Revolutionary era: Black Americans and the American Revolution - Colonial Williamsburg

The history of women in the Revolutionary era is becoming increasingly well documented. The New York Public Library maintains extensive teaching resources and a curated primary document collection on the history of women during the Revolutionary War. It can be accessed for free at Women and the War - Life During the American Revolution: Resources for Students and Educators - Research Guides at New York Public Library Research Centers .

PART FIVE: POST-VISIT MATERIALS AND CONTACT INFORMATION

Following the site visit, teachers are encouraged to continue civics learning with their students. One way that students can build upon their knowledge, reinforce the active learning of the site visit, and continue to learn how to participate in the civic process is through a *public meeting*. Public meetings are an integral aspect of American democracy. Public meetings can vary in form from relatively informal rural town meetings to formal Congressional hearings. In your class, you can develop a public meeting model that best meets the needs of your students and community. In this public meeting, your students can address the results of the vote they conducted on the Guiding Question and spend time developing some next steps, planning where they want to take their country for the next 250 years as citizens in a democratic community.

If, during the site visit, your students voted in favor of the ballot question, then a public meeting becomes the arena for developing ideas about the new government. Teachers may wish to discuss the Articles of Confederation, the United States Constitution, and/or allow students to establish their own norms and priorities for their new government. In this scenario, a summative product should include a description of the powers of government and rights of the people, analogous to the United States Constitution.

If, during the site visit, your students voted against the ballot question, then a public meeting becomes the arena in which students can determine how they structure participation in government while they exercise freedom in their local communities. Teachers may wish to guide their students through a discussion of Benjamin Franklin's 1754 Albany Plan that sought to provide democratic opportunities to

the American colonies as they remained part of the British Empire or the 1839 Durham Report that granted Canadians more autonomy while they remained under British suzerainty. In this scenario, a summative product should include a description of the powers maintained by the government and a description of individual rights that could exist under that authority.

Regardless of the results of the students' votes, the goal for teachers and students is not to recreate historical documents. This is an opportunity for students to consider democracy, empowerment, and the inclusion of marginalized groups as they create their own versions of governing documents that will support America for the next 250 years. It is a chance for students to develop their vision of a democratic society and to present that vision in their own words. You may choose to have students engage in this as individual work or you may guide them through the development of class-wide norms. Think about what will work best for your class, in your community.

As you frame this work for your students, have them consider:

- What they already know about U.S. history and the birth of the United States.
- What they learned about the civic process during the site visit.
- What they know about the history of participatory democracy in the U.S., particularly in relation to the expansion of voting rights to women, religious and ethnic minorities, indigenous Americans, and people of color.
- Foundational documents that you share and scaffold with them, such as the Articles of Confederation and the U.S. Constitution.
- Their own goals and aspirations for their country and community in the next 250 years.

You may want your students to visit the poster gallery that was displayed during the site-visit and which will remain on loan to your school following the visit. The poster gallery consists of a collection of artifacts and posters featuring real Americans from the era of the Declaration expressing their thoughts or concerns in their own words. The five posters highlight the following individuals:

- ★ Thomas Paine, an American patriot expressing the apprehension that the colonists felt at the prospect of declaring independence.
- ★ Mercy Otis Warren, a female patriot and advocate for Women's rights.
- ★ Thomas Hutchinson, a loyalist American describing the influence of popular trends on public opinion.
- ★ Chief Joseph Orono, Sachem of the Penobscot Nation at the time of the Revolution, expressing his support of American Revolutionaries and the choices that Indigenous Americans had to make.

- ★ Chief Joseph Brant, Loyalist commander of the Mohawk Nation at the time of the Revolution, expressing his frustration with American colonists and the choices that Indigenous Americans had to make.
- ★ Samuel Tenney, a free Black colonial soldier, sharing his concerns about the support Americans offered to those fighting for their independence.
- ★ Jonathan Eddy, a Canadian advocate for Revolution who later settled in the United States.
- ★ Hannah Watts Weston, a Maine woman who risked her life to support the patriots' cause.
- ★ John Woolman, an American Quaker who advocated for pacifism and a peaceful resolution to the conflict.
- ★ Marquis de Lafayette, a French nobleman who supported the American Revolution.

Teachers are encouraged to explore these perspectives with their students so that student work related to designing systems for America's next 250 years reflects the diversity of the American historical experience as well as the diversity students observe in American public life today.

How to Conduct a Public Meeting in Your Classroom

Public Meetings can take many forms, from relatively informal gatherings where consensus is reached to formal, rules-bound meetings in which formal votes are cast. You know your class best, and it is up to you to design the rules for an effective public meeting in your classroom.

Regardless of the form you choose, all public meetings should embrace the following goals:

- A clearly articulated common goal
- Participation from as many people as possible
- Respectful tone and language
- Solution-focused rather than debate-focused process
- Development of a final working document or other summative product

There are several models that teachers can employ to facilitate a public meeting based on the dynamics of their classes and students' familiarity with guided dialogue and group process. The following resources provide examples of different public meeting processes in the classroom:

A Teacher's Guide: The Basics of a Classroom Debate | ESL Debates

Scholastic.com Debate Guide

Town Hall Circle Teaching Strategy | Facing History & Ourselves

Sample Consensus Protocol

A Classroom Constitutional Convention | George Washington's Mount Vernon

Once students become familiar with the public meeting process, teachers and students can implement these protocols throughout their learning, embedding civics-related concepts across the curriculum.

Share Your Work!

We want to hear from you! Please use the attached form to share your impressions of the *Civics on the Road* program and examples of your students' work with us. There is no expectation that you submit any particular type of evidence, but we are interested in learning about the creative ways you and your students use the concepts they are learning to become more active citizens in your class, school and community. Please use this link or use the contact information below to share your experience with us.

For more information or for other resources, please contact:

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