



As we wait for our
Learning Lounge to begin,
please use the chat to share the
subject you teach, the grade
level(s), and what brings you
joy in your current teaching
assignment.

Division of Teaching and Learning
Services

Office of Standards





More Than Just a Month:

Integrating
Sikh American History
into the K-12 Social
Studies Curriculum

April 9, 2025

Division of Teaching and Learning Services

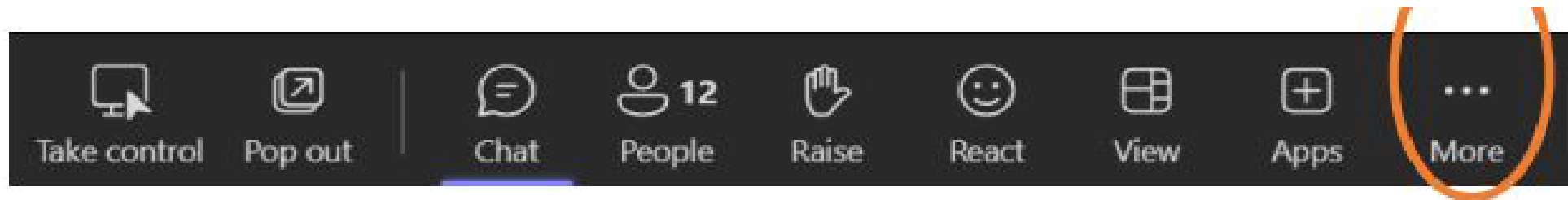
Office of Standards



To turn on live captions:



- Once you enter a Teams meeting or webinar, at the top of your screen, find the three dots with “more” written underneath.



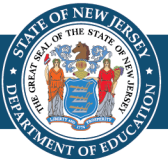
- Go to “Language and Speech” and click on “Turn on live captions”.



On today's Learning Lounge...



- Ashley Woolsey-Greene (she/her), Social Studies coordinator, Office of Standards.
- Ardaman Singh, Education Director, Sikh Youth Alliance.





Purpose of today's Learning Lounge



- Discuss legislation and standards that call for the inclusion of Sikh American history instruction in K-12 social studies.
- Present a historical overview of Sikh American history and their presence in New Jersey.
- Provide culturally responsive instructional strategies and resources.



Legislation



[Assembly Resolution No. 172:](#) The General Assembly of the State of New Jersey urges the State Board of Education to require school districts to incorporate Sikhism instruction in the existing social studies curriculum for elementary and secondary public school students.

[N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.44:](#) (AAPI) A board of education shall include instruction on the history and contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders in an appropriate place in the curriculum of students in grades kindergarten through 12 as part of the school district's implementation of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Social Studies.

[N.J.S.A. 18A:35-4.36a:](#) (Diversity & Inclusion) encourage safe, welcoming, and inclusive environments for all students regardless of race or ethnicity, sexual and gender identities, mental and physical disabilities, and religious beliefs.





Sikh Overview



- Sikhism is a religion, separate from Islam and Hinduism, founded by Guru Nanak in the Punjab region of India during the 15th century.
- Sikhism is the world's fifth largest religion with nearly 30 million adherents, roughly 1,000,000 of whom call the United States home.
- The Sikh community began immigrating to the United States in the late 1800s.
- New Jersey is home to one of the largest populations of Sikh Americans in the United States, with about 100,000 Sikh Americans living in the State.



By End of Grade 2



- **6.1.2.HistoryUP.2:** Use evidence to demonstrate how an individual's beliefs, values, and traditions may change and/or reflect more than one culture.
- **6.1.2.CivicsCM.3:** Explain how diversity, tolerance, fairness, and respect for others can contribute to individuals feeling accepted.
- **6.1.2.HistorySE.1:** Use examples of regional folk heroes, stories, and/or songs and make inferences about how they have contributed to the development of a culture's history.
- **6.1.2.Geo.HE.3:** Identify cultural and environmental characteristics of different regions in New Jersey and the United States.
- **6.1.2.CivicsDP.3:** Explain how historical symbols, monuments and holidays reflect the shared values, principles, and beliefs of the American identity.



