

America 250: Celebrating the 250th Anniversary of the Declaration of Independence



SCHOOL GUIDANCE | Last updated 4/27/2026

Purpose

In 2026, the United States will mark 250 years since the signing of the Declaration of Independence. This commemoration is an opportunity for the Wake County Public School System to engage students, families, and partners in a reflection on our shared history. Our goal is to inspire a deeper understanding of our nation's founding principles—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—while honoring the diverse experiences and challenges that have shaped North Carolina and the American spirit today.

What is America 250?

America 250 (or the Semiquincentennial) is the nationwide commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. Orchestrated by the [U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission](#), this milestone serves as a pivotal opportunity to reflect on the country's shared history, honor the diverse voices—including Indigenous, enslaved, and immigrant communities and women—that have shaped the American spirit, and inspire a deeper commitment to the founding principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. From local community events to national educational initiatives, the effort aims to engage all Americans in a collective journey to strengthen the "unfinished work" of our democracy.

What are our desired outcomes with this work?

As a district, we hope to accomplish the following:

- *Highlight the diverse voices (Indigenous, enslaved, immigrant, and women) that have shaped North Carolina's history over the last 250 years.* As our nation approaches its 250th anniversary, WCPSS recognizes this as a pivotal opportunity to examine our shared history through a more inclusive lens. By centering 'America 250' within our curriculum and community outreach, we aim to move beyond traditional narratives to ensure every student sees their ancestors' contributions as foundational to the American story.
- *Core Belief #5: The Board of Education, superintendent, and all staff value a diverse school community that is inviting, respectful, inclusive, flexible, and supportive.* This work is part of our district's ongoing efforts to ensure that our work is inclusive and supportive of all parts of our community. Specifically, our hope is to ensure that all students and families see themselves lifted up in a positive light within our district.
- *Core Belief #3: Well-supported, highly effective, and dedicated principals, teachers, and staff are essential to success for all students.* By intentionally sharing resources with and educating school staff and leaders on the culture and heritage of our students, we will in the long-term create a greater likelihood that school staff will be able to create meaningful instructional activities where EVERY student accurately sees their culture and heritage reflected in their learning.

- *WCPSS Equity Focused Practices:*
 - *Create brave spaces and belonging* enabling each and every student to bring their true and authentic selves to the educational process and reach their unbounded potential by seeing their culture and background represented in their school and classroom.
 - *Disrupt disproportionality* for individual students, student groups, communities, and schools to realize the equity and excellence goals of the district.
 - *Center student voice* to inform instructional practices, behavioral interventions, policies, processes, and systems of support.
 - *Partner equitably with families/caregivers*; respecting their expertise about their children, inform student learning and offer diverse perspectives in developing strategies to confront inequities in classrooms, schools, and the district.

What are the district's expectations for schools on this topic?

The district expectation is that all schools engage in celebrating and/or recognizing America 250 in some manner.

To clarify this:

- Schools should identify a way of doing this that is manageable and appropriate for the school.
- Schools are able to choose a strategy within this guidance and/or create their own strategies aligned with district expectations.
- Schools are expected to work within the best practices within this document.

What are ways that schools can celebrate and bring attention to this?

As schools celebrate and acknowledge our shared history, we encourage schools to keep the following best practices in mind:

- *Communicate Proactively!* Where teachers are engaging in work around culture and heritage, it is best practice to communicate the topic and resources proactively with parents. This allows for productive conversation and questions prior to instructional presentations. This is particularly critical when discussing difficult topics and/or experiences.
- *Provide ample opportunities for students to examine primary source materials.* Role play is not an appropriate method of implementing this work. Leveled instructional resources are available below. Primary source material that is not provided by the district must be approved by the principal.
- *Remember that we are all still learning about our own culture!* As such, it is not appropriate to ask students to speak for their heritage / culture without their permission. While students may want to speak about the culture, it is important to either leave this to be their choice and/or to talk with the student and/or their parent(s) prior to calling on them to share during class.
- *Acknowledge difference within a group's experience.* It's important to avoid generalizations about a group's heritage or culture. Within a group, experiences, beliefs, and traditions can be different and this should be honored in how we approach instruction.

