

NATIONAL
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Civics
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from NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of SCHOLARS

Commissioner Deena Bishop, Ed.D.
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Dear Commissioner Bishop,

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Civics Alliance work to ensure that every state has academic standards that promote first-rate education and protect school children from political indoctrination. We promote reform of content standards in every state, along the lines modeled by the Civics Alliance's *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*,¹ and we have been asked by Alaska citizens to comment on the Department of Education & Early Development's (hereafter, the Department) current *Alaska Social Studies Standards* (2024), to help inform the Department for its next revision of these standards.² We conclude that the *Standards* require complete revision—and that this improvement should be conducted by recruiting an independent commission to redraft new social studies standards.

The Existing Standards: Complete Insufficiency

The *Alaska Social Studies Standards* (hereafter *Standards*) have avoided the worst of the extreme politicization, unprofessional vocabulary, and ideologically extreme content that have degraded social studies standards in several states including Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Minnesota.³

¹ *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright/>.

² Alaska Social Studies Standards (2024), Department of Education and Early Development, <https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/Adopted-AK-SS-Standards-2024.pdf>.

³ David Randall, *Disowned Yankees: How Connecticut's Social Studies Standards Shortchange Students* (National Association of Scholars, 2024), <https://www.nas.org/reports/disowned-yankees>; David Randall, *Taken for a RIDE: How Rhode Island's Social Studies Standards Shortchange Students* (National Association of Scholars, 2023), <https://www.nas.org/reports/taken-for-a-ride>; Wilfred M. McClay, *National Expert: Minnesota's Academic Standards Among the Nation's Worst: Review of the 2021 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies, Draft Three* (American Experiment, 2022), <https://files.americanexperiment.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Among-The-Nations->

Unfortunately, the *Standards* have steered clear of the worst ideologically extreme content because they largely have steered clear of *any* content. The Thomas B. Fordham Institute’s *The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021* gave Alaska’s social studies standards F’s in both Civics and History.⁴ Unfortunately, the Department’s thorough revision has not fixed the fundamental problems diagnosed by the Fordham Institute: generally content-free content standards, albeit with a moderate amount of material in Economics and a lesser amount of material on government, especially Alaska government. The revised *Standards* continue to contain virtually no historical content—and these absences include basic facts of American history, much of how our government works, and our foundational documents of liberty. The *Standards* also have introduced substantial new amounts of politicized material. The Fordham Institute would be justified in giving Fs to these revised *Standards* as well.

We understand that the Department does not want to micro-manage the curriculum of school districts and individual teachers, and we agree with that choice. Yet a state academic content standard, if it is to be provided at all, should be a useful document. It should help new teachers who are unfamiliar with social studies content and will benefit from guidance about social studies content. It should help provide prompts for state and school district assessment. It should help professional development, curriculum frameworks, model lesson plans, and textbook creation. The *Standards*, unfortunately, are not useful for any of these purposes.

The Department should not attempt to revise these fundamentally flawed *Standards*. It should start from the beginning and create new social studies standards, along fundamentally different lines. Below we list our recommendations for what principles should guide the Department as it creates new social studies standards.

Dependence on NCSS Materials

Many flaws in the Alaska’s Standards proceed from one general cause: the Standards unfortunately derive (pp. 6, 11) too much of their structure and emphases from the National Council for the Social Studies’ (NCSS) ideologically extreme definition of social studies,⁵ as well as from the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*.⁶ The *C3 Framework* in particular replaces content knowledge with insubstantial and opaque “inquiry”; replaces social studies pedagogy with identity politics ideologies such as Critical Race Theory; and inserts ideologically extreme activism pedagogies such as Action Civics.⁷

[Worst.pdf?_gl=1*hyyls*_ga*MjA3OTA5MTQ1Ny4xNzEyOTMzMjY5*_ga_03BRYTYNY0*MTcxMjkzMzE2OC4xLjEuMTcxMjkzMzE5MS4zNy4wLjA.](#)

⁴ Jeremy Stern, et al., *The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021* (Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2021), pp. 44-47, <https://fordhaminstitute.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdfs/20210623-state-state-standards-civics-and-us-history-20210.pdf#page=45>.

