



EAGLE MOUNTAIN SAGINAW ISD

Fostering a Culture of Excellence

Dear Parent or Guardian,

In Grade 8, students study the history of the United States from the early colonial period through Reconstruction. The content in Grade 8 builds upon that from Grade 5 but provides more depth and breadth. Historical content focuses on the political, economic, religious, and social events and issues related to the colonial and revolutionary eras, the creation and ratification of the U.S. Constitution, challenges of the early republic, the Age of Jackson, westward expansion, sectionalism, Civil War, and Reconstruction. Students describe the physical characteristics of the United States and their impact on population distribution and settlement patterns in the past and present. Students analyze the various economic factors that influenced the development of colonial America and the early years of the republic and identify the origins of the free enterprise system. Students examine the American beliefs and principles, including limited government, checks and balances, federalism, separation of powers, and individual rights, reflected in the U.S. Constitution and other historical documents. Students evaluate the impact of Supreme Court cases and major reform movements of the 19th century and examine the rights and responsibilities of citizens of the United States as well as the importance of effective leadership in a constitutional republic. Students evaluate the impact of scientific discoveries and technological innovations on the development of the United States. Students use critical-thinking skills, including the identification of bias in written, oral, and visual material.

In this course, we use Project Based Learning, or PBL, to help students learn better. PBL motivates students to gain knowledge and remember it longer. PBL gives students the chance to apply the skills they learn in school to personally relevant and real-world situations. Your child also learns skills in PBL, such as how to think critically to create effective and innovative solutions, collaborate with peers, and communicate effectively in a variety of forms and settings. These skills will help students succeed in the future, both in school and in today's economy.

Our project is called "Where's the You in Democracy?" and it will last six weeks. In this unit, students will study democracy, the role of active citizens in a democracy, and the rights of citizens. The driving question of the project, which focuses our work, is *what are the roles of citizens in a democracy?* Learners will work independently as community members to create an action plan for increasing active participation in our democracy. Learners will also work collaboratively to create an informative exhibit on the roles of citizens in a democracy. At the end of the project, students will have the opportunity to share their work publicly with their peers, their administrators, and members of the community.

Students are assessed individually throughout the project based on the knowledge they gain and the skills they demonstrate. Please contact us to access the rubrics we will use to guide the creation of the products and assess your student's work. You may find these helpful in understanding what we are asking students to do, and supporting your child during the project.

As parents or guardians, you can discuss the project at home and encourage your child to think critically and ask questions about the topic. Consider discussing the following questions at home to deepen your child's learning and foster a culture of academic discourse in your home:

Project Questions:

- What rights are guaranteed to citizens?
- How can community members become more involved with their local government?
 - ... with their state government?
 - ... with their national government?
- Why is it important for voters to be involved in community events?
 - ... in state events?
 - ... in national events?
- How do community members make a difference in their local community, state, and country?

Critical Thinking Questions:

- What is the most important part of what you just learned about ____?
- How can you apply what you just learned about ____ to a new or different situation?
- How does ____ affect ____?
- Compare ____ to ____; how are they the same, and how are they different?
- After reading or learning about ____, what can you generally say is true, even though there are exceptions to that rule?
- What facts would you use to support your conclusion?

You can also support the project by coming to the final presentation. For more information about when and where the final presentation takes place, please contact your child's teacher. We hope you can attend.

Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns regarding your student or the project. We look forward to working with you and your child to ensure their success.

Respectfully,

Grade 8 GT/Advanced Humanities Social Studies Teachers