



Resources for Educators To Teach The Semiquincentennial of America's Founding



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Introduction

In April 2021, the West Virginia Legislature passed House Bill 2916, establishing the Semiquincentennial Commission for the Celebration of the 250th Anniversary of the Founding of the United States of America. The Commission is responsible for coordinating statewide efforts to commemorate this historic milestone and to promote meaningful engagement with the nation's founding principles.

The Commission is composed of a multitude of members representing diverse sectors of West Virginia. Together, they work to honor the nation's founding and ensure its significance is thoughtfully explored and shared.

West Virginia and the American Founding

Although West Virginia did not become a state until 1863, the region played an important role during the Revolutionary era. Numerous sites across the state reflect frontier conflict and Revolutionary-era activity, including the Battle of Point Pleasant (1774), attacks on Fort Henry in Wheeling (1777), and the assault on Fort Randolph (1782). In addition, western Virginia served as a strategic buffer along the frontier, helping protect eastern colonies and allowing Patriot forces to concentrate their efforts along the coast.

More enduring than these events, however, is the presence of Revolutionary ideals within West Virginia's own history. Adopted on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence articulated the principles of natural rights—life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—and asserted that governments exist to protect them.

These same principles guided the creation of West Virginia during the Civil War. The Declaration served as a moral foundation for Abraham Lincoln, who repeatedly framed the war as a test of the nation's founding ideas. In the Gettysburg Address, Lincoln reaffirmed this connection, reminding the nation that it was “conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

What This Means for Our Students

America250 presents a powerful opportunity for teaching and learning. It invites students to connect the events of 1776 to the responsibilities of citizenship today and challenges them to examine how Americans across generations have worked—often imperfectly—to live up to founding ideals.

Through the study of the American Revolution, the Civil War, and the creation of West Virginia, students can explore sacrifice, continuity, and change within the world's oldest democratic republic. America250 encourages students not only to learn history, but to understand why it matters.

As stated in the Declaration of Independence, “*To prove this, let facts be submitted to a candid world.*” America250 provides students the opportunity to do exactly that—by studying the past, examining evidence, and engaging thoughtfully with the ideas that continue to shape the American experiment.

West Virginia America250 Homepage

Please [visit the America250 website](#) for all relevant America250 activities across West Virginia. Included in this website is a grant opportunity for educational events or initiatives which schools are eligible to apply for.

The West Virginia Department of Education – 2026 Social Studies Fair and Arts Alive

The WVDE is incorporating America250 into the Social Studies Fair and Arts Alive in the form of Special Categories. On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

For the Social Studies Fair, students are invited to engage in research and present on the founding of America or the lasting contributions of West Virginia as the new nation was being formed. Projects within this category may include elements of other categories but must emphasize the creation of our country 250 years ago.

For more information on the Social Studies Fair, contact Matt Kelly at mmkelly@k12.wv.us.

For Arts Alive, students are invited to create artwork that depicts the founding of America or the lasting contributions of West Virginia as the new nation was being formed. Submissions within this category must emphasize the creation of our country 250 years ago.

For more information on Arts Alive, contact Karen Linville at karen.linville@k12.wv.us.

Below are resources for educators to supplement their instruction. Please note that these references are provided as resources for educators and do not necessarily reflect the position of the WVDE.

Elementary Resources

The American Revolutionary era is taught predominantly in 4th grade in the West Virginia College and Career Readiness Standards – with applications in other grade levels.

Name	Description	Link
America's Field Trip Contest (Grades 3-12)	Students can participate in an essay contest with 250 national winners.	America's Field Trip - America250.org
Educating for Democracy	There are lesson plans and resources provided for Grades K-5 by Educating for American Democracy.	Educating for American Democracy
Smithsonian	The Smithsonian Museum has many resources for Early Learners	Smithsonian Early Learners Resources
Sons of the American Revolution	SAR provides countless lesson plans for America250 in all grade levels.	SAR America250 Resources
Civic Star Challenge	A challenge created by iCivics and the Bill of Rights institute in Grades K-12.	Civic Star Challenge
PBS	Students explore our country's history and the reasons our forefathers fought for independence from England. (K-2)	America, Our Country Lesson Plan ARTHUR PBS LearningMedia
PBS	In this interactive lesson supporting literacy skills in U.S. history and civics, students learn about the three branches of the United States government. (3-5)	The Three Branches of Government Interactive Lesson PBS LearningMedia
PBS	Students will analyze the information in the Pledge of Allegiance.	Tracing the Evolution of the Pledge of Allegiance PBS LearningMedia
PBS	Students recognize symbols and understand their meaning to become active members of our communities.	Symbols of Democracy Together We Can PBS LearningMedia
PBS	This lesson helps students understand what it means for our government to get its power from the people.	Consent of the Governed Elementary E-Lesson Bill of Rights Institute

Middle School Resources

The American Revolution is explicitly mentioned in SS.8.21 – with applications in other grade levels.

Name	Description	Link
America's Field Trip (Grades 3-12)	Students can participate in an essay contest with 250 national winners.	America's Field Trip- America250.org
Sons of the American Revolution	SAR provides countless lesson plans for America250 in all grade levels.	SAR America250 Resources
Civic Star Challenge	A challenge created by iCivics and the Bill of Rights institute in Grades K-12.	Civic Star Challenge
Smithsonian	The Smithsonian Museum has many resources for Middle School aged students.	Educator Resources: Social Studies and Civics Smithsonian Institution
The American Revolution Museum	The American Revolution Museum offers virtual tours, online exhibits, and several other interactive features.	Museum of the American Revolution



High School Resources

The American Revolution is taught largely and most in depth across the high school course standards. There are mentions of the Declaration of Independence and/or the American Revolution in World Studies, U.S., Contemporary, Comprehensive Studies, and Civics.

Name	Description	Link
America's Field Trip (Grades 3-12)	Students can participate in an essay contest with 250 national winners.	America's Field Trip- America250.org
Constitution Center	The Constitution Center provides many ways to interact with the Constitution, the Declaration, and teaching about the values of the United States.	Constitution Center
Sons of the American Revolution	SAR provides countless lesson plans for America250 in all grade levels.	SAR America250 Resources
American Battlefield Trust	Resources including articles, maps, and videos about specific revolutionary war battles.	American Battlefield Trust
American Revolution Experience	The American Revolution Experience looks at the lives of ordinary people affected by the events of 1776 and beyond.	American Revolution Experience
Smithsonian	The Smithsonian Museum has many resources for High School students and beyond.	Educator Resources: Social Studies and Civics Smithsonian Institution
Civic Star Challenge	A challenge created by iCivics and the Bill of Rights institute in Grades K-12.	Civic Star Challenge
American Revolution Museum	The American Revolution Museum offers virtual tours, online exhibits, and several other interactive features.	Museum of the American Revolution
Daughters of the American Revolution	Daughters of the American Revolution is celebrating America250 with events and other activities throughout 2026.	Daughters of the American Revolution
Presidential 1776 Award	The Presidential 1776 award is a national civics competition for high school students.	Presidential 1776 Competition
PBS America @ 250	America @ 250 is where PBS asks educators to commemorate this defining era of the U.S. founding.	America at 250 PBS



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