

## Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Social Studies (“Social Studies GSEs”)

### APPENDIX A - Glossary of Terms

#### Civics & Government Vocabulary

**Amendment** – (constitutional) changes in, or additions to, a constitution; proposed by a two-thirds vote of both houses of Congress or by a convention called by Congress at the request of two-thirds of the state legislatures; ratified by approval of three-fourths of the states

**Anarchy** – political and social disorder due to the absence of government control: *The death of the king was followed by a year of anarchy.*

**Authority** – the right to control or direct the actions of others, legitimized by law, morality, custom, or consent: *According to the Constitution of the United States, the executive branch, namely the President, has the authority to veto laws approved by Congress.*

**Autocracy** – a form of government in which one person possesses unlimited power: *A monarchy is a type of autocracy.*

**Bill** – a form or draft of a proposed law presented to a legislature: *A bill must pass in both chambers of Congress before it can become law.*

**Bill of Rights** – the First Ten Amendments to the Constitution of the United States; ratified in 1791, these amendments limit government power and protect basic rights and liberties of individuals

**Branches of Government** – the three branches of the federal government are the Executive (President), Legislative (Congress: Senate and House of Representatives), and Judicial (Supreme Court)

***Brown v. Board of Education (1954)*** – a Supreme Court case which declared that “separate-but-equal” educational facilities are inherently unequal and therefore a violation of equal protection of the law guaranteed by the Fourteenth Amendment

**Boycotting** – voluntarily abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with a person, organization, or product as an expression of protest – usually motivated by sociopolitical reasons

**Buycotting** – voluntarily choosing to use, buy, or deal with a specific person, organization, or product as an expression of support – usually for sociopolitical reasons; the opposite of boycott

**Checks and Balances** – the system whereby each branch of an organization can limit the powers of other branches. This system is enacted through the Constitution of the U.S. in order to prevent any of its three branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) from dominating the Federal government: *e.g. Congress (legislative) has the power to declare war, the President (Executive) has the power to veto bills passed by Congress, and the Supreme Court (Judicial) has the power to interpret laws. e.g., the Senate must confirm major executive appointments, and the courts may declare acts of Congress unconstitutional*

**Citizen** – a native or naturalized member of a state or nation who owes allegiance to its government and is entitled to its protection, privileges, or franchises (distinguished from Alien): *Citizens of the United States have United States passports to prove their U.S. citizenship when visiting another country.*

**Citizenship** – the status of being a member of a state or country, one who promises allegiance to the nation and is entitled to its protection and to political rights

**Civic** – of or pertaining to citizenship; civil: *civic duties.*

**Civics** – the study of citizenship and government

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**Civil** – of or pertaining to, or consisting of citizens; civil life; civil society or of citizens in their ordinary capacity, or of the ordinary life and affairs of citizens as distinguished from military or religious life and affairs

**Civil liberties** – areas of personal freedom with which governments are constrained from interfering

**Civil rights** – protections and privileges of personal liberty given to all citizens by law, rights bestowed by nations on those within the territorial boundaries: *e.g. Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments to the Constitution.*

**Common good (public good)** – the good of the community

**Constitutional government (constitutionalism)** – the idea that the powers of government should be distributed according to a written or unwritten constitution and that those powers should be effectively restrained by the constitution’s provisions

**Culture** – learned behavior of a people group: belief systems, languages, social relations, institutions/organizations, material goods (food, clothing, buildings, technology)

**Debate** – a discussion, as of a public question in an assembly, involving opposing viewpoints: *a debate in the Senate on farm price supports.*

**Democratic ideals** – is a rhetorical phrase used to denote either personal qualities or standards of government behavior that are felt to be essential for the continuation of a democratic policy. *e.g., individual dignity, equality, liberty, freedom, legitimate authority, privacy, responsibility, justice, etc.: e.g. advocates for greater equality in the distribution of wealth will argue that inequalities create differing levels of opportunity and that equality is a democratic ideal.*

**Democracy** – government by the people; a form of government in which supreme power is vested in the people and exercised directly by them or by their elected agents under the electoral system: *The U.S. and Canada are democracies.*

**Dictatorship** – A country, government, or the form of government in which absolute power – usually gained and maintained by force – is exercised by a ruler or small group not restricted by a constitution, laws, opposition, etc. to be held responsible to the will of the people; a form of totalitarianism: *Cuba has been called a dictatorship even though it espouses communism.*