Points to think about:

APPRECIATION	APPROPRIATION
<p>Appreciation is honoring a culture by seeking to understand and learn in an effort to broaden your perspective and connect with others cross culturally.</p>	<p>Appropriation is demeaning a culture by taking one aspect of a culture that is not yours and using for your personal interest without full knowledge or full understanding.</p>
<p>I am doing this as a learning opportunity for students to interact with and experience another culture.</p>	<p>I don't have a deep understanding of the culture, history, traditions, and values of the culture. I am using what I've done in the past and/or am using a resource that hasn't been vetted by my school or the district.</p>
<p>I am honoring, respecting, and showing empathy to those who belong to this culture through this activity.</p>	<p>I have not sought input and guidance from individuals who are a part of the culture to ensure authenticity and avoid misrepresentation.</p>
<p>I am not perpetuating a negative stereotype that may hurt those who belong to this culture.</p>	<p>I am teaching "from" the culture rather than "about" the culture. "From" the culture gives a perception that I'm a member of that group. "About" the culture means focusing on teaching it rather than attempting to adopt it.</p>
<p>I understand the historical significance of what I am trying to do.</p>	<p>I am focusing on one aspect of a culture instead of striving for a balanced and respectful portrayal of the culture, avoiding picking aspects that may lead to a skewed or incomplete representation</p>
<p>If I post a picture on social media it is to educate others by celebrating, recognizing, and accepting the importance of the culture.</p>	<p>I have not critically examined nor reflected on my personal motivations for incorporating this element of another culture to ensure that it aligns to WCPSS's Core Beliefs, Strategic Plan, & equity-focused practices.</p>

Below are possible strategies that schools can use when celebrating and/or bringing attention to America 250.

- Engage in a classroom lesson using the instructional materials provided in this packet.
- Engage in weekly announcements to the school that includes relevant facts and information to educate students on America 250 / the Declaration of Independence.
- Invite a guest speaker to talk with students. Guest speakers must be approved through the existing [approval process](#). District staff can help identify appropriate speakers needed.

As always, teachers must consider how ANY instructional activity is aligned with and supportive of approved standards for their specific course.

Community Events

- [Raleigh Historic Bike Ride | Raleighnc.gov](#)

- Memorial Day Service **American Legion Post 148**: Memorial Day Service with an emphasis on America 250. Recognition by the Post of those who've died in service to our country. The service will take place at the J. Ashley Wall Town Square in Downtown Wendell on May 24 from 5 PM to 6 PM. Public parking is available throughout the area on the street or in public lots.
- May 25th Oakwood Cemetery: 701 Oakwood Ave Raleigh 27601 9am: Join TMF volunteers on Memorial Day weekend to lay hand-crafted commemorative tokens at interment locations of fallen heroes, pausing for a moment of reflection and honoring them on a sacred day of remembrance in our country.
- [America 250 - North Carolina Symphony](#)
- [Commemorating America's 250th Anniversary | NCMOH](#)
- [Upcoming Events | america250](#)

What are resources that can support schools in educating students?

Resources for Teachers and Community Members
About america250
Planning Guide for the 250th Anniversary of the United States and North Carolina
For Educators america250

Month & NC-Aligned Theme	Audience	Grades K-5 Resources	Secondary Resources
May - June 2026 Visions of Freedom	School-Based Staff	Visions of Freedom Resources	Visions of Freedom Resources
Week of July 4th, 2026 Gathering of Voices	Community Members & Families	Gathering of Voices Resources Encuentro de Voces – Primaria	Gathering of Voices Resources Encuentro de Voces – Secundaria
July - August 2026 Common Ground	School-Based Staff	Common Ground Resources	Common Ground Resources

What are the standards that this work builds on and connects to?

This work connects with student learning standards at each level. Specifically:

Elementary School Standards

- **Kindergarten**
 - **K.C&G.1** Understand that people work together to create and follow rules.
 - **K.H.1.2** Explain how various events have shaped history
- **Grade 1 Social Studies**
 - **1.B.1** Understand how culture, values, and beliefs shape people, places, and environments.
 - **1.C&G.1** Understand how people engage with and participate in the community.
 - **1.H.1** Understand how people and events have changed society over time.
- **Grade 2 Social Studies**
 - **2.B.1** Understand how values and beliefs shape culture in America
 - **2.C&G.1** Understand how freedom, equality, and democracy contribute to the government of America.
 - **2.H.1** Understand how various people and events have shaped America.
- **Grade 3 Social Studies**
 - **3.B.1** Understand how values and beliefs of individuals and groups influence communities.
 - **3.H.1** Understand how various people and historical events have shaped local communities
- **Grade 4 Social Studies**
 - **4.B.1** Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of North Carolina's identity as a state.
 - **4.C&G.1** Understand the role of citizens in local and state government.
 - **4.H.1** Understand the role of various people, events, and ideas in shaping North Carolina.
- **Grade 5 Social Studies**
 - **5.B.1** Understand ways in which values and beliefs have influenced the development of the United States.
 - **5.C&G.1** Analyze the structure and function of the United States government in terms of cooperation and compromise.
 - **5.C&G.2** Understand the ways in which the federal government has protected individual rights of citizens.