⁵ Comment on the NCSS’s New “Social Studies” Definition, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/comment-on-the-ncss-new-social-studies-definition/>.

⁶ *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, National Council for the Social Studies, <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3>.

⁷ David Randall, Issue Brief: The C3 Framework, National Association of Scholars, <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/issue-brief-the-c3-framework>; Stanley Kurtz, “Consensus by Surrender,” National Review, June 10, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/consensus-by-surrender/>.

Recommendation: The Department should ensure that its revised *Standards* are not informed either by the NCSS’s ideologically extreme definition of social studies or by the NCSS’ *C3 Framework*.

American Institutes for Research

A major part of the *Standards*’ dependence on the *C3 Framework*, and its fundamentally flawed approach, probably derived from the Department’s decision to hire American Institutes for Research (AIR) to take part in Alaska’s social studies standards revision process.⁸ States that hire AIR to take part in their social studies standards revision process standardly produce social studies standards that recapitulate the flaws of the NCSS’ *C3 Framework*: insufficient content knowledge, extensive use of “inquiry” pedagogy, heavy use of “skills” instruction; action civics; and at least some identity-politics ideology influence on content. All these consequences are the predictable results of hiring AIR. The Department’s decision to hire AIR was tantamount to a decision to adopt the ideologically extreme structure of the NCSS’ *C3 Framework*.

Recommendation: The Department should not hire AIR, or in any way involve AIR, in any part of the creation or revision of its *Standards*.⁹

Racially Discriminatory Drafting Process

The *Standards* state that,

The AHWG [Alaska History Workgroup] was composed of 8 individuals, including educators, education leaders, and representatives of Alaska tribes. This included representation from the Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, and Alaska Native Heritage Center. The function of the AHWG was to develop guidance for the inclusion of state history, Tribal government, and Indigenous histories. (p. 7)

The *Standards* further note that, “one of the AHWG members shared the guiding principles with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska’s Education Committee for feedback.” (p. 8) These statements indicate that the Department has engaged in illegal racial discrimination in creating its *Standards*. Alaska mandates instruction in Alaska Native history because it is part of the history of all Alaska citizens, and to benefit all Alaskans. Alaska’s legislature did not license race discrimination, but the Department impermissibly has used race categories to discriminate among its content advisors.

Recommendation: The Department should redraft all aspects of its *Standards* that drew upon content advisors selected using racial categories.

Recommendation: The Department should document for the Alaska public that it has selected all content advisors from the entire body of Alaska citizenry, without regard to

⁸ Deena Bishop to Members of the State Board of December 5, 2024 Education & Early Development, December 5, 2024, https://education.alaska.gov/state_board/december-2024/5A%20Cover%20Memo%20Business%20Meeting%20-%20Social%20Studies%20Standards.pdf.

⁹ Furthermore, journalists recently have published evidence that AIR has overcharged the federal government for its work as a contractor. Alex Gutentag and Michael Shellenberger, “US Education Department Contractor Overcharged Taxpayers While Spending Millions On Executive Salaries,” *Public*, March 17, 2025, <https://www.public.news/p/us-education-department-contractor>. Prudence suggests that the Department and state policymakers both should investigate whether AIR has overcharged the Department for its work.

race or sex, including advisors who represent the full range and approximate proportions of the Alaska citizenry's beliefs.

Lack of Lucidity Prevents Democratic Accountability

The *Standards* are so difficult to read that scarcely anyone knows exactly what they say or what they mean. The *Standards* present content by a complicated framework of Anchor Standards, Grade-Band Standards, and Leveled Content Standards, rather than a simple list format. Their opaque format reduces comprehension by teachers, which limits its effectiveness, and reduces comprehension by the public, which prevents democratic accountability. The *Standards* confess their incomprehensibility by including a nine-page section on "How to Read the Standards." (pp. 12-20)

Recommendation: The Department should redraft the *Standards* in a straightforward list format divided by individual grade band in Grades K-8 and by course in Grades 9-12.

