

Introduction for Educators

BUILDING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL

Interactive Explorations of Government and Civic Life

TEACHER EDITION



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Welcome

Welcome to *Building Democracy for All* - an interactive, multimodal, multicultural, open access eBook for teaching and learning key topics in United States Government and Civic Life. **Open access** means these materials are “digital, online, and free of charge” (Billings, 2019). This book is available online to anyone with an internet connection. The eBook can also be viewed and printed as a PDF file.

Designed as a core or supplementary text for middle and high school teachers and students, *Building Democracy for All* offers instructional ideas, interactive resources, primary documents, and multicultural and multimodal learning materials for interest-building explorations of United States government as well as students’ roles as citizens in a democratic society. It focuses on the importance of community engagement and social responsibility as understood and acted upon by middle and high school students—core themes in the [2018 Massachusetts 8th Grade Curriculum Framework](#), and which are found in many state history and social studies curriculum frameworks around the country.

Building Democracy for All has been developed by a collaborative writing team of higher education faculty, public school teachers, educational librarians, and college students who are preparing to become history and social studies teachers. The primary editors and curators are from the University of Massachusetts Amherst College of Education. Contributing teachers come from school districts in the Connecticut River valley region of western Massachusetts (Amherst, Gateway, Westfield, Hampshire Regional, and Springfield). As an open resource, the book is being revised constantly by the members of the writing team to ensure timely inclusion of online resources and information.

Book Overview

Teaching about government and civic life at this time in our country's history must recognize, as [The 1619 Project](#)'s Nikole Hannah-Jones has said, "the United States is a nation founded on both an ideal and a lie" ([2019, para. 9](#)).

The American ideal, articulated in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution, is that all people are created equal and have the inalienable rights to full participation in free and just democratic society. The lie, present throughout United States history, is that the ideals of democracy for all was denied to Black Americans, women, Native Americans, Latinx Americans, and LGBTQ

individuals from the nation's beginnings and is still denied to many today.

When thinking about teaching, learning, and school curriculum, writer Daniel Osborn (2020) reminds us, that "we have to remain vigilant of the role this institution plays in shaping collective memory and forming identities" ([para. 6](#)). In [Let's Rethink How We Teach Black History](#), Osborn asks:

- What narratives are we privileging as educators?
- What narratives are we silencing?
- What can we do to change this today, tomorrow, and in a sustained way moving forward?"

A fact-based government and civics curriculum, while important, must also face hard histories, address controversial topics, confront false narratives, and teach students to how to become active, engaged citizens committed to freedom and justice for all ([National Council for the Social Studies, 2020](#)).

In this book, we explore the ideals of the United States as set forth in its founding documents, its governmental institutions, and its laws and policies so students can see how a government and a society that follows democratic principles can function equitably and fairly for everyone. At the same time, we examine the hard histories of how decisions and structures have blocked those ideals from becoming reality for many people. Understanding the tensions between the ideal and the lie includes exploring how oppressed groups and courageous individuals have fought for social justice and political change through ongoing struggles and protests with the goal of realizing the dream of democracy for all.

Building Democracy for All is organized around seven major topics and 50 individual learning standards set forth in the [Massachusetts 8th Grade History & Social Science Curriculum Framework](#). An additional eighth section (to be completed by the end of 2020) will be devoted to strategies for conducting civic action/community engagement projects with students, as mandated by [Massachusetts law S2631: An Act to Promote and Enhance Civic Engagement](#).

- [Topic 1: The Philosophical Foundations of the United States Political System](#)
- [Topic 2: The Development of United States Government](#)
- [Topic 3: The Institutions of the United States Government](#)
- [Topic 4: Rights and Responsibilities of Citizens](#)
- [Topic 5: The Constitution, Amendments, and Supreme Court](#)
- [Topic 6: The Structure of Massachusetts State & Local Government](#)
- [Topic 7: Freedom of the Press and News/Media Literacy](#)

Topic Overview

Building Democracy for All is based on our belief that learning will be impactful and lasting when teachers and students act together as pedagogical partners. In this book, we use a framework where students and teachers can access an INVESTIGATE, UNCOVER, and ENGAGE module for each of the standards in the Massachusetts 8th Grade Civics and Government Curriculum Framework.

