

NJSLS Standards Alignment Guide

Ballot, Power, and Democracy in New Jersey | Student Workshop (Grades 7 through 12)

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This guide maps the 2020 New Jersey Student Learning Standards for Social Studies (NJSLS-SS) addressed by the workshop. Standards marked with * require the optional Economics Supplement module.

Standard 6.3: Active Citizenship — Civics, Government, and Human Rights (By End of Grade 8)

Standard Code	Performance Expectation	How the Workshop Addresses This Standard
6.3.8.CivicsPI.1	Evaluate, take, and defend a position on why government is necessary, and the purposes government should serve.	The workshop examines how the county line ballot system concentrated power in a small number of party leaders, prompting students to evaluate what purposes government should serve and whether the old ballot system fulfilled those purposes.
6.3.8.CivicsPI.3	Use a variety of sources from multiple perspectives to examine the role of individuals, political parties, interest groups, and the media in a local or global issue.	Students analyze primary sources (actual NJ ballot images, voter turnout data, court rulings) and examine the roles of political parties, advocacy groups (Good Government Coalition), individual actors (Andy Kim), and media coverage in the ballot reform movement.
6.3.8.CivicsPI.4	Investigate the roles of political, civil, and economic organizations in shaping people’s lives.	The workshop investigates how county party organizations shaped election outcomes, policy decisions, and representation for decades, and how civic organizations and legal challenges ultimately reformed the system.
6.3.8.CivicsPD.1	Deliberate on a public issue affecting an upcoming election, consider opposing arguments, and develop a reasoned conclusion.	The mock election activity and discussion questions require students to deliberate on ballot design as a public issue, consider arguments for and against the county line, and develop a reasoned position on fair elections.
6.3.8.CivicsPD.2	Propose and defend a position regarding a public policy issue at the appropriate local, state, or national level.	Reflection Worksheet Part B asks students to propose their own ideal ballot design and defend why it would be fairer, engaging them in state-level policy reasoning.
6.3.8.CivicsPD.3	Construct a claim as to why it is important for democracy that individuals are informed by facts, aware of diverse viewpoints, and willing to take action on public issues.	The workshop narrative demonstrates how informed citizens (researchers, lawyers, voters) used factual evidence to challenge an unfair system and ultimately changed state law. Discussion Question 3 asks students to reflect on what it means for democracy when insiders control candidate selection.
6.3.8.CivicsDP.1	Identify an issue of inequality, develop multiple solutions, and communicate the best one to an appropriate government body.	The workshop identifies the county line as a structural inequality (76.2% male, 85.7% white party chairs controlling candidate access). Students learn how multiple solutions were pursued: litigation, legislative reform, and public advocacy.
6.3.8.CivicsDP.2	Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and the limitations of First Amendment rights.	The Kim v. Hanlon case centered on First Amendment associational rights. Students learn how the federal court found the county line imposed a severe burden on candidates’ First Amendment rights, and how the Third Circuit upheld this finding.
6.3.8.CivicsPR.2	Evaluate the effectiveness of the fundamental principles of the Constitution in establishing a federal government that allows for growth and change over time.	The legal timeline demonstrates constitutional principles in action: judicial review (federal court striking down the county line), checks and balances (courts checking legislative inaction), and the legislative process (Assembly hearings, bipartisan committee, bill passage, governor’s signature).
6.3.8.CivicsPR.3	Take a position on an issue in which fundamental ideals and principles are in conflict.	The county line debate involved a genuine conflict between party associational rights (the right of parties to organize) and equal protection (the right of all candidates to fair ballot access). Students are asked to weigh these competing principles.
6.3.8.CivicsPR.5	Engage in simulated democratic processes (e.g., legislative hearings, judicial proceedings, elections) to understand how conflicting points of view are addressed in a democratic society.	The mock primary election activity is a direct simulation. Students vote using both the old county line format and the new office-block format, then compare outcomes and discuss how ballot design affects democratic participation.

6.3.8.CivicsPR.7	Compare how ideas become laws at the local, state, and national level.	The workshop traces the full arc from idea to law: federal lawsuit (2020 and 2024), court injunction (March 2024), appeals court ruling (April 2024), Assembly hearings (Fall 2024), legislative passage (December 2024/February 2025), and governor's signature (March 2025).
6.3.8.CivicsHR.1	Construct an argument as to the source of human rights and how they are best protected.	The workshop demonstrates how voting rights were undermined by structural ballot design and protected through judicial review and legislative reform. The representation data (underrepresentation of women and people of color) connects ballot design to civil rights outcomes.

Standard 6.3: Economics, Innovation, and Technology * (By End of Grade 8)

* Requires optional Economics Supplement module.