Pervasive Empty Verbiage

The *Standards* unfortunately draws upon the National Council for the Social Studies' (NCSS) *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*,¹⁰ which focuses upon banal jargon about "social studies skills," leavened with radical polemic, at the expense of real content.¹¹ The *Standards* therefore include pervasive empty and undefined verbiage:

Standards should provide students with place-based content, including themes related to geographic location, human engagement with and impact on the environment, and a nexus of perspectives within a location, and historic and contemporary movement. (p. 10)

Standards ensure a focus on student agency through inquiry and authentic learning opportunities that honor students' intellectual capacity to foster skill development and comprehension that have real-world connections. (p. 10)

Enduring questions focus on real-world issues and concerns. (p. 18)

Compelling questions have no one answer. (p. 18)

Active listening. (p. 24)

Responsible participation. (p. 42)

Investigate complex and diverse characteristics of human cultures across time and place, using multiple sources of information. (SS.6.2.19.1, p. 70)

Describe the characteristics of civilization using real-world examples. (SS.6.2.19.2, p. 70)

Analyze how Alaska has been a strategic position for the United States. (SS.5.1.20.1, p. 60)

Analyze how the geography of Alaska's regions influences the conflicts and alliances that arise during war. (SS.6.1.17.2, p. 70)

¹⁰ *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, National Council for the Social Studies, <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/c3>.

¹¹ The C3 Framework, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/the-c3-framework/>.

Listen to understand. (SS.9-12.4.8, p. 95)

Share personal views with the intent of promoting mutual understanding and productive, nonhostile speech. (SS.9-12.4.7, p. 95)

The *Standards* in large areas provide no help to a principal or teacher who wants to proceed beyond banalities that are at a best a prologue to actual education.

Recommendation: The Department should end its reliance upon the NCSS' *C3 Framework* and remove all concepts and languages from its Standards that draw upon or parallel the concepts and language of the *C3 Framework*.

Recommendation: The Department should redraft the *Standards* to remove all banal jargon and empty verbiage.

Language Errors

The Standards generally give an unfortunate appearance of illiteracy among its personnel by using *impact* rather than *affect*, *effect*, or *consequence*. (*Standards*, *passim*: 97 instances)

Recommendation: The Department, when drafting content standards, should employ only personnel who command the English language and possess professional copyediting skills.

Absent Factual Content

Alaska's previous social standards already did an extraordinarily poor job at providing historical content. The new *Standards* largely preserve the inadequacies of the previous standards. While there is some substance in the Economics strand, and limited substance in the Civics strand, the *Standards* possess virtually no historical content. The names of Christopher Columbus, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln are absent. But so are (to select from an extraordinary catalogue of absences) *Christianity*, *Protestantism*, and *Catholicism*; any hint that technological advance might have improved Americans' standard of living; and virtually all of the narrative, events, and heroes of America's wars. Virtually the only content on America's rich common culture is "Analyze the cultural contributions of modernism, the Harlem Renaissance, and the New Woman." (SS.US.4.22.1, p. 121) The *Standards* provides very little useful guidance to school districts, teachers, providers of professional development, textbook companies, or assessment companies.

School districts and teachers should have substantial liberty to determine their own curricula. But if there are going to be state standards at all, they should help school districts and teachers by providing a content-rich outline of subjects to be covered. If the Department is not going to provide an outline of content to assist school districts, it should not waste taxpayer dollars by providing almost useless standards.

Recommendation: The Department should redraft the *Standards* to provide content-rich social studies standards, such as *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards* and the social studies standards of Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Virginia.¹²

¹² *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, p. 18, <https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright/>; Louisiana Student Standards Social Studies, Louisiana Department of Education, https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academic-standards/02-08-2022---draft-louisiana-social-studies-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=52de6518_14; Oklahoma Academic Standards

Inquiry-Based Learning

“Inquiry-Based Learning” is a pedagogy that focuses on questions to the exclusion of answers. “Inquiry-Based Learning” encourages teachers to replace instruction in content with instruction in “skills”—instruction which becomes hollow when not accompanied by content knowledge. The NCSS’ *C3 Framework* is committed to inquiry-based learning; so in consequence is the AIR. The *Standards*, unfortunately, have been explicitly subordinated throughout to inquiry-based learning: “Standards should be grounded in inquiry-based learning opportunities that incorporate various experiential, real-world contexts for students (home, classroom, school, community) and utilize Indigenous ways of learning.” (p. 9) The *Standards* dedicate themselves to “inquiry,” and scant content knowledge, because of this deleterious pedagogical commitment.