**Discriminate** – is to make a distinction between people on the basis of class or category without regard for individual merit; the unfair treatment or denial of normal privileges to persons because of their race, age, sex, nationality or religion

**Diversity** – variety in culture and ethnic background, race and belief is not only permissible but also desirable and beneficial in a pluralistic society

**Divine right** – the doctrine that monarchs derive their right to rule directly from God and are accountable only to God

**Due process of law** – the principle that government must normally respect all of a person’s legal rights when the government deprives a person of life, liberty, or property, guaranteed under the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution

**Election** – is a decision making process where people choose people to hold offices (through voting): *The presidential elections in the United States are held every four years.*

**Federal (federalism)** – system of government in which power is divided between a central authority (national government) and constituent unit (states); in particular, the allocation of significant law making powers with most powers retained by the central authority: *e.g., the United States is a federal system*

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**Feudal (feudalism)** – a political and economic system in which a king or queen shared power with the nobility who required services from the common people in return for allowing them to use the noble’s land: *Feudalism was prevalent in the Middle Ages.*

**Freedom** – quality or state of independence; demonstration of free will in areas such as: to gather in public (assembly); to print or publish without government interference (press); to worship as one pleases (religion); to express oneself verbally or non-verbally (speech); etc.

**Functions of government** – to establish justice, to insure domestic tranquility, to provide for the common defense, to promote the general welfare, and to secure the blessings of liberty: *Preamble to the U.S. Constitution*

**Government** – the people, institutions and/or procedures through which a political unit (territory, people, organization, etc.) is ruled or administered

**Habeas corpus** – court order demanding that the individual in custody be brought into court and shown the cause for detention; guaranteed by the Constitution and can be suspended only in cases of rebellion or invasion

**Human rights** – concept of human beings as having universal rights, or status, regardless of legal jurisdiction or other localizing factors, such as ethnicity, nationality, or sex: *According to the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, human rights are conceptualized as based on inherent human dignity.*

**Ideology** – the combined doctrines, assertions, and intentions of a social or political group that justify its behavior

**Individual rights** – held distinct from human rights, but the rights of individuals by virtue of their humanness provide the moral claim to freedom of action often codified into law so they may be protected by impartial third parties

**Institution** – (political or government) organizations such as Congress, the presidency, and the court system that play a significant role in the making, carrying out, and enforcing [of] laws and managing conflicts about them; also a custom, practice (e.g., the institution of slavery), organization (e.g., Congress), relationship, or behavioral pattern of importance in the life of a community or the larger society

**Interdependence** – a situation in which decisions or events in one part of the world or in one sector of the economy affect decisions and events in other parts of the world and other sectors of the economy

**Judicial Review** – the power of the court to study and decide on the constitutionality of the laws of the government or the acts of a government official: *The precedent for judicial review was established in the 1803 Supreme Court case Marbury v. Madison.*

**Justice** – the fair distribution of benefits and burdens, fair correction of wrongs and injuries, or use of fair procedures in gathering information and making decisions

**Law** – a set of rules, issued and enforced by a government, that binds every member of society: *If you break the law and disturb the peace, you will pay the consequences.*

**Legitimized (legitimacy)** – Acceptance as right and proper; belief among citizens that their government has the right to pass and enforce laws. To make lawful or legal; pronounce or state as lawful: *Parliament legitimized his accession to the throne.*

**Liberty** – permission granted by a government to go freely within specified limits; privileges of various social, political, or economic rights and privileges

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**Majority rule** – is the rule that requires more than half the members of a polity (community, government, or corporation) who cast a vote to agree in order for the entire polity to make a decision on a measure being voted on: *After sixty-nine percent of the community voted to approve the amendment to the law, it went into effect according to the majority rule.*

**Magna Carta** – a document signed by King John of England in 1215 that guaranteed certain basic rights; considered the beginning of constitutional government in England

**Marbury v. Madison (1803)** – a historic case in which the Supreme Court held that it had the power of judicial review over acts of Congress

**Minority rights** – embodies two separate concepts; first, normal individual rights as applied to members of a racial, ethnic, class, religious, linguistic, or sexual minorities, and second, collective rights of minority groups. A legal framework designed to ensure that a specific group, which is vulnerable, disadvantaged or in a marginalized position in society is able to achieve equality and is protected from persecution: *e.g. children’s rights, women’s rights and refugee rights. Civil rights movements often seek to ensure that individual rights are not denied on the basis of membership in a minority group.*