Standard Code	Performance Expectation	How the Workshop Addresses This Standard
6.3.8.EconET.1	Using quantitative data, evaluate the opportunity cost of a proposed economic action, and take a position and support it.	Economics Supplement: Students use quantitative data (38-percentage-point county line advantage, 1.4% vs. 80% loss rates, 2025 turnout data) to evaluate the opportunity cost of the county line system: blocked reforms, patronage hiring, reduced voter participation, and diminished government accountability.
6.3.8.EconET.2	Assess the impact of government incentives and disincentives on the economy.	Economics Supplement: The patronage system operated as an economic incentive structure: party loyalty was rewarded with government jobs and contracts. Students assess how this distorted government hiring, contract allocation, and policy priorities, and how ballot reform changed these incentive structures.

Standard 6.3: Active Citizenship (By End of Grade 12)

Standard Code	Performance Expectation	How the Workshop Addresses This Standard
6.3.12.CivicsPD.1	Develop plan for public accountability and transparency in government related to a particular issue(s) and share the plan with appropriate government officials.	The workshop models how research provided the evidentiary foundation for public accountability in NJ's electoral system. P.L. 2025, c.32 requires a ballot design impact report to the Governor and Legislature, exemplifying transparency mechanisms. Older students can develop their own accountability proposals.
6.3.12.HistorySE.1	Analyze the impact of current governmental practices and laws affecting national security and/or First Amendment rights and privacy.	The Kim v. Hanlon ruling analyzed the impact of NJ's ballot design on First Amendment associational rights. The workshop presents the court's reasoning and the Third Circuit's affirmation, engaging students with a current, real-world First Amendment case.

Standard 6.1: U.S. History — History, Culture, and Perspectives

Disciplinary Concept	Core Idea	How the Workshop Addresses This
6.1.8.HistoryCC	Chronological sequencing helps us understand the interrelationship of historical events. Political, economic, social, and cultural factors both change and stay the same over time.	The workshop places NJ's county line in historical context (Tammany Hall, the persistence of NJ machines after other states reformed) and traces the chronological sequence from the 2020 lawsuit through the 2025 legislation, demonstrating how political systems change over time.
6.1.8.HistoryUP	An individual's perspective is impacted by one's background and experiences. Perspectives change over time.	Students consider multiple perspectives: party leaders who benefited from the county line, candidates excluded by it, voters influenced by ballot design, and researchers who documented its effects. The mock election helps students experience how ballot design shapes their own decision-making.
6.1.8.HistorySE	Our understanding of the past deepens through analysis of a wide variety of primary and secondary sources.	The workshop uses primary sources (actual NJ ballot images, official voter turnout data, the ballot design guide) alongside secondary sources (Rubin's statistical analyses, news coverage, court decisions). The Spot the Difference worksheet specifically asks students to analyze primary ballot images.
6.1.8.HistoryCA	Historical events may have single, multiple, and direct and indirect causes and effects.	Students learn the county line had multiple causes (historical patronage, NJ's political culture, lack of reform pressure) and multiple effects (reduced competition, demographic underrepresentation, blocked reforms, diminished voter agency). Discussion questions prompt students to construct their own cause-and-effect arguments.

Social Studies Practices (K through 12)

The NJSLS-SS identifies seven practices representing the habits of mind central to social studies. The workshop addresses all seven.

Practice	How the Workshop Addresses This Practice
Developing Questions and Planning Inquiry	The workshop opens with an essential question ("Would that be a fair election?") and the Spot the Difference worksheet guides students through structured inquiry about ballot design.
Gathering and Evaluating Sources	Students engage with primary sources (ballot images, turnout statistics) and secondary analyses (Rubin's research, court opinions). The worksheets ask students to compare and evaluate these sources.
Seeking Diverse Perspectives	The workshop presents perspectives of party leaders, reform advocates, excluded candidates, and voters. The demographic data (county party chair composition vs. NJ population) illustrates whose perspectives were privileged under the old system.
Developing Claims and Using Evidence	The discussion questions and reflection worksheet require students to develop evidence-based claims about ballot fairness, democratic participation, and reform outcomes.
Presenting Arguments and Explanations	Reflection Worksheet Part B asks students to propose and explain their ideal ballot design. Discussion questions require students to articulate and defend positions on ballot reform.
Engaging in Civil Discourse and Critiquing Conclusions	The post-mock-election discussion promotes civil discourse: students compare Round 1 and Round 2 voting behaviors and discuss whether ballot design should influence outcomes.
Taking Informed Action	The workshop concludes with voter registration information (vote.nj.gov) and NJ's pre-registration for 17-year-olds, connecting learning to real civic action.

Summary: The workshop addresses 15 specific performance expectations across Standards 6.1 and 6.3, 4 disciplinary concept areas, and all 7 Social Studies Practices. It is particularly strong in Standard 6.3 (Active Citizenship), which supports NJ's mandatory middle school civics requirement. Contact: info@agardresearchassociates.org

Reference: <https://www.nj.gov/education/standards/socst/>