



American Government

The HCPS Office of Social Sciences will build empowered and informed citizens who think critically, advocate locally, impact globally, and innovate by examining the lessons of the past and applying them to today.

Course Overview

In American Government, students learn the Constitutional framework and democratic process that structure the state and national systems. American Government establishes a knowledge base which supports the development of skills needed for citizens in a participatory democracy. Effective citizens possess a clear understanding of government: its structure, its purposes, and its processes. They gather, communicate, and utilize information in order to evaluate the competing goals and varying points of view related to public issues. The American Government course emphasizes the foundational principles of federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, judicial review, representative democracy, limited government, rule of law, individual rights and responsibilities, consent of the governed, majority rule with minority rights, popular sovereignty, and equal protection.

Types & Purposes of Government

This unit is designed for students to study the relevance and purposes of government in their lives as well as to study the nature of comparative political organizations in order to evaluate their effectiveness in addressing the needs of citizens in a changing world. They will examine contemporary issues and situations to determine the need for government and identify the structures of various government systems and determine their advantages and disadvantages.



Government & the Economy

Students will analyze various economic systems, including a focus on the mixed economy of the United States. Students will also examine opportunity cost and related topics and concepts. Students will examine the role and impact of government on public and private economic decision-making; including, a focus on fiscal and monetary policy, the impact of the business cycle, and the role of regulation.

The Constitution

This unit is designed for students to examine the Constitution and the framework of government it establishes. Students will identify the purposes of government contained in the Preamble, evaluate the effectiveness of the federal system, and describe the amendment process in order to evaluate the degree to which it supports democratic principles and values.



The Executive Branch

This unit is an introduction to the executive branch of the federal government, including the nomination and election process, presidential powers, and the organization of the executive office. Students will examine the presidential decision-making process through analysis of historical and contemporary case studies, and they will examine the executive branch roles and responsibilities at the federal, state and local level.

The Legislative Branch

This unit is designed for students to study the legislative process at the national, state, and local levels of government. Through this examination, students will discover the structure, functions, and powers of the legislature at each level. Students will also analyze how legislation can protect the rights of individuals and groups.



The Judicial Branch

In this unit students are introduced to the structure, purpose, and powers of the judicial branch of government at the national, state, and local level. Students will examine the historical development of judicial authority and analyze Supreme Court cases related to judicial review, civil rights, due process, equality, and governmental power.

Citizens & Government in Action

Students will analyze the roles and responsibilities citizens have in the United States and how citizens can influence public policy; including, the use of legal means of dissent and a study of political attitudes and voting patterns. Students will also analyze political, economic, and social issues that impact the local, national, and international community; including, a focus on crime and crime prevention, environmental policy, and foreign policy.



Economic Decision-Making

This unit focuses on personal financial literacy topics, including money management decisions, understanding credit, and financial responsibility. Students will demonstrate understanding of the impact decisions involving saving and investing to achieve short and long-term goals. Students will engage in activities related to budgeting investing.

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They will examine contemporary issues and situations to determine the need for government and identify the structures of various government systems and determine their advantages and disadvantages.

Enduring Understanding:

- The political and economic rights, responsibilities, and choices exercised by a governed people are dependent upon the type of political system under which they live.
- Government exists to meet basic needs and to provide structure to society
- Democratic governments must balance the rights of the individual and the needs of the common good.
- Cooperation and conflict influence foreign and domestic policy decisions.
- The evolution of government in the United States can be traced to numerous historical documents and philosophies.

Essential Question:

- How do the principles and structures of the United States government assist and/or impede meeting the purposes of government while protecting the rights and authority of the citizens?

Acquisition:

- Students will know how democratic and authoritarian governments differ. Students will know the principles of a democratic type of government.
- Students will be skilled at comparing the rights of citizens, powers of government, and characteristics of democratic and authoritarian governments.