INVESTIGATE, UNCOVER, ENGAGE MODULES

1. **INVESTIGATE** offers **learning field trips** with historical context and online links to primary source materials, historical timelines, biographies of influential people, interactive websites, and relevant factual information to promote awareness and understanding of the principles, values, institutions, and practices of American democracy. Investigating our nation's governmental history and foundations introduces students to their rights and responsibilities as members of a democratic society.
2. **UNCOVER** presents **little-known histories and stories** of women, African Americans, indigenous peoples, LGBTQIA individuals, children and teens, and others who are under-represented in textbooks, curriculum frameworks and learning plans. These sections connect the struggles of diverse individuals and groups to major events and institutions of United States democracy. UNCOVER invites students to explore deeply the ongoing struggles of individuals and groups to achieve equal status in American society. Students participate in inquiry learning where questions, rather than answers, are the focus of the learning activities (Lesh, 2011).
3. **ENGAGE** poses **public policy issues and questions** for students to analyze through discussion, writing, and civic action projects. ENGAGE questions ask students to think deeply about the choices they face as members of a democracy and then act on their decisions as engaged members of their communities. Researchers have documented that **political-based discussions** among students in classrooms **increase civic knowledge and dispositions** while expanding individual perspectives beyond one's immediate group of family and friends (Hess & McAvoy, 2014; Korbey, 2019).

Each module includes resources for use in face-to-face classes and online learning formats.

Suggested learning activities sections feature ideas for interactive explorations of the topic. These activities encourage students to explore issues, discuss ideas, analyze documents, design solutions to community problems, formulate personal positions about public policies, and create knowledge to share with others. Activities emphasize higher-order thinking using interactive web-based learning materials and digital tools and apps to support and extend student thinking and learning.

Online resources include digital primary sources, secondary source background materials, historical biographies, multimedia resources, landmark court cases, LGBTQ history resources, women's history materials, and other online information drawn from reliable and trusted academic and educational sites. Many of the online resources feature links to pages in the free [resourcesforhistoryteachers wiki](#), a multimedia/multicultural resource hosted by the College of Education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst.

Teacher-Designed Learning Plans are found in boxes throughout the book. These plans can be adapted to in-person, fully online, remote, and blended learning formats. We encourage book readers to submit their own lessons to be included in the text.

How to Use This Book

This book is designed for teachers and students working together in collaborative learning environments. Topics and standards are accompanied by easy-to-read introductions, designed to interest readers. Links throughout the sections make the book an interactive reading and viewing experience. Learning activities for each module in each standard are written to encourage students to connect with and act on issues facing our democratic society.

The book may be a core or supplementary text for 8th grade classes. It can also be useful in high school government and history courses, including Advanced Placement (AP) United States Government and Politics. The Table of Contents is organized based on the Massachusetts Curriculum Framework, but topics presented can be aligned to curriculums in middle and high schools around the country that are teaching government and civic life.

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References

A list of references to the sources cited throughout the chapters can be found on this Google Doc: [Building Democracy for All eBook References](#).

Student Edition

We are also developing a Student Edition of *Building Democracy for All*. Like the Teacher Edition, this edition will address each of the Topics in the Massachusetts 8th Grade Civics and Government curriculum framework in a more interactive and student-accessible format. Standards and modules in the Student Edition will have short written introductions followed by one or two selected learning activities for students to complete, individually or in small groups. This edition will feature multimedia-based activities and interactive learning experiences that stress creative self-expression and critical thinking among students. Like the Teacher Education, the Student Edition will be available online to anyone with an internet connection, free of charge. We anticipate that the Student Edition will be ready in fall 2020.

About the Book Team

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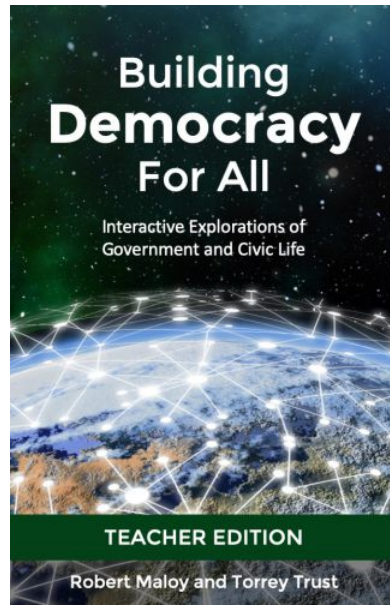
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