Recommendation: The Department should remove all “Inquiry-Based Learning” from the *Standards* and replace them with a content-rich framework.

Social Studies Education Subordinated to Action Civics

The *Standards*’ subordinates social studies education throughout to “action civics,” also known as “protest civics,” which uses the pedagogy of “service-learning” to substitute vocational training in progressive activism for classroom civics education.¹³ The *Standards* cue organizing students for progressive protest by standards such as, “Plan and demonstrate ways in which engaged citizens can effect change in their tribe, community, state, nation, or world.” (SS.9-12.10.3, p. 100)

The *Standards* uses the vocabulary of action civics pervasively, in such phrases as *active citizenship*, *active civic participation*, *advocacy*, *civic engagement*, *collective impact*, *engaged citizens*, *implement solutions*, *informed action*, and *organize solutions through action*. They also repeatedly conflate action civics with progressive advocacy:

Civic discourse ... also involves enabling effective decision-making aimed at finding consensus, compromise, or—in some cases—confronting social injustices through dissent. (p. 19)

Collaborate to create a plan for future preservation or use of Alaska’s resources. (SS.6.3.1.16.5, p. 72)

Engage in collaborative discussions about the ongoing struggle for civil rights, equal justice, and the responsibilities of citizenship in a diverse society. (SS.8.7.5.1, p. 91)

Social Studies, <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/fox23.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/c/9b/c9b26f13-94af-475b-9c8b-e37a2551d7a0/680aad526bfd6.pdf.pdf>; South Dakota Social Studies Standards, South Dakota Department of Education, <https://doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/documents/SS-Standards-2023.pdf>; 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning, Virginia Department of Education, <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/history-and-social-science/standards-of-learning-1276>.

¹³ Stanley Kurtz, “‘Action Civics’ Replaces Citizenship with Partisanship,” *The American Mind*, January 16, 2021, <https://americanmind.org/memo/action-civics-replaces-citizenship-with-partisanship/>; Thomas K. Lindsay and Lucy Meckler, “*Action Civics*,” “*New Civics*,” “*Civic Engagement*,” and “*Project-Based Civics*”: *Advances in Civic Education?* (Texas Public Policy Foundation, 2020), <https://www.texaspolicy.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Lindsay-Meckler-Action-Civics.pdf>.

Recognize historic inequalities in the United States and Alaska and evaluate proposed solutions to correct them. (SS.9-12.10.7, p. 100)

A substantial amount of American history, from the Colonial era through the American Revolution to the present is presented only as a historical prologue to “civic engagement,” rather than important in its own right: “Reflect on the lessons from Colonial America to engage in discussions about the importance of civic engagement, individual rights, and the balance of power in contemporary society.” (SS.8.3.5.1, p. 82; and see SS.8.4.5.1, p. 86; SS.8.4.7.1, p. 86; SS.8.7.23.3, p. 91; SS.8.8.7.1, p. 93)

The *Standards* spend far more time directing students to engage in action civics than they do in directing them to learn about the ideals and history of liberty, civic virtue and republican self-government, or the structure of our constitutional republic.

Recommendation: The Department should revise the *Standards* to remove all action civics, including s civic engagement, service-learning, or any other euphemism for the same activity. It especially should remove all aspects of *Anchor Standard 5: Informed Civic Discourse and Engagement* and *Anchor Standard 7: Participation and Deliberation*.

Ideological Distortion

Much of the *Standards*’ content has been ideologically distorted, to suit progressive and radical ideology.

