

The Quality of Ohio's Draft Social Studies Revision is Unauditable

Remarks to the Ohio State Board of Education, March 9, 2010

Eric Price, Quality Dayton

I did not find sufficient detail on the Social Studies Revision website to assess the quality of the draft standards. Specifically, how will the standards meet the expectation of United Nations, current and retired members of the Supreme Court of the United States, and observers such as Diane Ravitch, etc.? Regarding civics education, the draft standards do not clearly leverage organizations such as the American Bar Association, League of Women Voters, Annenberg Foundation (ourcourts.org and factchecked.org) and the Kettering Foundation (National Issues Forum in the Classroom, far preferable to Annenberg Student Voices).

Regarding social studies broadly, the advice of Dr. Diane Ravitch should be sought. Dr. Ravitch has served Ohio well in the past and today is a highly credible defender of traditional public schooling versus privatization. So her concerns--joined by officers of the American Federation of Teachers--must be taken seriously to protect the integrity of public education and the jobs of public school teachers. Dr. Ravitch recommends social studies standards be reviewed by members of the National Association of Scholars. This is the best advice we could follow if Ohio is to retain its leadership role in academic standards.

A constitutional system of public education must clearly meet US treaty obligations, and must not perpetuate--in the words of retired Justice Souter--"the dangerous state of civic knowledge today."

International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Ratified by the United States Senate in 1994, Article 7 of the convention states:

"States Parties undertake to adopt immediate and effective measures, particularly in the fields of teaching, education, culture and information, with a view to combating prejudices which lead to racial discrimination and to promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship among nations and racial or ethnical groups, as well as to propagating the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, and this Convention"

Current standards applicable to Article 7 are missing in the draft:

"Analyze historical and contemporary examples of citizen movements to bring about political change" and "Explain how an individual participates in primary and general elections including ... Identifying the major duties, responsibilities and qualifications required for a particular position; Becoming informed about candidates and issues;"

Remarks on Civic Education to the American Bar Association, by Retired Justice Souter, August 1, 2009

"... One way it [our republic] may be lost is by a kind of erosion in the minds of its people. It will be lost by citizens who lack the understanding to feel responsible for preserving the constitutional government that they have. ... He [ABA President] has pledged himself to support the creation of a committee charged with establishing working groups to look into the condition of civic education in each of the 50 states and to support the legislation and the administrative action needed state-by-state to ensure that a rising generation will not duplicate the dangerous state of civic knowledge today."

A Challenge to the Partnership for 21st Century Skills

"...All students—regardless of race or class—deserve a first-rate liberal arts education, rich in the study of history, science, literature, geography, civics, mathematics, the arts, technology, and

foreign languages. At the present time, there is growing pressure on our schools to reduce time spent on these disciplines and subjects to make room for what is now called '21st century skills.'"

- ... Kevin P. Chavous, co-founder, Democrats for Education Reform
- Antonia Cortese, Secretary-Treasurer, American Federation of Teachers ...
- Chester E. Finn, Jr., President, Thomas B. Fordham Institute ...
- E.D. Hirsch, Jr., founder, Core Knowledge Foundation
- Bill Honig, former Superintendent of Public Instruction, State of California ...
- Paul E. Peterson, ... Program on Education Policy and Governance, Harvard University
- Diane Ravitch, Research Professor of Education, New York University ...
- Sheldon M. Stern, Historian, John F. Kennedy Library (retired) ...
- Sandra Stotsky, Department of Education Reform, University of Arkansas
- Whitney Tilson, co-founder, Democrats for Education Reform
- Randi Weingarten, President, American Federation of Teachers
- Daniel Willingham, Professor of Psychology, University of Virginia ...
- Peter Wood, President, National Association of Scholars