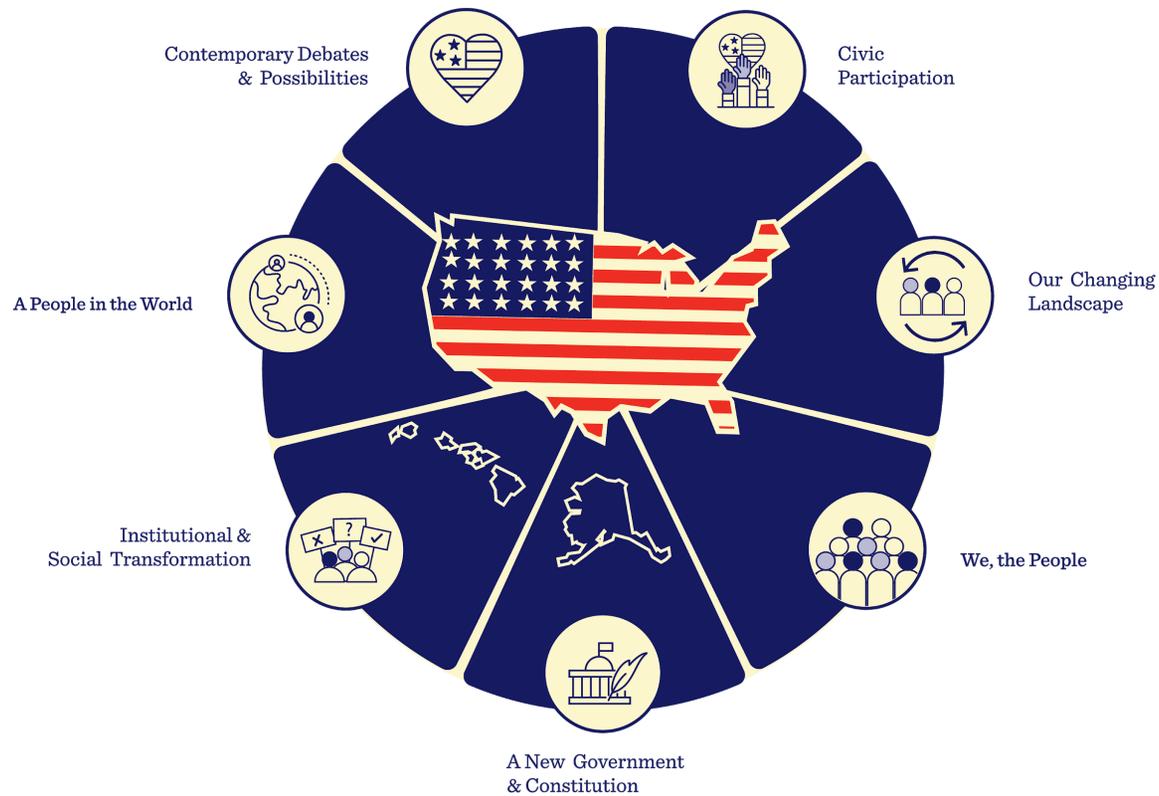


## Educating for American Democracy Roadmap Disability History and Civics Extension



Dear Educator:

Thank you for your interest in the [Education for American Democracy \(EAD\) Roadmap](#)! The *Roadmap* seeks to strengthen civic and history education for all young Americans in service of a healthier constitutional democracy. Along with its [Pedagogy Companion](#), the *Roadmap* offers guidance for content and instructional strategies for K-12 history and civics education across the United States. It is organized by major themes and questions, and vertically spiraled across four grade bands: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12. Importantly, the *Roadmap* includes 5 “design challenges”, which state honestly and transparently some of the rich dilemmas that educators will encounter as they work with the content themes and instructional guidance. Implemented effectively, this integrated approach to teaching history and civics can help students become more engaged and empowered citizens regardless of race, income, disability, and any number of other factors.

Effective implementation for *all* students therefore requires careful consideration of accessibility. This piece develops these considerations through a collaboration of civil rights organizations and expert feedback. In particular, educators must pay attention to these critical accessibility principles:

- Physical Accessibility: All students have physical access, including both access to coursework, educators, and resources, and, where necessary, accommodations to fully engage in opportunities.
- Pedagogical Accessibility: All course materials and content are differentiated, designed and delivered to ensure inclusion of the diversity of cultures, experiences, academic skill levels, and backgrounds of students.
- Narrative Accessibility: Students see both themselves and their peers in the stories and lessons.