Geography

The *Standards*’ Geography strand is very substantially progressive activism that has hollowed out actually instruction in geographical knowledge. The very definition of Geography has been radicalized: “Global-scale issues and problems cannot be resolved without extensive collaboration among the world’s peoples, nations, and economic organizations.” (p. 15; and see p. 16) The Geography strand’s constant focus on “cultural and environmental characteristics of places or regions” (SS.K-2.16.2, p. 31; and see pp. 32, 34, 36) replaces geographical knowledge with progressive activism. The Geography strand’s environmental activism commitment even leads it to include material that properly belongs in an Earth Science class: “Demonstrate an understanding of the formation of landforms, including erosion, deposition, glaciation, and tectonic and volcanic processes.” (SS.7.1.18.4, p. 75)

Recommendation The *Standards*’ Geography strand throughout should focus on factual knowledge of Alaska, the United States, and the world, and avoid material that promotes ideologically extreme activism (e.g., climate change activism or open borders activism).

Identity Politics: Alaska Natives

A substantial portion of the *Standards*’ ideological distortion focuses upon identity politics presentation of Alaska Natives and their history. Some part of this distortion is encoded in the use of vocabulary such as “Indigenous.” As Samuel Lair has noted, phrases such as “Indigenous perspectives” denote an ideologically motivated effort to “decolonize” the curriculum, which results in the distortion or omission of traditional American history. The ultimate goal of using such vocabulary is the indoctrination of students to become “radical Left activists” who will oppose what seek to revolutionize American as a whole, as an example of ongoing colonialism

and systemic racism.¹⁴ Far too much of this radical vocabulary pervades the *Standards* coverage of Alaska Natives—as the *Standards*’ Guiding Principles state was intended: “Alaska Native culture, history, perspectives, values, and practices should be thoughtfully incorporated throughout the social studies standards and contextualized within a contemporary global indigeneity framework.” (p. 9)

Examples of vocabulary and content that articulate racialized deference, racialized difference and radical ideology, none of them appropriate to the *Standards* of a free and equal citizenry, include “Celebrates the diversity of peoples, cultures, perspectives, voices, and ideologies in Alaska” (p. 6); “Indigenous ways of knowing” (p. 9; and see SS.6.3.16.1, p. 72); land acknowledgments (SS.4.1.9.1, p. 47);¹⁵ “Explore inequality throughout the history of Alaska and its connection to current issues.” (SS.5.1.25.1, p. 67); “colonial rule” (SS.AKH.4.23.1, p. 110; SS.AKH.4.24.2, p. 110; and see SS.AKH.4.8.1, p. 111; SS.AKH.5.10.2, p. 112); “colonial assimilationist policies” (SS.AKH.4.23.2, p. 111; and see SS.US.23.9.1, p. 115); “Examine the reciprocal relationship between Alaska Native peoples and Alaska’s environment.” (SS.9-12.20.2, p. 106);¹⁶ and “expertise”.¹⁷ Phrases such as “Indigenous resistance efforts” (SS.US.1.8.2, p. 114; and see SS.AKH.4.8.1, p. 111; SS.US.1.21.2, p. 114) and “Manifest Destiny” (SS.US.1.25.1, p. 115) also forward identity-politics polemic. The phrase “Indigenous and immigrant residents” (p. 18) delegitimizes white Alaskans as equally native to Alaska; the entire Theme “The Myth of the Last Frontier” (p. 110) further delegitimizes American Alaska.

Recommendation: The Department should redraft the *Standards* to remove all identity-politics ideology. It should particularly remove all items that forward a “decolonizing,” “Indigenous” ideology, and which delegitimize the American people’s rightful possession of Alaska.

Ideological Distortion: General

The *Standards* contain pervasive vocabulary and concepts that distort the *Standards*’ content to forward an ideologically extreme political agenda. Some examples include:

Reflect on lessons from history to engage in discussions about present-day issues related to cultural exchange, environmental impact, and global cooperation. (SS.8.2.5.1, p. 82)

¹⁴ Samuel Lair, “CRT 2.0,” *The American Mind*, January 23, 2025, <https://americanmind.org/salvo/crt-2-0/>.