By End of Grade 5



- **6.1.5.CivicsCM.1:** Use a variety of sources to describe the characteristics exhibited by real and fictional people that contribute(d) to the well-being of their community and country.
- **6.1.5.CivicsCM.5:** Investigate the lives of New Jersey individuals with diverse experiences who have contributed to the improvement of society.
- **6.1.5.HistoryCC.9:** Evaluate the impact of ideas, inventions, and other contributions of prominent figures who lived in New Jersey.
- **6.1.5.CivicsDP.2:** Compare and contrast responses of individuals and groups, past and present, to violations of fundamental rights (e.g., fairness, civil rights, human rights).
- **6.1.5.CivicsHR.1:** Describe how fundamental rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights contribute to the improvement of American democracy (i.e., freedom of expression, freedom of religion, freedom of the press, freedom of assembly, freedom of petition, the right to vote, and the right to due process).
- **6.1.5.CivicsHR.4:** Identify actions that are unfair or discriminatory, such as bullying, and propose solutions to address such actions.





By End of Grade 8



- **6.2.8.HistoryUP.3.c:** Compare and contrast the tenets of various world religions that developed in or around this time period (i.e., Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, and Taoism), their patterns of expansion, and their responses to the current challenges of globalization.
- **6.3.8.CivicsDP.2:** Make a claim based on evidence to determine the extent and the limitations of First Amendment rights (e.g., U.S. Supreme Court decisions).
- **6.3.8.CivicsDP.3:** Use historical case studies and current events to explain why due process is essential for the protection of individual rights and maintenance of limited government.



By End of Grade 12



- **6.1.12.CivicsDP.13.a:** Analyze the effectiveness of national legislation, policies, and Supreme Court decisions in promoting civil liberties and equal opportunities.
- **6.1.12.GeoPP.14.a:** Use data and other evidence to determine the impact of recent immigration and migration patterns in New Jersey and the United States on demographic, social, economic, and political issues.
- **6.1.12.HistoryUP.14.a:** Explore the various ways women, racial and ethnic minorities, the LGBTQ community, and individuals with disabilities have contributed to the American economy, politics and society.



By End of Grade 12, cont.



- **6.1.12.HistorySE.14.b:** Use a variety of sources from diverse perspective to analyze the social, economic and political contributions of marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals.
- **6.1.12.HistoryCC.14.d:** Evaluate the role of religion on cultural and social norms, public opinion, and political decisions.
- **6.3.12.CivicsHR.1:** Compare current case studies involving discrimination or other unfair practices in the United States with those of other nations and evaluate the extent to which these human rights violations are a universal problem.

Sikh American History



Sikh Americans of NJ



Ardaman Singh
Education Director, Sikh Youth Alliance



Sikh Americans of NJ cont.



Ravinder Singh Bhalla
Mayor, Hoboken, NJ



Gurbir Singh Grewal
1st Sikh-American Attorney General of NJ

Sikh Americans of NJ cont.



Rajpal Bath

Executive Director
The New Jersey-India
Commission

Who are the Sikhs?



National

Who are the Sikhs?

February 9, 2016 | 9:12 AM EDT

"Who are the Sikhs?" was produced by the Sikh Coalition to raise awareness of the Sikh faith and identity in the United States.





Sikhism Core Beliefs



Core Beliefs: Oneness and Equality

- **One Divine Being:**

- Sikhs believe in one God, the creator, present within all creation - Ik Oankar.
- This belief fosters a worldview rooted in the interconnectedness of all beings.



- **Equality of All:**

- Divine presence in every person means inherent equality.
- Sikhism rejects discrimination based on gender, caste, ethnicity, or any other social identity.



Sikhism History



- **Origins:**
 - Founded by Guru Nanak in 1469 CE in the Punjab region of South Asia.
 - Successive guidance from ten Gurus until 1708 CE.
- **Guru Granth Sahib:**
 - The Sikh holy scripture, considered the living Guru.
 - Contains writings of the Gurus and other spiritual figures.
 - Central to Sikh worship and ceremonies.
 - The Gurdwara is the place of Sikh worship, and the Guru Granth Sahib is the central focus.
- **Guru Khalsa Panth:**
 - The community of initiated Sikhs.
 - Established by Guru Gobind Singh in 1699 CE.
 - Represents collective authority and commitment to Sikh principles.
 - Initiation (Amrit) and adherence to the Sikh code of conduct (Rehat Maryada) are central to this community.

Sikh Identity

- **Five Articles of Faith (Panj Kakkar):**
 - Kesh (unshorn hair): Represents acceptance of God's will.
 - Kanga (small comb): Symbolizes cleanliness and discipline.
 - Kara (steel bracelet): Signifies eternity and commitment to God.
 - Kirpan (religious article resembling a knife): Represents defense of justice.
 - Kachera (soldier-shorts): Symbolizes self-control and readiness.
 - These articles are cherished as gifts from the Gurus, not merely for their functional value.