**Monarchy** – form of government that has a monarch (king or queen) as Head of State; usually political power is exercised under the claim of divine or hereditary right of that single ruler; a type of autocracy: *The United Kingdom is a monarchy.*

**Oligarchy** – a form of government where the many are ruled by a few rather than one

**Parliamentary (system)** – a form of government that gives governmental authority to a legislature that selects the executive from its own members: *England and France have parliamentary governments.*

**Pluralism** – the affirmation and acceptance of diversity; in politics, the affirmation and acceptance of diversity in the interests and beliefs of the citizenry is one of the most important features of a democracy

**Policy** – a course of action adopted and pursued by a government, ruler, political party, etc.

**Political ideology** – an organized, coherent set of attitudes about government and public policy: *By identifying with a political party, you show your agreement with their political ideology.*

**Political party** – A group of people with broad common interests who organize, however loosely, to elect government officials under a given label, control government, and influence government policies; An organization that seeks to attain higher political power within a government, usually through participating in a campaign. *e.g., in the United States: Democrat, Republican, etc.*

**Political system** – the government, ruler(s), and institutions exercising power over a specific territory

**Politics** – the methods by which individuals and groups try to influence operations of government

**Popular sovereignty** – the concept that political and legislative power resides with the citizens, who entrust that power to the government, which is under their control because the people’s vote is considered the final authority

**Privileges** – any of the rights common to all citizens under a modern constitutional government

**Public policy** – a government’s course of action that guides present and future decisions in a manner consistent with laws and customs

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**“Regime of truth”** – a power structure or truth-generating apparatus (school, discipline, profession, law) that reinforces a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements

**Republic (republican government)** – state in which the supreme power rests in the body of citizens entitled to vote and is exercised by representatives chosen directly or indirectly by them to promote the common welfare

**Rights** – the just claims that belong to a person by law, nature, or tradition: *The Declaration of Independence states that all people are created equal with “certain unalienable rights ... Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.”*

**Rule** – a principle or regulation governing conduct, action, procedure, arrangement, etc. that is enforced by those who established it, but is not necessarily universally applicable or enforceable: *e.g., some schools enforce the wearing of school uniforms, but not all schools in that state are required to follow that rule.*

**Rule of Law** – The principle that every member of a society, even a ruler, must follow the law; The principle that government authority is legitimately exercised only in accordance with written, publicly disclosed laws adopted and enforced in accordance with established procedure. The principle is intended to safeguard against arbitrary governance: *e.g. separation of powers or principle of legitimate equality of all before the law.*

**“Rule of man”** – government officials and others governing by their personal whim or desire rather than by the “rule of law”

**Separation of powers** – the division of governmental power among several institutions that must cooperate in decision making: *The separation of powers in the United States government provides a series of checks and balances among the three branches of government.*

**Service learning** - a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (usually incorporated into an educational system as a graduation requirement)

**Social contract (compact)** – an agreement among all the people in a society to give up part of their freedom to a government in return for protection of their natural rights; a theory developed by Locke to explain the origin of legitimate government

**Society** – a community of people living in a particular region or associating together and having shared customs, laws, and organizations

**Sovereignty** – the ultimate, supreme power in a state; in the United States, sovereignty rests with the people; complete independence and self-government

**Special interest group** – an organized body of individuals who share some goals and try to influence public policy to meet those goals

**States’ rights** – the rights belonging to the various states, especially with reference to the strict interpretation of the Constitution, by which all rights not delegated by the Constitution belong to the states

**Suffrage** – right to vote

**Theocracy** – a form of government in which the leaders of the government are also the leaders of the religion and they rule as representatives of the deity (by divine authority): *The Holy Roman Empire was a theocracy.*

**"Unalienable" (inalienable) rights** – fundamental rights of the people that may not be taken away; a phrase used in the Declaration of Independence

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**Vote** – (n) A formal expression of opinion or choice made by an individual or body of individuals: *According to the tally of the votes, the new student council will consist entirely of new members.*; (v) An individual’s act of expressing support or preference for a certain motion, candidate, or selection of candidates by casting a ballot: *Each student voted for the candidate he or she thought would be the best for the position.*

### Historical Perspectives Vocabulary

**Artifact** – an object made or used by man that is of archeological or historical interest (e.g., tools, weapons, ceramics, pieces of furniture, etc.)