Middle School Standards

- **Grade 6 Social Studies**
 - **6.C&G.1** Understand the purpose of government and authority.
 - **6.H.1.1** Explain the role various events, people, and groups played in the rise, fall, and transformation of societies in Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas.
- **Grade 7 Social Studies**
 - **7.B.1** Understand how individual and group values and beliefs have influenced various cultures.
 - **7.C&G.1** Analyze modern governmental systems in terms of conflict and change.
 - **7.H.1.1** Distinguish specific turning points of modern world history in terms of lasting impact.
- **Grade 8 Social Studies**
 - **8.B.1** Analyze the impact of group behavior on the development of North Carolina and the nation.
 - **8.C&G.1** Understand how democratic principles have influenced the government structure and policies of North Carolina and the nation.
 - **8.H.1** Understand the role of conflict and cooperation in the development of North Carolina and the nation.

High School Standards

- **World History**
 - **WH.B.2** Understand the concept of identity in historic and contemporary societies in terms of its development and impacts.
 - **WH.C&G.1** Analyze the relationship between various societies and government in terms of freedom,

- equality, and power.
- **WH.H.1.1** Analyze historical events and issues in world history from a variety of perspectives.
- **Civic Literacy**
 - **CL.B.1** Understand how values, beliefs, and norms influence the American system of government.
 - **CL.C&G.1** Understand the impact of the founding principles of the United States on the federal and state government.
 - **CL.C&G.3** Analyze the various responsibilities of individuals living in the United States in terms of citizenship, civic participation, and the political process.
 - **CL.H.1** Understand how individual rights and the American system of government have evolved over time.
- **American History**
 - **AH.B.1** Evaluate American identity in terms of perspective, change, and continuity.
 - **AH.C&G.1** Evaluate the relationship between the American people and the government in terms of freedom, equality, and power.

NCEES STANDARD 2: TEACHERS ESTABLISH A RESPECTFUL ENVIRONMENT FOR A DIVERSE POPULATION OF STUDENTS.

Teachers embrace diversity in the school community and in the world.

Teachers demonstrate their knowledge of the history of diverse cultures and their role in shaping global issues. They actively select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate histories and contributions of all cultures.

Teachers recognize the influence of race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and other aspects of culture on a child's development and personality.

Teachers strive to understand how a student's culture and background may influence his or her school performance. Teachers consider and incorporate different points of view in their instruction.

- Demonstrate knowledge of diverse cultures
- Select materials and develop lessons that counteract stereotypes and incorporate contributions.
- Recognize the influences on a child's development, personality, and performance

Consider and incorporate different points of view **Teachers work collaboratively with the families and significant adults in the lives of their students.**

Teachers recognize that educating children is a shared responsibility involving the school, parents/guardians, and the community. Teachers improve communication and collaboration between the school and the home and community in order to promote trust and understanding and build partnerships with all segments of the school community. Teachers seek solutions to overcome cultural and economic obstacles that may stand in the way of effective family and community involvement in the education of their children.

- Improve communication and collaboration between the school and the home and community.
- Promote trust and understanding and build partnership with school community.
- Seek solutions to overcome obstacles that prevent parental/community involvement.

NCEES STANDARD 4: TEACHERS FACILITATE LEARNING FOR THEIR STUDENTS

Teachers plan instruction appropriate for their students.

Teachers collaborate with their colleagues and use a variety of data sources for short and long range planning based on the North Carolina Standard Course of Study. These plans reflect an understanding of how students learn. They engage students in the learning process. Teachers understand that instructional plans must be constantly monitored and modified to enhance learning. Teachers make the curriculum responsive to cultural diversity and to individual learning needs.

- Collaborate with other teachers
- Use data for short and long range planning
- Engage students in the learning process
- Monitor and modify plans to enhance student learning
- Respond to cultural diversity and learning needs of students

Teachers help students develop critical thinking and problem solving skills.

Teachers encourage students to use inquiry-based investigations, think creatively, develop and test innovative ideas, synthesize knowledge and draw conclusions. They help students exercise and communicate sound reasoning, understand connections, make complex choices, and frame, analyze and solve problems.

- Encourage students to ask questions, think creatively, innovate and test ideas, synthesize knowledge and draw conclusions
- Help students exercise and communicate sound reasoning, understand connections, make complex choices, and frame, analyze and solve problems

Questions

If you have questions, please feel free to reach out to:

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