Sikh Identity



- **The Turban:**

- Worn by both men and women.
- Historically a symbol of royalty, adopted to represent equality and sovereignty.
- A public declaration of commitment to Sikh values.





Sikh Youth Alliance



The Sikh Youth Alliance is dedicated to providing educators with the resources, guidelines, and lesson plans necessary to achieve our three primary goals.

We are a volunteer, grassroots non-profit organization located in New Jersey. We strive to create a Sikh voice with focus on capacity building, prompting cultural awareness, dialogue and youth political participation.

- A foundational understanding of Sikhism within the social studies curriculum.
- Educating students about the appearance of Sikhs.
- Reducing future misunderstandings, fear, and discrimination of Sikh Americans.

Our efforts to meet these three goals tremendously impact how Sikhs feel and live in this country. We intend not to provide an advanced religious context of Sikhism or promote any religious education but to simply create a basic and respectful understanding of Sikhism.

Moreover, our education is intended to broaden children's perspectives regarding the changing demographics of cultures in New Jersey. We can build a more robust and harmonious society by promoting inclusivity and cultural awareness.



Next Steps



What's your why?



What do you know?



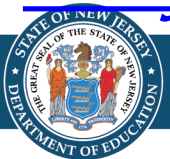
How can I help?



Instructional Resources



- PBS: [Growing Up Sikh in America](#)
- NewseumED: [Sikh Traditions Lesson Plan](#)
- [Sikh Museum](#)
- Sikh Youth Alliance: [NJ Curriculum](#)
- The Pluralism Project: [Sikhism in America](#)
- The Sikh Coalition: [Educators Resources and Lesson Plans K-12](#) / [NJ Standards Alignment](#)
- [Why do Sikhs have love hair and wear turbans?](#) Video





Sikh American History



- [South Asian American Digital Archive \(SAADA\)](#)
- [The Sikh Coalition Digital Library](#)
- [United Sikhs History Archive](#)
- [The Pluralism Project Harvard University: Sikhism](#)
- [Kaur Foundation: Sikh American Heritage Toolkit](#)



Respectful and Culturally Responsive Instruction



- **Center Sikh voices and experiences**
 - Incorporate primary sources.
 - Highlight diverse Sikh American experiences across different regions and time periods.
- **Address common misconceptions respectfully**
 - Teach accurate terminology: “Sikh” is pronounced “sick” (not “seek”).
 - Explain that Sikhism is an independent religion, not a branch of Hinduism or Islam.
 - Address and correct stereotypes that may arise in classroom discussions.
- **Create an inclusive learning environment**
 - Display images of Sikh Americans in various professional and community roles.
 - Include Sikh holidays and celebrations in your classroom calendar.
 - Establish clear guidelines for respectful discussion of religious and cultural practices.
 - Support Sikh students by being proactive about addressing bullying or misconceptions.



Conclusion



- Implement culturally responsive Sikh American history curriculum aligned with NJSLS-Social Studies.
- Learn with your students to enhance their understanding as well as your own.
- Engage with local Sikh American communities to support authentic learning experiences.



References



- Kumar, P., & Preeti, K. (2023). Teaching Sikh American history in K-12 classrooms: A culturally responsive approach. *Journal of Multicultural Education*, 38(2), 145-162.
- Puar, S. K. (2019). *Sikhs of New Jersey: The Pioneers from Punjab*. United States: American History Press.
- Singh, J. (2022). Sikh Americans in New Jersey: Historical perspectives and contemporary presence. *American Studies Quarterly*, 45(3), 278-295.
- The Sikh Coalition. (2023). *Toolkit for educators: Teaching Sikh American history and culture*. The Sikh Coalition Digital Library.
- United Sikhs. (2024). *Historical documentation of Sikh American contributions*. United Sikhs History Archive.



Thank You!



Ashley Woolsey-Greene
Social Studies Coordinator
SocialStudies@doe.nj.gov





Follow Us on Social Media!



Facebook:
@njdeptofed



Instagram:
@newjerseydoe



LinkedIn:
New Jersey Department of Education



Threads:
@NewJerseyDOE



X: @NewJerseyDOE



YouTube:
@newjerseydepartmentofeduca6565