Experience 1: Purposes of Government

- Essential Question:
 - Why do governments form?
- Main Ideas:
 - Understanding civilizations require organizational structures in their government so that individuals and groups can peacefully coexist
 - Identifying the purposes of government, including economic decision making, safety, public goods and services, and national security.

Experience 2: Types and Systems

- Essential Question:
 - Why do governments form?
- Main Ideas:
 - Comparing and describing the advantages and disadvantages of direct, representative, presidential, and parliamentary democracies.
 - Evaluating the advantages and disadvantages of democratic and authoritarian political systems.
 - Comparing authoritarian and democratic governments on distribution of power, efficiency of decision making, maintaining public order, protecting individual rights, and the ability to address a crisis

Experience 3: Characteristics of Democracy

- Essential Question:
 - Where do the principles of democratic government originate?
- Main Ideas:
 - Tracing the evolution of limited government and other principles from English common law through the Enlightenment philosophers to the foundations of American government.
 - Explaining representative democracy, popular sovereignty, and consent of the governed, and demonstrate how these concepts have ensured citizens' power over time.
 - Describing how the Declaration of Independence articulates the philosophy of government founded on basic principles.
 - Analyzing how the Constitution reflects the basic principles and eliminated the weaknesses of the Articles of the Confederation.
 - Analyzing how the principles of government are applied to real world situations.

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Enduring Understanding:

- United States economic policy is continually adapting to meet competing socio-economic goals

Essential Question:

- How does the United States balance competing socio-economic goals?

Acquisition:

- Students will know how opportunity cost, economic systems, and government policies can impact the decision-making of citizens and consumers.
- Students will be skilled at explaining how a country's type of government can impact their economic system. Students will be skilled at explaining how the government can impact the money supply of a country.
- Students will understand that local, national, and international relationships are affected by economic systems.
- Students will evaluate how economic systems influence people's choices by making and enforcing rules concerning resource allocation, taxation, and the distribution of goods and services.
- Students will determine how political and economic rights, responsibilities, and choices exercised by a governed people are dependent upon the type of political system under which they live.
- Students will evaluate how the evolution of government in the United States can be traced to numerous historical documents and philosophies.
- Students will analyze how governments balance the rights of the individual and the needs of the common good.

Experience 1: Introduction to Economics

- Essential Question:
 - How do personal choices factor into economic decisions?
- Main Ideas:
 - Determining how scarcity and opportunity cost affect government decision-making.
 - Evaluating the role of the United States government in answering the basic economic questions

Experience 2: Economic Systems

- Essential Question:
 - What kind of economic system should the United States have?
- Main Ideas:
 - Explaining how traditional, command and market and mixed economies answer the basic economic questions of what to produce, how to produce and for whom to produce when resources are limited

Experience 3: Fiscal Policy, Monetary Policy, and the Business Cycle

- Essential Question:
 - How does the United States measure and establish its socio-economic goals?
 - How effective is fiscal policy at promoting full employment, price stability, and economic performance?
- Main Ideas:
 - Explaining how the Consumer Price Index (CPI), the unemployment rate, and the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) measure economic performance.
 - Explaining how the business cycle reflects economic instability, including periods of inflation and recession.
 - Describing the role of the state and federal legislative branches in developing fiscal policy.
 - Analyzing the role of the executive in the budgetary process on the national, state and local level.
 - Describing how the legislative branch influences economic performance by using the tools of fiscal policy including increasing and decreasing taxes and tariffs and/or spending.
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of fiscal policy in achieving economic growth, full employment, and price stability.

Experience 4: Regulatory Agencies and Entitlement Programs

- Essential Question:
 - How does the United States measure and establish its socio-economic goals?
- Main Ideas:
 - Explaining how governments prioritize the competing socio-economic goals of freedom, growth, stability, equity, national defense, environmental protection, and educational quality in response to changing economic, social, and political conditions.

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The Constitution

This unit is designed for students to examine the Constitution and the framework of government it establishes. Students will identify the purposes of government contained in the Preamble, evaluate the effectiveness of the federal system, and describe the amendment process in order to evaluate the degree to which it supports democratic principles and values.