**Chronicle** – (n) an account, description, record, history, narration, story, journal, or diary of events; (v) to record, recount, narrate, or write down to keep track of events

**Chronology** – the study of history is grounded in chronology; the main way historians arrange events and trends in history to see patterns of continuity and change in history; understanding the order of events is crucial to understanding, analyzing, or explaining the importance or meaning of events

**Civilization** – a society in a particular geographical area and/or time period with cities, a central government run by official leaders, and workers who specialize in certain jobs, leading to social classes; can be characterized through writing, art, architecture, and other cultural factors

**Discourse** – communication of thought by words; talk; conversation or a formal discussion of a subject in speech or writing, as a dissertation, treatise, sermon, etc.

**Enduring documents** – historical documents which are central to the ideology, structure, and actions of a government, institution, or society: *e.g., Bill of Rights, Declaration of Independence, Constitution of the United States, Magna Carta.*

**Historical interpretation** – the act of interpreting historical sources that takes place when researching a person, topic, or event in history, by selecting certain facts to emphasize and organizing facts around certain concepts; all history is an interpretation by historians who bring to their research and writing their own frame of reference or set of perceptions and experiences through which they view the world and people

**Historical thinking skills** – skills that enable students to: differentiate among the past, present, and future time; formulate historical questions for inquiry; seek and evaluate evidence; compare and analyze historical stories, illustrations, and records; interpret historical records; and construct historical narratives of their own (source: *National Standards for History*, National Center for History in the Schools)

**Primary source** – an original fundamental and authoritative document pertaining to an event or subject of inquiry; a firsthand or eyewitness account of an event: *e.g. an autobiography is a primary source.*

**Secondary source** – any document that describes an event, person, place, or thing; usually not created by someone living in the same time period; contains information others have gathered and interpreted; indirect or second-hand information: *e.g. a biography is a secondary source.*

**Seminal documents** – documents extolling original, relevant ideas that are seen to influence the development of future events or issues: *e.g., Declaration of the Rights of Man, Universal Declaration of Rights, International Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

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### Geography Strand Vocabulary

**Absolute location** – the location of a point on Earth’s surface which can be expressed by a grid reference (e.g., latitude and longitude)

**Acculturation** – the process of adopting the traits of a cultural group

**Altitude** – the height of an object or point in relation to sea level or ground level

**Axis** – an imaginary straight line passing through the center of the Earth and about which it rotates

**Boundary** – the limit or extent within which a system exists or functions, including a social group, a state, or physical feature (e.g., mountain range, river)

**Cardinal directions** – the four main points of the compass; north, east, south and west

**Cartography** – the design and creation of maps and other geographic representations

**Climate** – long-term patterns and trends in weather elements and atmospheric conditions

**Communities** – interaction of people in a common area who may share common values; places where people live, work, and play

**Compass rose** – a drawing that shows the orientation of north, south, east, and west on a map

**Continent** – any of the world’s main continuous expanses of land (Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Australia, Europe, North America, South America)

**Continental drift** – the gradual movement of the continents across the earth’s surface through geological time

**Country** – unit of political space often referred to as a state or nation-state

**Cultural diffusion** – the spread (through adoption of an aspect or aspects) of cultural elements from one culture to another

**Cultural landscape** – the surface of the earth as modified by human imprint on the physical environment through human action, including housing types, settlement patterns, and agricultural use

**Demographics** – the statistical data of a population (e.g., birth rate, average age, per capita income, education, literacy rate)

**Density** – the population or number of objects per unit area (e.g., per square kilometer or mile)

**Distance** – an amount of space between two things, locations, or people; can be measurable (e.g., 2 miles from a certain point) or relative (e.g., three countries west)

**Distribution** – the arrangement of items over a specified area

**Ecosystem** – (ecological system) a network or system formed by the interaction of all living organisms (plants, animals, humans) with each other and with the physical and chemical factors of the environment in which they live

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**Elevation** – height of a point or place above sea level

**Environment** – everything in and on Earth's surface and its atmosphere within which organisms, communities or objects exist; natural or physical environment refers to those aspects of the environment produced by natural or physical processes; the human or cultural environment refers to those aspects of the environment produced by human or cultural processes

