

## Contemporary Issues : 9-12

**Course Description:** In Contemporary Issues, students study various dynamic issues facing today's society enabling them to discover their values and responsibilities as citizens in that society. The course will utilize six social studies standards of essential content knowledge and four process skills are integrated for instructional purposes. Students will utilize different learning methods to research, discuss, debate and formulate opinions on those contemporary issues.

### Standard Number: 1.0 Culture

**Standard:** Culture encompasses similarities and differences among people, including their beliefs, knowledge, changes, values, and tradition. Students will explore these elements of society to develop an appreciation of and respect for the variety of human cultures.

### Learning Expectations:

The student will

- 1.1. understand patterns of discrimination.
- 1.2. identify trends and controversies regarding modern medicine and human genetics.
- 1.3. understand ethical debates on internet usage.
- 1.4. understand various issues concerning modern print and visual media.

### Performance Indicators:

1.1 understand patterns of discrimination.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- relate types of existing discrimination (e.g., gender, ethnic, and racial bias).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- differentiate attitudes towards different patterns of discrimination

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- formulate solutions and judge whether conditions for resolution exist.

### Sample Tasks:

Students will research the issue of affirmative action and prepare to assume roles in a debate concerning the issue.

1.2. identify trends and controversies regarding modern medicine and human genetics.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- list issues and controversies regarding contemporary medicine.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- analyze perspectives on human genetics.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- weigh ethics of medical trends and human cloning.

**Sample Tasks:**

Students will create a propaganda campaign voicing the opinion of a certain interest group (e.g., the A.M.A., Clonaid, religious advocates).

1.3 understand ethical debates on internet usage.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- recognize issues of debate relative to internet usage (e.g., musical sharing, pornography, censorship, invasion of privacy).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- analyze the ethics of internet usage.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- predict future applications and outcomes of internet proliferation.

**Sample Tasks:**

Students will prepare questions for guest speakers representing different points of view (e.g., legislator, music industry, internet user).

1.4 understand various issues concerning modern print and visual media.

*At Level 1 the student is able to*

- list opinions regarding modern print and visual media from multiple perspectives.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- question the appropriateness, accuracy, and impact of media content.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- critique the responsibilities of modern media providers and their recipients.

### **Sample tasks:**

Students will research different types of media, interview providers, recipients of the story and author an editorial critique (e.g., issue: election of 2000, 9/11, or the Iraq crisis).

### **Standard Number:** 2.0 Economics

**Standard:** Globalization of the economy, the explosion of population growth, technological changes, and international competition compel students to understand, both personally, and globally, production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services. Students will examine and analyze economic concepts such as basic needs versus wants, using versus saving money, and policy making versus decision making.

### **Learning Expectations:**

The student will

- 2.1 understand the role of the stock and the ethics of corporate handling of public investments.
- 2.2 identify popular perception of government revenues and expenditures.
- 2.3 recognize popular attitudes and governmental regulations concerning gambling and lotteries.

### **Performance Indicators:**

2.1 understand the role of the stock and the ethics of corporate handling of public investments.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- define the structure of the stock market.
- recognize different types of stocks and investments available to the public.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- compare and contrast the interests of investors versus corporate management (e.g., profit, fraud).

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- appraise the risk factor and earnings/loss potential of various savings plans versus stock investments in today's current market.
- debate the effectiveness of economic and governmental restraints to today's current investment strategies.

**Sample tasks:**

Students will interview senior citizens specifically regarding their own financial strategies for retirement and their confidence level in savings plans versus stocks.

2.2 identify popular perception of government revenues and expenditures.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- define sources of government revenues and types of expenditures (e.g., taxation, welfare).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- dramatize contemporary attitudes toward taxation and welfare programs at various levels.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- measure the appropriateness of revenues and expenditures at various government levels.

**Sample tasks:**

Students will examine state budget issues considering revenues and expenses in preparation for class discussion and debate.

2.3 recognize popular attitudes and governmental regulations concerning gambling and lotteries.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- recognize forms of gambling and purposes for lotteries.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- classify legal versus illegal and levels of gambling addictions

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- appraise the effects of gambling on contemporary society;

- weigh the ethics of lotteries (e.g., tax on the poor, application of lottery revenues, pragmatic realities).

**Sample tasks:**

The students will brainstorm types of gambling and lotteries and compile list on chalkboard.

**Standard Number:** 3.0 Geography

**Standard:** Geography enables the students to see, understand and appreciate the web of relationships between people, places, and environments. Students will use the knowledge, skills, and understanding of concepts within the six essential elements of geography: world in spatial terms, places and regions, physical systems, human systems, environment and society, and the use of geography.

**Learning Expectations:**

The student will

- 3.1 understand the current debates on environmental usage and protection issues.
- 3.2 identify changing global and universal frontiers.

**Performance Indicators:**

3.1 understand the current debates on environmental usage and protection issues.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- identify the environment and societal challenges to the current debates on environmental and protection beliefs.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- discriminate between the goals of environmentalists versus the goals of corporate users.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- develop a plan to balance opposing viewpoints regarding environmental issues.

**Sample tasks:**

Research a local or national environmental issue in preparation for classroom debate on the issue (e.g., the creation of state road building, Arctic Wildlife Preserve).