Enduring Understanding:

- In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a democratic system that serves the purposes of government and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Essential Question:

- How do the principles and structures of the United States government assist and/or impede meeting the purposes of government while protecting the rights and authority of the citizens?

Acquisition:

- Tracing the evolution of limited government and other principles from English common law through the Enlightenment philosophers to the foundations of American government.
- Explaining representative democracy, popular sovereignty, and consent of the governed, and demonstrate how these concepts have ensured citizens' power over time.
- Describing how the Declaration of Independence articulates the philosophy of government founded on basic principles.
- Analyzing how the Constitution reflects the basic principles and eliminated the weaknesses of the Articles of the Confederation.
- Analyzing how the principles of government are applied to real world situations.

Experience 1: Principles: The Roots of Democracy

- Essential Question:
 - Where do the principles of democratic government originate?
- Main Ideas:
 - Tracing the evolution of limited government and other principles from English common law through the Enlightenment philosophers to the foundations of American government.
 - Explaining representative democracy, popular sovereignty, and consent of the governed, and demonstrate how these concepts have ensured citizens' power over time.
 - Describing how the Declaration of Independence articulates the philosophy of government founded on basic principles

Experience 2: The Articles of Confederation

- Essential Question:
 - What are the Articles of Confederation and why were they a weak form of government?
- Main Ideas:
 - Tracing the evolution of limited government and other principles from English common law through the Enlightenment philosophers to the foundations of American government.
 - Explaining how the Article of Confederation were structured in response to the goals of society at the time
 - Identifying how the weaknesses in the Articles of Confederation led to the Constitutional Convention

Experience 3: The Constitution

- Essential Question:
 - How does government structure affect how power is organized?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing how the Constitution structures the government and provides for separation of powers, checks and balances, and judicial review, in such a way as to limit governmental power in favor of the people.
 - Explaining how the delegated, reserved, concurrent, and denied powers of government are divided in federalism and shared between national and state levels.
 - Describing the formal process for amending the Constitution and why this process is necessary.

Experience 4: The Bill of Rights

- Essential Question:
 - How do the principles of government influence the structure of government to protect the rights of individuals?
- Main Ideas:
 - Evaluating the balance between majority rule and the protection of individual rights.
 - Identifying the rights in the Bill of Rights and how they protect individuals and limit the power of government.
 - Analyzing the purpose of limited government and its impact on the structure, function, and processes of government

Experience 5: The Evolution of American Democracy

- Essential Question:
 - How do the principles of government influence the structure of government to protect the rights of individuals?
- Main Ideas:
 - Analyzing how principles are incorporated into the historic documents of American government and how those principles have been applied.
 - Analyzing how the principles of government are applied to real world situations.

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Enduring Understanding:

- In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form an executive branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens

Essential Question:

- How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the executive branch?

Acquisition:

- Describing the structure, power, and organization of the executive branch on the federal, state, and local levels.
- Explaining how executive departments and regulatory agencies assist in protecting rights, maintaining order and protecting the safety of citizens.
- Determining how the nominating process, closed and open primaries, and general elections reflect the principles of representative democracy, consent of the governed, and majority rule.
- Evaluating the utility of the Electoral College over time
- Comparing and contrasting the powers, roles, and responsibilities of local, state and national executives.
- Describing the purpose, limitations and impact of executive orders in protecting rights, maintaining order, and providing safety for citizens.
- Analyzing the impact of crisis on expansion of state and federal government power.
- Describing the role of regulatory agencies in carrying out the policies of the executive branch on the national and state level

Experience 1: Road to the White House

- Essential Question:
 - Are presidential elections organized to maintain a representative democracy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Determining how the nominating process, closed and open primaries, and general elections reflect the principles of representative democracy, consent of the governed, and majority rule.
 - Evaluating the utility of the Electoral College over time