**Equator** – an imaginary line at zero degrees latitude, running east and west around the globe and dividing it into two equal parts known as the Northern and Southern Hemispheres; that place on Earth which always has approximately twelve hours of daylight and twelve hours of darkness

**Ethnicity** – of or relating to a sizable group of people sharing a common and distinctive racial, national, religious, linguistic, or cultural heritage

**Fauna** – animal life of an area or region

**Flora** – plant life of an area or region

**Geographic features** – the components of the Earth; two types of geographical features, namely natural geographical features (e.g., landforms, ecosystems) and artificial geographical features (e.g., human settlements, engineered constructs)

**Geographic Information System (GIS)** – a computerized geographic database that contains information about the spatial distribution of physical (e.g., topography, vegetation) and human (e.g., roads, buildings, sewers) characteristics of Earth's surface that can be combined with a geographical perspective to solve societal problems

**Geographic representation** – maps, globes, graphs, diagrams, photographs, and satellite-produced images used to depict selected aspects of the earth's surface

**Geographic tools** – any product used to compile, organize, manipulate, store, analyze, report, or display geographic information (e.g., almanacs, geographic dictionaries, paper or digital map, aerial photography, GPS, remote sensing technology)

**Geography** – the scientific study of the Earth's surface that describes and analyzes the spatial variations in physical, biological, and human phenomena that occur on the surface of the globe and treats their interrelationships and their significant regional patterns

**Geology** – the scientific study of the origin, history, and structure of the Earth

**Globe** – a scale model of Earth that correctly represents area, relative size and shape of physical features, distance between points and true compass direction

**Global Positioning System (GPS)** – a radio navigation system that allows land, sea, and airborne users to determine their exact location, velocity, and time 24 hours a day anywhere in the world

**Grid** – a pattern of lines on a chart or map, such as those representing latitude and longitude, which helps determine absolute location and assists in the analysis of distribution patterns

**Hemisphere** – a half of a sphere (e.g., on the Earth: Western Hemisphere, Southern Hemisphere, etc.)



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**Human characteristics** – the patterns and features that people make on the surface of the Earth, such as cities, roads, canals, farms, and other ways people change the Earth (e.g., dwellings, crops, machines, places of worship and other cultural elements)

**Infrastructure** – the internal foundation that provides support for a society or government; the manmade features that support a society (e.g., utilities, roads, emergency services)

**Intermediate direction** – the points of the compass that fall between the cardinal directions of north and east, north and west, south and east, south and west (e.g., northeast - NE, northwest - NW, southeast - SE, southwest - SW)

**International dateline** – an imaginary line through the Pacific Ocean, corresponding with 180 degrees longitude, to the east of which, by international agreement, the calendar date is one day earlier than to the west

**Land use** – the range of uses of Earth's surface made by humans, classified as urban, rural, agricultural, forested, etc. with more specific sub-classifications useful for specific purposes (e.g., low-density residential, light industrial, nursery crops)

**Landform** – the shape, form or nature of a specific physical feature of the Earth's surface (e.g., mountains, plains, plateaus)

**Latitude** – a measure of the distance north or south of the Equator, measured by imaginary lines parallel to the Equator that are numbered in degrees, along a line of longitude

**Legend** – an explanatory description to features or symbols on a map or chart; also called a key

**Location** – the position of a point on Earth's surface expressed by means of a grid (absolute) or in relation (relative) to the position of other places;

**Longitude** – a measure of the distance east or west of the Prime Meridian, measured by imaginary lines (meridians) numbered in degrees east or west up to 180 degrees

**Map** – a graphic representation of a portion of Earth that is usually drawn to scale on a flat surface

**Map elements** – title, compass rose, scale, key and symbols

**Map projections** – the transfer of the shape of land and water bodies, along with a global grid, from a globe to a flat map using a mathematical formula; projections include: Mercator, Robinson, conic, and polar

**Meridian** – an imaginary great circle on the surface of the Earth passing through the poles and any given place and used to measure longitude

**Migration** – the act or process of people moving from one place or region to another with the intent of staying at the destination permanently or for a relatively long period of time; the act or process of organisms moving from one place or region to another as part of a regular cycle or due to environmental changes

**Nation** – a cultural concept for a group of people bound together by a strong sense of shared values and cultural characteristics including language, religion and common history

**Nation state** – a political unit consisting of an autonomous state with defined borders and territory that is inhabited predominantly by a people sharing a common culture, history, and language

