



CALIFORNIA 175 & AMERICA 250

SCHOOL TOOLKIT

BACKGROUND

California is celebrating 175 years of statehood through summer 2026 as the United States celebrates the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026. The California 175 / America 250 Working Group is encouraging communities across the Golden State to [celebrate](#) and highlight California's ingenuity and innovation, resilience, joy and sense of belonging while encouraging youth civic literacy and engagement.

CELEBRATE IN YOUR COMMUNITY!

To help your school community commemorate the occasions, we've come up with a list of ideas below - but encourage other creative ways to uplift the anniversaries!

SCHOOL BOARDS and SCHOOL DISTRICTS

1. Incorporate the official California 175 / America 250 logo on digital and print communications - request branding toolkit here: [Branding Toolkit Request Form](#)
2. Share what your schools are doing on social media using #CA175 or @america250
3. Ensure your schools have a [State Seal of Civic Engagement](#) program
4. Become a [Clean California Community](#) - please reach out to cacelebrates@gov.ca.gov for a connection

Comments, suggestions or want to share the great things happening at your school?
Please reach out to cacelebrates@gov.ca.gov

SCHOOLS / TEACHERS – ALL GRADES

1. Incorporate the official California 175 / America 250 logo on digital and print communications - request branding toolkit here: [Branding Toolkit Request Form](#)
2. Share what your school is doing on social media using #CA175 or @america250
3. Highlight the anniversaries in **parades, festivals, school events, community gatherings, and fairs**
4. Focus on **curriculum about state or U.S. history and civics**. The [California Council for the Social Studies](#) has compiled a [resource guide of civics curriculum](#) (also see Appendix) and [Rosie the Riveter Trust](#) shares their [Rosie's Toolbox Curriculum](#)
5. Implement civic practices and apply to have your school recognized with a [Civic Learning Award](#), a program of the [Power of Democracy Civic Learning Initiative](#)
6. Create a **time capsule** for your school to keep
7. Promote America250's [America's Field Trip](#) contest prompting students to answer "what does America mean to you?" and providing winners a field trip to exciting destinations across the U.S. – March 30, 2026 submission deadline
8. Participate in [MY AMERICA](#), a free, national, collective art project calling on students in grades K-12 to design a fabric tile – with words or art – reflecting on the U.S. MY AMERICA will provide the supplies, then teachers return the completed tiles so the organizers can weave them together into a giant American flag mosaic that will travel around the country. Deadline October 1, 2026. Register [here](#).
9. Register for free, live virtual field trips from [California State Parks PORTS](#) (Parks Online Resources for Teachers and Students)® Program
10. Promote the [California State Parks Adventure Pass](#) which gives California fourth graders attending public school and their families a free pass to access 54 state parks
11. Encourage students and their families to check out a free vehicle day-use [California State Library Park Pass](#) at their local public library for free entry to more than 200 participating state parks

12. Community day(s) of service – create your own, partner with [California Volunteers](#), or get ideas at [America Gives](#). Please reach out to ccelebrates@gov.ca.gov for a connection
 13. **Collect and share stories** of what it means to be a Californian, American, or member of your community
 14. Paint a **mural** at school celebrating California or the United States
 15. Consider **assignments or challenges celebrating California or the United States** through various art forms:
 - a. Art (various mediums)
 - b. Photography
 - c. Essays or stories
 - d. Historical fiction short story
 - e. Video stories (scenery, culture, interview older Californian)
 - f. Performances
- * Schools or school districts could run a contest if they'd like to make it a competition.

SCHOOLS / TEACHERS – HIGH SCHOOL

1. Encourage civic engagement by participating in [High School Voter Education Week](#) April 13 – 24, 2026

APPENDIX

America250/CA 175 Instructional Resources

Compiled by California Council for the Social Studies Curriculum, Instruction & Assessment and the Government Relations and Partnership Development Committees

America250 Commemoration

Civic Star Challenge

A nationwide initiative from iCivics and the Bill of Rights Institute that encourages K–12 educators to engage students with key themes of the Declaration of Independence through free lesson plans and activities; teachers who log their classroom activities can enter for a chance to earn prizes (over \$200,000 in classroom grants and awards) and recognition.

Grade Level: K–12 (resources include grade-specific lessons and activities suitable for all ages)

National Constitution Center

A comprehensive multimedia civic toolkit for America’s Semiquincentennial that includes an interactive presentation of the Declaration of Independence (with annotated text, audio narration, and historical context), video and written biographies of signers, essays from leading scholars, and a range of classroom and family learning resources about the founding documents and ideas. It also features town hall programs, scholar videos, lesson plans, and activities meant to explore how the founding principles have shaped America’s story from 1776 through today.

Grade Level: 5–12 (resources span elementary introductions to deeper high school explorations of civic ideas)

PBS: America at 250

A multi-year commemorative initiative from PBS marking the United States’ 250th anniversary with a wide range of history and civics-focused programming, including documentaries (like Ken Burns’ The American Revolution), digital shorts, classroom resources, events, and PBS KIDS content that explore U.S. founding history and broader cultural stories. Programming spans TV episodes, online videos, interactive tools, and educational media designed to engage learners of all ages with the nation’s origins and civic principles.