Experience 2: Roles and Powers of the President

- Essential Question:
 - Do Presidents have the appropriate amount of power to fulfill his or her constitutional responsibilities?
- Main Ideas:
 - Comparing and contrasting the powers, roles, and responsibilities of local, state and national executives
 - Evaluating the role of the state and federal governments concerning issues related to public safety and maintaining order and how those decisions affect individuals and groups

Experience 3: Crisis, Civil Rights, and the Executive Branch

- Essential Question:
 - How has the government's role and policies adapted to address various public issues?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the purpose, limitations and impact of executive orders in protecting rights, maintaining order, and providing safety for citizens.
 - Analyzing the impact of crisis on expansion of state and federal government power.

Experience 4: State and Local Executives

- Essential Question:
 - Do Governors and local executives have the appropriate amount of power to fulfill his or her constitutional responsibilities?
- Main Ideas:
 - Comparing and contrasting the powers, roles, and responsibilities of local, state and national executives

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Legislative Branch

This unit is designed for students to study the legislative process at the national, state, and local levels of government. Through this examination, students will discover the structure, functions, and powers of the legislature at each level. Students will also analyze how legislation can protect the rights of individuals and groups.

Enduring Understanding:

- In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a legislative branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Essential Question:

- How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the legislative branch?

Acquisition:

- Describing the bicameral structure, powers, and organization of the United States Congress and the Maryland General Assembly and the structures, powers, and organizations thereof.
- Identifying and comparing/contrasting the powers and responsibilities of local, state, and national legislative bodies, linking it to clauses within the Constitution
- Describing how laws are made and the tools that assist and/or impede the process.
- Explaining tools used by political parties, interest groups, lobbyists, candidates, the media and citizens to impact elections, public policy, and public opinion.
- Analyzing various methods that individuals or groups may use to influence laws, government policies, and elections including referendum, acts of civil disobedience, voting, boycotts, financial contributions, digital communication, and voting drives.
- Evaluating how the election process, including open and closed primaries, affects political outcomes, individual voter behavior, public opinion, and the impact of reapportionment, redistricting, and gerrymandering.
- Evaluating how the roles and strategies that individuals and groups use to influence government policy and institutions affect the concepts of government.

Experience 1: Structure of the US Congress

- Essential Question:
 - How do principles of government influence the structure and organization of the legislative branch as established in the Constitution?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the bicameral structure, powers, and organization of the United States Congress

Experience 2: Powers of Congress

- Essential Question:
 - How did regional tensions challenge national unity?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the structure, powers, and organization of the legislative branch on the federal level.
 - Describing how the Constitution provides for separation of powers and checks and balances.
 - Evaluating the Elastic Clause and how implied powers impact the function of government.
 - Determining why Bills of Attainder, ex post facto laws, and the suspension of Habeas Corpus are denied powers

Experience 3: How a Bill Becomes a Law

- Essential Question:
 - How does the process of lawmaking assist and impede the functioning of the legislative branch?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing how laws are made and the tools that assist and/or impede the process

Experience 4: Congress and Civil Rights Legislation

- Essential Question:
 - How do the principles of government and competing interests impact the formation and implementation of public policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Evaluating the effectiveness of governmental policies (legislation and executive orders) in promoting equity and civil rights for historically marginalized groups.
 - Examining the impact of equal protection on immigration and affirmative action policies

Experience 5: State and Local Legislative Branches

- Essential Question:
 - How did regional tensions challenge national unity?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the bicameral structure, powers, and organization of the Maryland General Assembly and local legislature

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The Judicial Branch

In this unit students are introduced to the structure, purpose, and powers of the judicial branch of government at the national, state, and local level. Students will examine the historical development of judicial authority and analyze Supreme Court cases related to judicial review, civil rights, due process, equality, and governmental power.

Enduring Understanding:

- In the United States, principles and structures are employed to form a judicial branch that serves the purposes established in the Constitution and protects the rights and authority of citizens.

Essential Question:

- How do the foundational principles and structures of government assist or impede the functioning of government in the judicial branch?

