



Pacing Guidance: Grades 3-5

FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2026-27

UPDATES FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2026-27

For SY2026-27, DESE’s Investigating History curriculum will feature newly published Grades 3-4 courses (revisions of pilot materials) and a revised Grade 5 course. First units are now available on the [DESE website](#), and remaining units will be published in Summer and early Fall 2026.

Grade	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
3rd	Indigenous Peoples of the Northeast	Indigenous Communities, European Colonizers, and the Plymouth Colony	Change in the Time of Massachusetts Bay Colony	Massachusetts and the Revolution	The People and Governments of Massachusetts
4th	North American Geography	Indigenous Societies of North America	European Arrival in North America	Impacts of U.S. Expansion	Regions of the United States
5th	Before and Beyond the Colonies	The American Revolution and U.S. Government	Growth and Struggle in the Early Republic	The Civil War and the Ongoing Fight for Civil Rights	No Unit 5

RECOMMENDED INSTRUCTIONAL MINUTES

At Grades 3-5, DESE recommends three **30-minute** lessons or **90 minutes** of instructional time weekly. Depending on schedules, schools may choose to organize instruction into longer blocks or alternate between condensed social studies units and another subject area. Schools are encouraged to consider potential connections to units in other subject areas (e.g. ELA, science) when building out their calendars for the school year.



RECOMMENDED PACING

The following guidance assumes three **30-minute lessons** per week or **90 minutes** of instructional time.

Grade 3

Grade 3	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
Approx. Window	September-October	November-December	December-February	February-April	April-June
Start Between	9/8-9/15	10/26-11/9	12/14-1/18	2/22-3/15	4/16-5/17
Lessons	20	22	23	26	22*

Grade 4

Grade 4	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4	Unit 5
Approx. Window	September-October	November-December	December-February	February-April	April-June
Start Between	9/8-9/15	10/26-11/9	12/14-1/18	2/22-3/15	4/16-5/17
Lessons	22	21	25	23*	23*

Grade 5

Grade 5	Unit 1	Unit 2	Unit 3	Unit 4
Approx. Window	September-November	November-January	January-April	April-June
Start Between	9/8-9/15	11/9-11/30	1/25-2/22	4/5-5/3
Lessons	23	25	26*	25*

* The exact number of lessons in Units 3.5, 4.4-5, and 5.3-4 may change slightly due to pending unit revisions. This document will be updated following unit finalization.



GRADE 3: SPECIAL NOTES

- **Unit 1** in Grade 3 contains a stand-alone, **flexible cluster on map skills**. This cluster may be integrated into the first days of school, taught before or after the rest of the unit, or otherwise implemented as needed to support student skill-building in this area.
- **Unit 5** in Grade 3 includes activities that engage with **local history, government, and community**. These activities may require a greater degree of planning and research given their local focus.

TIPS TO SUPPORT SUCCESSFUL PACING

- **For leaders: maintain instructional time.** Recognizing the complexity and constraints of elementary school schedules, Investigating History units will be most successful when teachers have adequate time in their schedules to support the depth of inquiry in the curriculum.
- **Calendar early and often.** Map out the units at the start of the year and return to your calendar when planning for each unit. Plan intentionally for interruptions (breaks, testing, etc.).
- **Use [unit and lesson internalization tools](#)** to identify key unit, cluster, and lesson learning goals and to drive your planning and decision-making. **If you have serious concerns about pacing** as the year unfolds, use your unit unpacking work to be strategic and intentional about which lessons to prioritize.
- **Balance authentic inquiry with a sense of urgency.** Make sure that students are given the opportunity to investigate, discuss, and synthesize their learning, as provided in the curriculum. At the same time, watch for common pitfalls, such as taking too long on activators or trying to answer every question students generate.

GUIDANCE FOR ADAPTING MATERIALS

Investigating History units are written with coherence in mind. When making adaptations, ensure that you maintain the rigor and key learning goals of the curriculum. Prioritize changes that:

- Are guided by the unit questions and Enduring Understandings
- Are in support of students' IEP requirements and/or goals or in response to specific language needs
- Build connections to routines, supports, and/or content from other subject areas (e.g. incorporating writing graphic organizers from ELA)
- Make connections to students' lives, current events, or local communities.

Learn more at mass.gov/investigatinghistory