The following guidance is designed around the 7 Key Themes and 5 Design Challenges of the *Roadmap*. Designed collaboratively with leading organizations and experts who work with specific populations, each section begins with key strengths, challenges, and relevant historical considerations for groups, provides direct example extensions for themes and design challenges, and ends with resources for further consideration. The piece is not meant to be exhaustive, but a constructive thought, conversation, deliberation, and collaboration starter for teams of educators and schools implementing EAD.

Please also note, the EAD framework is flexible and provides significant room for different and diverse experiments with implementation. EAD as an initiative celebrates the anticipated diversity of approaches. Emerging America and Learning Disabilities Association of America are both organizational champions of Educating for American Democracy. The work and content of this piece is the intellectual property of the authors and should not be construed as an endorsement by the broader Educating for American Democracy initiative or other partner organizations that champion the initiative.

## Introduction

There are nearly 7 million students with disabilities in the United States, making up 14% of the total student body nationally. This population is itself diverse, made up of 13 different disability categories ranging from the most prevalent, learning disabilities (i.e. dyslexia, dyscalculia, dysgraphia, etc.) which make up over a third of all disabilities, to the least prevalent, visual impairments, traumatic brain injury, and orthopaedic impairments, each making up less than one percent of the disability population. Students with disabilities face distinct obstacles to engaging in content that, with accommodations, can be addressed. Depending on the disability, this may include different means in accessing content, representing learning, and engaging with learning.

Students with disabilities bring a number of strengths to their civics classrooms, including a diversity of experiences and perspectives to topics and discussions. For example, the disability rights movement has been among the most successful civil rights movements in the country, and principles originating from the disability rights movement such as universal design for learning, self-advocacy and self-determination have enormous benefits for all learners in civics implementation. In the last century, the disability rights movement has made enormous strides in the American story, going from a group whose very right to exist was questioned, to reconceptualization of the needs and rights of veterans with disabilities in the wake of World War II, to a modern movement for full inclusion. Helping all students understand this history, key issues in the present, and possibilities in the future will improve the education of students with disabilities, and of their peers as well.

## The Seven Themes Disability Extension

Theme	Theme Summary	Sample Disability Extension
Theme 1: Civic Participation	This theme explores the relationship between self-government and civic participation, drawing on the discipline of history to explore how citizens' active engagement has mattered for American society and on the discipline of civics to explore the principles, values, habits, and skills that support productive engagement in a healthy, resilient constitutional democracy. This theme focuses attention on the overarching goal of engaging young people as civic participants and preparing them to assume that role successfully.	Explore what it means to be an inclusive classroom community. What actions and processes uphold that community? How has civic participation changed over time in terms of voting rights and access, who got to learn, and how they engaged?
Theme 2: Our Changing Landscapes	This theme begins with the recognition that American civic experience is tied to a particular place, and explores the history of how the United States developed the physical and geographical shape it has, the complex experiences of harm and benefit which that history has delivered to different portions of the American population, and the civics questions of	How have changing landscapes made it easier or harder to be an American with a disability? How have our schools and public buildings changed over time to enable participation? Who continues to be left out and how can they be included?

	<p>how political communities form in the first place, become connected to specific places, and develop membership rules. The theme also takes up the question of our contemporary responsibility to the natural world.</p>	
<p>Theme 3: We, the People</p>	<p>This theme explores the idea of “the people” as a political concept—not just a group of people who share a physical landscape but also a group of people who share political ideals and institutions. The theme explores the history of how the contemporary American people has taken shape as a political body and builds civic understanding about how political institutions and shared ideals can work to connect a diverse population to shared processes of societal decision-making. The theme also explores the challenge of <i>E pluribus unum</i>: forging one political people out of diverse experiences.</p>	<p>Who is included in the definition of what it means to be disabled? Who decides? How have definitions changed with regards to explicit legal rights? How have these legal rights changed Americans’ views of people with disabilities? How have people with disabilities been incorporated into the “We the People” lens and where is there still room to grow? What unique challenges do people with disabilities continue to face when participating in “We the People”?</p>
<p>Theme 4: A New Government Constitution</p>	<p>This theme explores the institutional history of the United States as well as the theoretical underpinnings of constitutional design.</p>	<p>How have legislative bodies and courts protected the rights of those with disabilities? What actions on the part of ordinary citizens have made these rights important and sustainable? What actions may have diminished those rights?</p>
<p>Theme 5: Institutional &amp; Social Transformation— A Series of Refoundings?</p>	<p>This theme explores how social arrangements and conflicts have combined with political institutions to shape American life from the earliest colonial period to the present, investigates which moments of change have most defined the country, and builds understanding of how American political institutions and society change.</p>	<p>How has the social definition of what it means to be an American with a disability changed over time? How have public and private institutions developed in response to changing needs? What has been the role of ordinary citizens within this process? What have been the experiences of those impacts in the lives of those with disabilities?</p>
<p>Theme 6: A People in the World</p>	<p>This theme explores the place of the U.S. and the American people in a global context, investigating key historical events in international affairs, and building understanding of the principles, values, and laws at stake in debates about America’s role in the world.</p>	<p>How has the history of disability rights impacted the lives of people with disabilities in other countries? How have actions in other countries impacted the lives of people with disabilities in the US? What international treaties and agreements uphold the rights of individuals with disabilities? How have these collective rights provided us with a broader understanding of what it means to be a “citizen”?</p>

