

RESEARCH AND STANDARDS

The necessity for giving students a strong foundation in United States government has been echoed in numerous reports and speeches in recent years. In particular, state and national social studies standardized test results have revealed that many American students have only a minimal knowledge of their own government. As Gordon states, “Given the disappointing results of the 1998 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in civics, improvement in that subject is clearly needed. The congressionally mandated NAEP revealed that a large majority of the 22,000 U.S. students tested (grades 4, 8, and 12) have a weak understanding of the purpose and function of their Constitutional government” (2001).

Research on teaching content to students with special needs and reading difficulties has shown that modified instructional strategies are critical to improving comprehension. Sousa notes that teachers should “consider modifying instructional strategies to meet the various learning styles and abilities of students with learning problems” (2001). Among the strategies he suggests are to “break the assignment into shorter tasks, adjust the reading level of the classroom material, relate the new learning to students’ experiences, reduce the number of concepts presented at one time, give an overview of the lesson before beginning, and provide practice test questions for study.” Each of these research-based strategies has been integrated into the *Living in the United States* series. Students will find the short chapters easy to understand due to the controlled 3.0–4.5 reading level. Each chapter also gives a short preview to lead students into the learning. Extension questions for each section include personal connection questions, and review pages provide concrete questions to study before taking the final test.

United States Citizenship meets both state and national standards (including the Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies developed by the National Council for the Social Studies) regarding civics and government. As students read the Student Text and complete the worksheets and quizzes in the Teacher’s Guide, they will meet many of the requirements of the ten social studies strands identified by NCSS, particularly the following three:

- Strand V: Individuals, Groups and Institutions
- Strand VI: Power, Authority and Governance
- Strand X: Civic Ideals and Practices

Gordon, D. T. (2001, November/December). Teaching Civics After September 11 [Electronic version]. *Harvard Education Letter*, 17(6), 1–5.

Sousa, D. A. (2001). *How the Special Needs Brain Learns*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, Inc.