3.2 identify changing global and universal frontiers.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- define frontier and label on-going frontiers (e.g., nuclear energy, space exploration).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- utilize existing technologies to explore new geographic frontiers available from the classroom.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- predict the outcomes and value of continued exploration .

**Sample tasks:**

Use the computer lab for research sites relative to scientific and technological advancements to compile a journal.

**Standard Number:** 4.0 Governance and Civics

**Standard:** Governance establishes structures of power and authority in order to provide order and stability. Civic efficacy requires understanding rights and responsibilities, ethical behavior, and the role of citizens within their community, nation, and world.

**Learning Expectations:**

The student will

- 4.1. identify types of legal statutes and penal code, and issues relative to their enforcement.
- 4.2. recognize the elasticity and restrictions of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and the potential for civil disobedience and protest in society.

**Performance Indicators**

4.1 . identify types of legal statutes and penal code, and issues relative to their enforcement.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- define reasons for civil statutes and codes.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- distinguish different levels of punishment and the validity for each punishment (e.g., community service, incarceration, rehabilitation, death penalty);
- compare the application of differing punishments as determined by local, national or international systems.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- judge the fair application of justice in America's penal system by using primary resources (e.g., racial, gender or social-economic profiling).

**Sample Tasks:**

On a field trip or class visits with local law enforcement officers or city and school administrators, the students will question authority figures on pertinent current issues in the application and reality of law.

4.2. recognize the elasticity and restrictions of the First Amendment of the United States Constitution and the potential for civil disobedience and protest in society.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- recognize the protections offered by the First Amendment, and; define civil disobedience.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- deduce the perimeters of First Amendment rights as exhibited by various periods in American history.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- consider possible future amendments addressing restrictions of the existing First Amendment;
- compare and contrast American civil liberties with those citizens in other contemporary nations.

**Sample Tasks:**

The students will write and produce a news-cast of a theoretical issue from the perspective of one or more foreign nations or cultures specifically addressing First Amendment issues.

**Standard Number:** 5.0 History

**Standard:** History involves people, events, and issues. Students will evaluate evidence to develop comparative and causal analyses and to interpret primary sources. They will

construct sound historical arguments and perspectives on which informed decision in contemporary life can be based.

### **Learning Expectations:**

The student will

- 5.1 recognize the impact of traumatic effects of destructive events on human society.
- 5.2 identify controversies created by differing interpretations of the Second Amendment.

### **Performance Indicators:**

5.1 Recognize the impact of traumatic effects of destructive events on human society.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- identify past and current wars and conflicts and causal factors;
- identify events of terrorism (e.g., causes, costs, perspectives).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- distinguish popular perspectives, methodology and cultural impact of warfare on civilization (e.g., conscientious objectors, refugees, veterans).

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- predict future theaters of wars and conflicts;
- formulate proactive policies for the United States to avoid future conflicts.

### **Sample Tasks:**

Students will research a conflict and interview individuals with different perspectives on the topic. Role play an in-class panel discussion displaying these multiple perspectives.

5.2 identify controversies created by differing interpretations of the Second Amendment.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- recognize the verbiage of the Second Amendment of the United States Constitutions.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- discuss the relevance of the Second Amendment in today's society;
- compare and contrast types of gun control and effectiveness of its implementation.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- consider revision of the existing Second Amendment language to reconcile the controversies.

### **Sample tasks:**

Research statistics and news articles concerning the possession of weapons and gun-related crimes. Debate the impact the influence of the Second Amendment on these situations.

### **Standard Number: 6.0 Individuals, Groups, and Interactions**

Standard: Personal development and identity are shaped by factors including culture, groups, and institutions. Central to this development are exploration, identification, and analysis of how individuals and groups work independently and cooperatively.

### **Learning Expectations:**

The student will

- 6.1 identify various contemporary religious perspectives on social issues.
- 6.2 understand the impact of abortion and its controversies on modern society.
- 6.3 recognize current epidemic diseases and trends or approaches in dealing with terminal illness.

### **Performance Indicators:**

6.1 identify various contemporary religious perspectives on social issues

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- list various religious sects and their perspectives on current events.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- interpret the establishment and free exercise clause in the First Amendment.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- appraise constitutionality of the separation of church and state (e.g. prayer in schools, Ten Commandments in public buildings).

### **Sample Tasks:**

Students will create an issue- based concept mapping activity differentiating the perspectives of religious affiliations.

6.2 understand the impact of abortion and its controversies on modern society

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- define abortion and recognize its social controversies.

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- analyze the Supreme Court ruling Roe v. Wade and the judicial after effects.

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- weigh the impact of politics versus personal choice on the future of abortion rights;
- predict the future political consequences of the abortion decision as influenced by changing political figures.

6.3 recognize current epidemic diseases and trends in dealing with terminal illness.

*At Level 1, the student is able to*

- list known epidemic diseases and issues of terminal illness (e.g., AIDS, bio-terrorism diseases, physician assisted suicide).

*At Level 2, the student is able to*

- analyze governmental approaches and policies regarding these topics (e.g., funding of research, treatment, distribution of governmental health services, the right to die debate).

*At Level 3, the student is able to*

- conclude the effectiveness of public and private health care providers and insurance companies in dealing with epidemic diseases and terminal illnesses (e.g., HMO, nursing homes, clinics, Medicare, Medicaid).

### **Sample Tasks:**

Students will research different alternatives and plans for cost effective group or private health insurance plans for their families.