Acquisition:

- Describing the structure, power, and organization of the judicial branch on the federal, state, and local levels.
- Analyzing specific landmark Supreme Court decisions and the impact on specific principles of government
- Explaining how the Supreme Court used the due process and equal protections clauses of the 14th Amendment to incorporate protection of individual rights and extend federal power.
- Comparing and contrasting elements of criminal and civil law

Experience 1: Organization and Jurisdiction of Federal and State Courts

- Essential Question:
 - How does the judicial branch uphold the principles of government, and why is the structure different from the other branches of government
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the structure, power, and organization of the judicial branch on the federal, state, and local levels

Experience 2: Criminal and Civil Law

- Essential Question:
 - How do two court systems maintain order and uphold individual rights?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the role of the courts in settling disputes between individuals. • Analyzing the effectiveness of out-of-court settlements, arbitration, and mediation as alternatives to litigation.
 - Identifying the elements of civil law including: plaintiff, defendant, contract, breach of contract, torts, damages, preponderance of evidence, and petit jury.
 - Identifying the elements of criminal law including: defendant, prosecutor, reasonable doubt, felony, misdemeanor, grand jury, indictment, probable cause, presumption of innocence, plea bargaining, writ of habeas corpus, and subpoena.
 - Comparing the proceedings of civil and criminal cases including: grand jury, petit jury, indictment, standards of proof (beyond a reasonable doubt and preponderance of the evidence), plea bargaining, probable cause, writ of habeas corpus, and subpoena.

Experience 3: Judicial Review and Landmark Court Cases

- Essential Question:
 - How have the decisions of the Supreme Court impacted individual rights, government powers, and policies over time?
- Main Ideas:
 - Analyzing how the Supreme Court decisions in *Miranda v. Arizona* (1966), *Tinker v. Des Moines* (1969), and *T.L.O. v. New Jersey* (1985) impacted individual liberty.
 - Analyzing how the Supreme Court decisions in *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010) impacted federalism.
 - Analyzing how the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *United States v. Nixon* (1974) impacted the separation of powers. • Analyzing how the Supreme Court's decision in the case of *Marbury v. Madison* (1803) impacted limited government and checks and balances.
 - Analyzing how the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) and *Baker v. Carr* (1962) impacted equal protection.
 - Explaining how the Supreme Court used the due process and equal protections clauses of the 14th Amendment to incorporate protection of individual rights and extend federal power.

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Citizens and Government in Action

Students will analyze the roles and responsibilities citizens have in the United States and how citizens can influence public policy; including, the use of legal means of dissent and a study of political attitudes and voting patterns. Students will also analyze political, economic, and social issues that impact the local, national, and international community; including, a focus on crime and crime prevention, environmental policy, and foreign policy.

Enduring Understanding:

- In the United States the government balances competing interests to develop domestic and foreign policy that promotes the common good.

Essential Question:

- How does the government balance competing interpretations of the common good in order to implement public policy?

Acquisition:

- Analyzing how candidates, campaigns, political parties, media, lobbyists, and financial contributions and citizens influence political process, policy, and public opinion
- Evaluating the tools that individuals or groups may use to influence laws, government policies, and elections
- Explaining how geographic characteristics and shared interests stimulate regional cooperation between governments and influence foreign policy and effect political decision-making
- Analyzing patterns, trends, and projections of population and how these may affect environmental policy, education spending, health care, and social security

Experience 1: What's Effective Citizenship?

- Essential Question:
 - How can effective citizenship be exercised to change government policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Evaluating the tools that individuals or groups may use to influence laws, government policies, and elections including referendum, acts of civil disobedience, voting, boycotts, financial contributions, digital communication, and voting drives.

Experience 2: Political Attitudes

- Essential Question:
 - How do individuals and groups influence government policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Analyzing how candidates, campaigns, political parties, the media lobbyists and financial contributions and citizens, influence the political process, policy, and public opinion.