Grade Level: All ages (K–12+) includes PBS KIDS materials for younger learners and in-depth documentaries and classroom resources suitable for middle and high school

Gilder Lehrman

A rich educational hub centered on the Declaration of Independence that offers annotated text with historical context and quizzes, lesson plans for deep reading and analysis of the document, classroom videos and activities, and visual/multimedia resources to help students understand the Declaration’s meaning, background, and impact. It also includes primary source exhibitions, charts/graphs for classroom use, and connections to broader history like how the Declaration influenced later civil rights movements.

Grade Level: Grades 7–12 (with some activities and visuals usable for upper middle school and adaptable for high school)

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[Teach Democracy](#)

A free K–12 classroom activity and national student media contest focused on the Declaration of Independence and its ongoing importance to democratic ideals, inviting students to create drawings, slides, or short videos that explain what the document means today. The program includes grade-specific prompts (e.g., American symbols for K–3, Declaration themes for older students) and offers prizes and national recognition for standout entries.

Grade Level: K–12 (activities tailored by grade span: elementary, upper elementary, middle, and high school)

[America250](#)

A set of standards-aligned lesson plans and classroom activities developed in partnership with Discovery Education to help educators integrate the America’s Field Trip student contest and its prompt (“What does America mean to you?”) into their teaching. These materials include an educator guide, a master class video, and grade-band-specific lesson plans and activities (3–5, 6–8, and 9–12) designed to deepen student engagement with civic identity, active citizenship, and the nation’s history and future aspirations.

Grade Level: Grades 3–12 (with differentiated lessons and activities for elementary, middle, and high school)

[National Park Service](#)

A Teaching with Historic Places field guide that offers inquiry-based lesson plans anchored in real historic sites to help students explore the values and promises of the Declaration of Independence—liberty, equality, memory, and belonging—through physical and virtual historic places across U.S. history. The lessons use primary sources and themes tied to places to connect abstract civic principles to tangible contexts, with materials suitable for analyzing how Americans have worked toward a “more perfect Union.”

Grade Level: Grades 5–12 (lessons are middle and high school focused but adaptable for broader social studies curricula)

[Smithsonian](#)

A Smithsonian-wide initiative commemorating the United States’ 250th anniversary with exhibitions, collection stories, and public programs that reflect on American history, founding ideals, and contemporary civic life while inviting visitors and learners to explore how the nation’s shared future can be shaped. The site also links to educator resources (classroom-ready civics and social studies materials), a webinar series for teachers, and virtual tools that support critical thinking about America’s past, present, and future.

Grade Level: Grades 5–12 (resource depth spans upper elementary through high school social studies and civics)

California 175th Commemoration

[Calisphere](#)

Calisphere provides free access to unique and historically important artifacts for research, teaching, and curious exploration. Discover over two million photographs, documents, letters, artwork, diaries, oral histories, films, advertisements, musical recordings, and more. The collections in Calisphere have been digitized and contributed by all 10 campuses of the [University of California](#) and other important [libraries, archives, and museums](#) throughout the state.

APPENDIX cont.

[California Museum](#)

In alignment with the Museum's mission to educate and inspire visitors to make their mark on history, an emphasis is placed on providing standards-aligned curriculum for K-12 classrooms, tools and resources that meet the practical needs of teachers in classrooms across California. All field trip tour and learning programs feature accompanying materials aligned with History-Social Science, Visual and Performing Arts, Common Core ELA, Civics Outcomes and CASEL Core SEL Competencies.

[Teaching American History](#)

Teaching American History supports teachers of American history, government and civics, by bringing the documents and debates of America's past into the present through free document-based seminars, document collections both online and in print, and other resources. A resource primarily for sources and background info. They feature images and history commemorating "The Bear Flag Republic: 175th Anniversary."

[Library of Congress, Early California](#)

The collection of primary source resources covers the dramatic decades between the Gold Rush and the turn of the 20th century. It captures the pioneer experience; encounters between Anglo-Americans and the diverse peoples who had preceded them; the transformation of the land by mining, ranching, agriculture, and urban development; the often-turbulent growth of communities and cities; and California's emergence as both a state and a place of uniquely American dreams.

[California State Library](#)

The California History Section holds a premier collection of primary source documents from and about California's rich history. Their vaults house thousands of rare [books](#), [maps](#), [newspapers](#), and [periodicals](#) in addition to a huge collection of one-of-a-kind [photographs](#), [letters](#), and [ephemeral items](#) such as posters, pamphlets and sheet music. Regardless of whether you're a serious researcher, a fourth grader or an average person visiting Sacramento, they have a resource for you.

[California History Social Science Project](#)

[Teaching California](#) offers lesson plans and primary source sets for grades K – 12 aligned to the 2016 History-Social Science Framework. See [CHSSP resources](#) focused on California and the U.S.