Central Idea:
- Government systems can promote or deny equal opportunities.

Key Concepts:
- Function: How does it work?
- Responsibility: What is our responsibility?
- Perspective: What are the different points of view?

Lines of Inquiry:
- Structure and functions of governments
- Rights and responsibilities of citizens
- Democracy and the power of the people

Related Concepts:
- Democracy
- Government
- Balance of Power
- Citizenship
- U.S. History

How We Organize Ourselves

This week we are launching our new unit, Powerful People, under the transdisciplinary theme, How We Organize Ourselves.

How We Organize Ourselves is all about the interconnectedness of human-made systems and communities; the structure and function of organizations; societal decision-making; economic activities and their impact on human-kind and the environment.

Fourth grade is focusing on government as a human-made system, the structure and function of our government, and societal decision-making through the democratic process.

The central idea is: Government systems can promote or deny equal opportunities.

This means your fourth grader will look at how The United States was founded on principles of freedom, democracy, and equality.

Overall, this unit is focused on government as an organizational tool that is unique to human civilizations. Students will inquire into a wide variety of questions such as:
- What is government? What different kinds of governments exist?
- Why and how are governments formed?
- What are the strengths and weakness of governments?
- More specifically, how does The United States government function?

For a national perspective, students will also look at the historical events that led to the U.S. independence, our democracy, and our fundamental beliefs about leadership, organization, and government.

For a more global perspective, students will make comparisons to other models of government such as the monarchy and parliamentary democracy of The United Kingdom.

WELCOME TO OUR SECOND UNIT OF INQUIRY!
Maryland Social Studies Curriculum Standards

WHAT SHOULD YOUR CHILD BE ABLE TO DO? (SKILLS)
By the end of fifth grade, students should be able to independently and collaboratively, ask compelling questions, brainstorm related questions, concepts, and ideas, and locate helpful resources to answer those questions. Students should also be able to examine historical documents, perspectives, time periods, etc. to draw conclusions and answer their own questions.

WHAT SHOULD YOUR CHILD KNOW AND UNDERSTAND? (KNOWLEDGE & CONCEPTS)
This unit has a dual focus: civics and history.

CIVICS: By the end of fifth grade, students should be able to distinguish, describe, explain, and compare the structure and function of different government systems. For example, students should understand how rules and laws are put into place, how leaders make decisions, and how we protect our values and freedoms. They should also be able to discuss and demonstrate civic participation.

HISTORY: By the end of fifth grade, students should be able to compare, question, explain, and connect events for our history and how they influenced our lives today. They should also be able to consider different perspectives across time periods, individuals, and groups.

A BRIEF OVERVIEW: At the same time, it is important for students to develop specific knowledge about our local, national history. Your fourth grader will look closely at the U.S. history that led to our current democracy. They will also look at our modern day government at both a state and national level. For a personal connection, students will examine these concepts in the classroom and school organizational systems.

♦ Week One: Introduction to the Theme: How We Organize Ourselves and the Concept of Government.
♦ Week Two: The Evolution of Democracy over Time from Greece to Modern Day.
♦ Week Three: The Historical Reasoning for U.S. Democracy beginning with Taxation without Representation.
♦ Week Five: A Closer Look at State Government with Maryland as a Case Study.

WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP!

READ & TALK
1. Biographies about Great American or Foreign Leaders: What are the characteristics of great leaders? What does it mean to be a good citizen?
2. Nonfiction Books about Politics, History, and Our Government: What is the main idea of this book, chapter, paragraph? How do you know?
3. Current Events in your Daily Newspaper: What are the facts in this article? What are the opinions? What is your opinion? Why?

FOR MORE INFORMATION
♦ College, Career, and Civic Life Framework
♦ Kids.Gov
♦ Helping Your Child

"No one is born a good citizen; no nation is born a democracy. Rather, both are processes that continue to evolve over a lifetime. Young people must be included from birth. A society that cuts off from its youth severs its lifeline." -- Kofi Annan