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**Natural hazard** – an event or process taking place in the natural environment that is destructive to human life and/or property (e.g., hurricane, flooding, earthquake)

**Parallel** – an imaginary circle on the surface of the Earth paralleling the equator and used to measure latitude

**Perception** – the feelings, attitudes, and images people have of different places, peoples, and environments

**Perceptual maps** – (mental maps) the images people have in their heads of where places are located

**Physical feature** – a natural characteristic or an aspect of a place or area that derives from the physical environment (e.g., elevation, landforms, vegetation)

**Physical map** – a map that shows physical features (e.g., mountains, rivers, valleys, oceans) on the Earth’s surface

**Physical systems** – processes that create, maintain, and modify Earth’s physical features and environments, consisting of four categories: atmospheric (e.g., climate), lithospheric (e.g., plate tectonics, erosion), hydrospheric (e.g., water cycle, ocean currents), and biospheric (e.g., plant and animal communities).

**Place** – a location or area with distinctive human and/or physical characteristics that give it meaning and character and distinguishes it from other locations or areas

**Plate tectonics** – the theory that the uppermost part of the earth is composed of rigid slabs or plates that slide or drift very slowly, causing the present-day configurations of continents and the formation of physical features (e.g., mountain ranges, ocean basins, valley systems)

**Political features** – spatial expressions of political behavior: boundaries on land, water, and air space, and cities, towns, counties, countries

**Political map** – a map representing the locations of human-made boundaries and features, such as countries, states, cities, towns, and other borders

**Population density** – the number of individuals occupying an area derived from dividing the number of people by the area they occupy, usually expressed as individuals per square mile or kilometer

**Prime meridian** – the meridian at zero degrees longitude which is used as a reference line from which longitude east and west is measured; also known as the Greenwich meridian because it passes through Greenwich, England

**Proximity** – the state, quality, sense or fact of being near or next to

**Push and pull factors** – the social, political, economic, and environmental factors that drive (push: e.g., loss of employment, political upheaval, natural disasters) or draw (pull: e.g., higher pay, climate, cheap land) people away from their previous location, often simultaneously

**Region** – an area with one or more common characteristics or features, which give it a measure of homogeneity and make it different from surrounding areas

**Relative location** – the location of a point, place, or region expressed in relationship to the location of other points, places, or regions (e.g., northwest, downstream)

**Rural** – like or having to do with a place away from a city, usually with low population density

**Scale** – on maps, the relationship or ratio between a linear measurement on a map and the corresponding distance on Earth's surface (e.g., 1 inch = 100 miles)

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**Sea level** – the level of the surface of the sea with respect to the land

**Settlement pattern** – the spatial distribution and arrangement of human habitations, including rural and urban centers

**Site** – the specific location where something may be found, including its physical setting (e.g., on a floodplain)

**Spatial** – pertaining to distribution, distance, direction, areas and other aspects of space on the Earth’s surface

**Spatial patterns** – the patterns or ways in which the same features or phenomena are found in different places around the world

**Suburban** – pertaining to the culture, manners, and customs of a residential area outlying a city

**Sustainability** – the ability to be maintained at a certain rate or level over a long period of time, especially as relates to the environment, economy and society

**Thematic map** – a map representing a specific spatial distribution, theme or topic (e.g., population density, livestock production, climates of the world, cultural features, natural features)

**Time zone** – a division of Earth, usually 15 degrees longitude, within which the time at the central meridian of the division represents the whole division

**Topography** – the arrangement of the natural and artificial features of an area of the Earth’s surface

**Tropic of Cancer** – also referred to as the Northern tropic, is the circle of latitude on the Earth that marks the most northerly position at which the Sun may appear directly overhead at its zenith

**Tropic of Capricorn** – also referred to as the Southern tropic, is the circle of latitude on the Earth that marks the most southerly latitude on the Earth at which the Sun may appear directly overhead at its zenith

**Urban** – related to a city or densely populated area

**Water cycle** – (hydrologic cycle) the continuous circulation of water from the oceans, through the air, to the land, and back to the sea through evaporation, condensation, and precipitation

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### Economics Strand Vocabulary

**Abundance** – an extremely plentiful or over-sufficient quantity or supply

**Barter** – the direct exchange of goods or services between people without the use of money

**Buyer** – a person or entity (e.g., business firm) which acquires or agrees to acquire ownership (goods) or benefit or usage (services) in exchange for money