<p>Theme 7: A People with Contemporary Debates &amp; Possibilities</p>	<p>This theme explores the contemporary terrain of civic participation and civic agency, investigating how historical narratives shape current political arguments, how values and information shape policy arguments, and how the American people continues to renew or remake itself in pursuing fulfillment of the promise of constitutional democracy.</p>	<p>How has treatment of individuals of people with disabilities changed over time in the US? How have people with disabilities emerged as political actors? What are their distinctive perspectives? What does that change tell us about future progress? What general lessons about the treatment of all people have emerged from this particular history?</p>
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### The Five Design Challenges

Design Challenge	Design Challenge Questions	Sample Disability Extension
<p>Design Challenge 1: Motivating Agency, Sustaining the Republic</p>	<p>DC1.1: How can we help students understand the full context for their roles as civic participants without creating paralysis or a sense of the insignificance of their own agency in relation to the magnitude of our society, the globe, and shared challenges? DC1.2: How can we help students become engaged citizens who also sustain civil disagreement and civic friendship, and thus American constitutional democracy? DC1.3: How can we help students pursue civic action that is authentic, responsible, and informed?</p>	<p>How can the teaching of history and civics relate to goals of promoting broader self-advocacy and self-determination for young people with disabilities so that they can succeed in postsecondary education, careers, and as active participants and leaders in their communities, states, and country? How can we ensure that all students take responsibility for making civic participation fully inclusive for everyone? How has this history impacted citizens who are not disabled? How has this history impacted our country's sense of collective empathy?</p>
<p>Design Challenge 2: America's Plural Yet Shared Story</p>	<p>DC2.1: How can we integrate the perspectives of Americans from all different backgrounds when narrating a history of the U.S. and explicating the content of the philosophical foundations of American constitutional democracy? DC2.2: How can we do so consistently across all historical periods and conceptual content? DC2.3: How can this more plural and more complete story of our history and foundations also be a common story, the shared inheritance of all Americans?</p>	<p>How can we understand disability history in the United States in a way that simultaneously acknowledges both the painful past and honors the substantial progress that has been made? How can we explore the distinctive identities, experiences, and contributions of Americans with disabilities to America's story? How can this specific history impact the history of other once marginalized citizens?</p>

<p>Design Challenge 3: Simultaneously Celebrating &amp; Critiquing Compromise</p>	<p>DC3.1: How do we simultaneously teach the value and the danger of compromise for a free, diverse, and self-governing people? DC3.2: How do we help students make sense of the paradox that Americans continuously disagree about the ideal shape of self-government but also agree to preserve shared institutions?</p>	<p>What key compromises have been made in the drafting and execution of key disability rights such as the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act and other laws? What have different groups in relevant debates advocated for? How have the resulting compromises impacted the lives of individuals with disabilities—for the positive and for the negative? How have such laws helped us to develop a more nuanced understanding of Civil Rights?</p>
<p>Design Challenge 4: Civic Honesty, Reflective Patriotism</p>	<p>DC4.1: How can we offer an account of U.S. constitutional democracy that is simultaneously honest about the wrongs of the past without falling into cynicism, and appreciative of the founding of the United States without tipping into adulation?</p>	<p>What have been the major events and realities that have defined the American disability rights movement? Which individuals and which communities have taken leadership to advance the rights of people with disabilities? What has been challenging, what has been promising, and what does that promise and challenge bode for our future as an inclusive society?</p>
<p>Design Challenge 5: Balancing the Concrete &amp; the Abstract</p>	<p>DC5.1: How can we support instructors in helping students move between concrete, narrative, and chronological learning, and thematic and abstract or conceptual learning?</p>	<p>How have key themes and concepts of disability, identity, accessibility, accommodations, universal design, and other important disability rights principles changed over time? How have technological and social changes shaped these ideals? How can we foster investigation of the stories of groundbreaking individuals and groups across the centuries? How has such knowledge impacted the professional growth of the helping and teaching professions?</p>