Experience 3: Voting Patterns

- Essential Question:
 - How do individuals and groups influence government policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Identifying the voting patterns of various demographic groups and their impact on governmental policy.

Experience 4: Regional Relationships

- Essential Question:
 - How do regional interests shape the formation and implementation of government policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Explaining how geographic characteristics and shared interests stimulate regional cooperation between governments and influence foreign policy and effect political decision-making.
 - Analyzing the importance of regional characteristics and interests including economic development, natural resources, climate and environmental issues, and population shifts in formulating local, state, and national government policy.
 - Analyzing patterns, trends, and projections of population and how these may affect environmental policy, education spending, health care, and social security.
 - Evaluating the way national, state, and local governments develop policy to address land use and environmental issues, such as pollution, urban sprawl, property rights and land use/ zoning.

(Experiences 5–6 on next page)

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Experience 5: Crime Analysis and Prevention

- Essential Question:
 - How do the principles of government and competing interests impact the formation and implementation of public policy?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describing the impact of the rights and responsibilities of citizens on crime and punishment and incarceration.

Experience 6: World Citizenship: The Use of Foreign Policy

- Essential Question:
 - How does the United States establish and achieve foreign policy goals?
- Main Ideas:
 - Analyzing the conflicting demands of the United States foreign policy goals of trade, national security, and human rights.
 - Contrasting isolationism versus interventionism in United States foreign policy.
 - Explaining the tools used by the president to develop and implement foreign policy.
 - Examining how the foreign policy tools of military intervention, economic sanctions, foreign aid, and diplomacy affect American relationships with other countries
 - Explaining the military and security functions of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Nations (UN).
 - Explaining the humanitarian role of the Red Cross/Red Crescent and the United Nations. • Explaining the economic function of the United Nations (UN) and the World Trade Organization (WTO).
 - Analyze how the United States involvement in international organizations advances or hinders the achievement of foreign policy goals.

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Economic Decision-Making

This unit focuses on personal financial literacy topics, including money management decisions, understanding credit, and financial responsibility. Students will demonstrate understanding of the impact decisions involving saving and investing to achieve short and long-term goals. Students will engage in activities related to budgeting investing.

Enduring Understanding:

- Economic systems influence people's choices by making and enforcing rules concerning resource allocation, taxation, and the distribution of goods and services.

Essential Question:

- How do individuals measure and establish financial/economic goals?

Acquisition:

- Students will know the impact of setting financial goals, making financial decisions, and investing money to reach goals.
- Students will be skilled at reading for information about financial services provided by financial institutions and information about how a person can properly maintain their credit.

Experience 1: Financial Literacy and Money Management Decisions

- Essential Question:
 - What types of economic decisions are needed to reach short and long term financial goals?
- Main Ideas:
 - Develop short and long term financial goals and identify economic decisions needed to reach them using opportunity cost
 - Analyze factors that affect the financial decisions people making in both the short and long term
 - Evaluate different ways people can save and invest their money to reach their financial goals

Experience 2: Understanding Credit and Financial Responsibility

- Essential Question:
 - What are the advantages and disadvantages of having and using credit?
- Main Ideas:
 - Evaluate the impact of credit and financial responsibility by analyzing individual case studies of credit scenarios, reading for information about consumer credit protections offered by the government, and examining strategies to ensure identity security.

Experience 3: Animal Farm

- Essential Question
 - What are the impacts of economic decisions made by the government on individual rights and freedoms as depicted in George Orwell's, Animal Farm?
- Main Ideas:
 - Describe how when the power of the government is unlimited, control is obtained through the use of force and individual freedoms are minimal to non-existent.
 - Evaluate the characteristics of an authoritarian government as depicted in Animal Farm
 - Analyze the impacts of economic decisions made by the government on individual rights and freedoms

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All HCPS Social Science Frameworks are built to align with the Maryland State Social Studies Standards and MSDE State Frameworks. Information on the standards and frameworks can be found on the MSDE website (<https://marylandpublicschools.org>).