**Capital resources** – man-made goods (e.g., tools, equipment, machines, buildings) used in the production of goods and services; also called physical capital and capital goods

**Command economy** – a system in which economic decisions are largely made by a central authority (e.g., government, feudal lord); also called a planned economy

**Competition** – the rivalry among people and/or business firms for resources and/or consumers

**Consumer** – a person who buys or rents goods or services

**Consumption** – the usage of goods (e.g., resources, money) and services through consumer purchasing or in production of other goods

**Cost** – something of value (e.g., money, time, effort) expended to obtain something else; can be monetary and/or nonmonetary

**Cost/benefit analysis** – the process of weighing all predicted costs against the predicted benefits of an economic choice

**Credit** – the use of someone else’s funds in exchange for a promise to pay (usually with interest) at a later date (e.g., credit card, loans from a bank, credit extended by suppliers); an arrangement for deferred payment for goods and services

**Currency** – coins and/or paper money

**Depletion** – the lessening or exhaustion of a supply

**Demand** – the different quantities of a resource, good, or service that potential buyers are willing and able to purchase at various prices during a specific time period

**Distribution** – the manner in which total output and income is distributed among individuals or factors (e.g., the distribution of income between labor and capital)

**Division of labor** – a method of organizing production whereby each worker performs only a single or a very few steps of a major production task (as when working on an assembly line)

**Economic growth** – an increase over time in an economy’s output and ability to produce goods and services; usually measured as the annual rate of increase in a nation’s real gross domestic product (GDP)

**Economic systems** – the way societies organize (e.g., laws, rules, institutions) to determine what goods and services to produce, and how to produce and distribute them; examples include traditional, command, and market

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**Economics** – the study of the way society chooses to employ its limited resources, which have alternative uses, in the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services, and of the behavior of individuals and institutions engaged in this system

**Economy** – the production and distribution of goods and services within an economic system

**Entrepreneur** – a person who begins, manages and bears the risks of a business venture

**Entrepreneurship** – the human resource that assumes the risk of organizing other productive resources (often through innovation) to produce goods and services

**Equilibrium price** – the market price at which the supply of an item equals the quantity demanded; market clearing price

**Exchange rate** – the rate, or price, at which one country’s currency is exchanged for the currency of another country (e.g., x pesos per 1 dollar)

**Factors of production** – the resources used to produce goods and services (i.e. land, labor, capital, entrepreneurship)

**Fiscal policy** – how a government uses revenue collection (e.g., taxes) and/or government expenditures to influence general economic activity (e.g., change the level of output, employment, or prices)

**Goods** – tangible commodities, such as products, materials, or resources, that can satisfy people’s wants or needs

**Gross Domestic Product** – (PA) the total monetary or market value of the total output of final goods and services produced by an economy in a given time period, usually one year; real GDP is a nation’s GDP corrected for inflation

**Human resources** – people who work in jobs to produce goods and services; also, people’s intellectual and physical abilities

**Incentives** – factors (e.g., prices, profits, losses, fear of punishment, expectation of reward) that motivate or influence human behavior, action, or effort

**Income** – money (e.g., wages/salaries, rents, interest, profits, commissions) received in a given period in exchange for providing resources used to produce goods or services; can be received by individuals, households, businesses, and governments

**Inflation** – a sustained increase over time in the average price level of the entire economy (measured by a rate expressed as a percent) resulting in a reduction in the purchasing power of money

**Innovation** – a new, often better or more effective process, method, idea, product, service or technology

**Interdependence** – a situation where ideas, goods and/or services in one area affect decisions and events in other areas, reducing self-sufficiency; often occurs as a result of specialization

**Interest** – a payment (usually expressed in a percent rate of the principal amount) made for the use of borrowed money; from a consumer’s perspective, it can be money given (e.g., credit card balance, bank loan) or earned (e.g., savings, certificate of deposit)

**Macroeconomics** – the study of the overall aspects and workings (economic activity) of a national economy, such as national output, price levels, employment rates, and economic growth

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**Marginal analysis** – a decision-making tool that weighs the additional costs and benefits of a particular action, usually based on the impact of *the next* dollar spent or the change *one more unit* would bring about

**Market** – a place or process through which prices are established and goods and/or services are exchanged through the interactions of buyers and sellers

**Market economy** – an economic system where prices are determined by and most goods and services are exchanged through transactions between buyers and sellers in private markets, and where major decisions about production and distribution are based on supply and demand

**Microeconomics** – the study of the behaviors and decisions made by consumers (e.g., individuals, households, firms) and how these behaviors and decisions interact to form the prices of goods and services (e.g., market prices) and the factors of production

**Mixed economy** – an economic system that contains elements of a market economy along with elements of a command and/or traditional economy, resulting in a system in which decisions are made and the economy directed by markets (through the actions of private parties), government, and tradition; mixed economies rely primarily on the price system for their economic organization but use a variety of government interventions (e.g., taxes, spending, regulation) to handle macroeconomic instability and market failures

**Monetary policy** – government decisions on money supply and interest rates to achieve economic goals (e.g., economic growth, stability) and influence economic activity

**Money** – anything that is generally accepted as a medium of exchange with which to buy goods and services or repay debts, that serves as a standard of value, and has a store of value; usually a form of currency

**Natural resources** – an element of the physical environment (e.g., land, water, minerals, trees) that people value and use to meet a need for fuel, food, industrial product or something else of value

**Nonrenewable resources** – naturally occurring elements in finite supply that cannot be replaced once they are used (e.g., minerals, petroleum)

**Opportunity cost** – the cost of an activity measured in terms of the value of the next best alternative that must be given up when a choice is made

**Output** – the total amount of a commodity produced

**Price** – the quantity of payment or compensation (usually monetary) given in exchange for a particular good or service; the money value of a good, service, or resource that is largely determined by the buying and selling decisions of consumers and producers

**Private goods** – a commodity that benefits the individual and cannot be consumed or used without necessarily preventing others from using it

**Producer** – one who makes goods or services

**Profit** – the difference between total revenues (income received) and the full costs of producing and selling a good or service; if costs are greater than revenue, profit is negative (there is a loss)

**Progressive tax** – a tax structure where, as people earn more, they pay a larger percentage of their income in taxes (e.g., the federal income tax)

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**Proportional tax** – a tax structure where, as people earn more, the percentage of their income they pay in taxes remains the same (e.g., a flat tax)

**Public goods** – goods and services provided by the government rather than by the private sector that more than one person can use without necessarily preventing others from using them, whether or not particular individuals desire to consume the public good

**Renewable resources** – a resource or substance that can be regenerated if used carefully (e.g., fish, timber)

**Resources** – inputs or factors used in the production of goods and services; categories include land (natural resources), labor (human resources), capital (human-made resources), and entrepreneurship

**Savings** – the setting aside of earnings (income) for future use, not spent for consumer goods

**Scarcity** – an economic condition that exists because resources are in fixed or limited supply relative to demand; demand is greater than supply

**Seller** – the person or entity makes goods available for purchase by consumers

**Services** – actions that are valued by and done for the benefit of others

**Specialization** – a form of division of labor in which each individual or firm concentrates its productive efforts on a single or limited number of activities, producing a narrower range of goods and services than they consume

**Supply** – the different quantities of a resource, good, or service that potential sellers are willing and able to sell at various prices during a specific time period

**Surplus** – the situation resulting when the quantity supplied exceeds the quantity demanded of a good or service (e.g., over and above what is needed or used), usually because the price is for some reason below the equilibrium price in the market; excess

**Tariff** – a surcharge or tax imposed by a government on imported goods and services in order to protect domestic products from foreign competition

**Tax** – a required (non-voluntary) payment of money made to a government for which no good or service is directly received in turn, but which forms the revenue a government uses to support specific facilities and/or services, including public goods; a payment to the government that is levied upon incomes, property, sales, etc.

**Technology** – the application of scientific knowledge and activities (e.g., making of tools, machines, techniques) to solve a problem, achieve a goal, or perform a specific function in the production of goods and services needed and desired by people

**Trade** – voluntary exchange between two parties (e.g., individuals, organizations, nations) of goods and/or services for other goods and/or services or money

**Trade-off** – an exchange in which one benefit or option is given up for another considered more desirable; the use of a resource, good, or service in a particular way that precludes other uses for the same resource, good, or service

**Traditional economy** – an economic system in which decisions are made largely by repeating the actions or customs from an earlier time or generation

**Value** – the worth of a commodity or asset in terms of other commodities; the worth of a good or service as determined by the market

## Rhode Island Grade Span Expectations for Social Studies (“Social Studies GSEs”)

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