¹⁵ *Land acknowledgment* is a phrase intended to delegitimize the United States. Jay Schalin, “The Antisocial Mind of the ‘Land Acknowledger,’” *The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal*, June 30, 2025, <https://jamesgmartin.center/2025/06/the-antisocial-mind-of-the-land-acknowledger/>. The *Standards* use camouflaging phrasing: “Examine Indigenous land ownership, rights, and acknowledgment in Alaska and other areas.” The camouflaging phrasing suggests that the drafts of the *Standards* knew that Alaska’s citizens would object if they saw the phrase *land acknowledgment* presented straightforwardly.

¹⁶ Every people has a reciprocal relationship with the environment. The claim that Alaska Natives have a specifically reciprocal relationship with the environment is a staple of identity-politics ideology, which surely should not be presented in the *Standards* as an unquestionable fact.

¹⁷ The *Standards* define “expertise” as “developed from multiple ways of knowing.” (SS.9-12.2.4, p. 94) Since the only “way of knowing” listed in the *Standards* is Indigenous, the *Standards* therefore indirectly define the Indigenous as “experts.” Later standards should be read with this equation in mind: e.g., “Take informed action to create and implement solutions to a local issue, incorporating perspectives from local experts.” (SS.9-12.9.4, p. 99)

Critique inequities in different economic systems. (SS.9-12.11.3, p. 101)

Investigate how identity groups and society address systemic inequity through individual actions; individual champions; social movements; and local community, national, and global advocacy. (SS.US.2.7.1, p. 116)

Evaluate the inclusivity and exclusivity of Progressive Era reform movements. (SS.US.3.21.2, p. 119)

Investigate how identity groups and society address chronic inequity through individual actions; individual champions; social movements; and local community, national, and global advocacy. (SS.US.6.21.1, p. 124)

Analyze the factors affecting climate change and global sustainability. (SS.WH.6.14.2, p. 129)

These examples, and many others, subordinate all of the *Standards* to the ideological agenda of radical activists.

Recommendation: The Department should remove from the *Standards* every word and phrase drawn from radical polemical vocabulary.

New Standards Structure

The revised *Standards* should incorporate a thoroughly revised structure. Aspects of the revised structure should include:

Liberty and Documents of Liberty: The *Standards* should emphasize instruction in America's foundational commitment to the ideal of liberty. The *Standards* should add to its four Disciplines (Civics, Economics, Geography, and History) the Disciplines of *Liberty*¹⁸ and *Documents of Liberty*. The *Standards* should incorporate throughout K-12 instruction a series of named documents that illustrate the Western and American commitment to the ideals and institutions of liberty into the *Standards*, including at least the 24 documents specified by Kentucky in KRS 158.196.¹⁹ The series also should include a broader selection of documents illustrating the intellectual background of the Founding Documents and American history. (See **Appendix 1: Recommended Historical Documents**.) The Department should also publish a *Documents of Liberty Reader* and provide lesson plans and professional development to facilitate instruction in the Documents of Liberty.

¹⁸ "Liberty" should be defined as: "The slow development and application of the ideals and institutions of liberty, particularly those embodied in constitutional self-government. Students generally should be able to identify the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government; assess the extent to which civilizations have fulfilled these ideals; and describe how the evolution of these ideals at different times and in different places has contributed to the formation of modern American ideals." *American Birthright*, pp. 22-23.

¹⁹ KRS 158.196, <https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/law/statutes/statute.aspx?id=53057>.

Geography: The *Standards* throughout should focus on factual knowledge of Alaska, the United States, and the world, and avoid material that promotes ideologically extreme activism (e.g., climate change activism or open borders activism).²⁰

Patriotic Elementary School Education: Many social studies standards rely on a flawed pedagogy, which believes that children should first learn about the community, then the state, and finally the nation. Advocates of this approach underestimate young children's ability to understand America's symbols, values, and virtues. Consequently, they fail to provide students with the essential early education in America's shared heritage of freedom. Florida's excellent 2021 revised Civics and Government Strand used an effective pedagogy to teach K-6 students about America, and we have integrated Florida's patriotic focus into *American Birthright*. The revised standards should highlight patriotic content and ensure its inclusion in K-2.

American History: The *Standards* should include material on America's colonial history—the first 150 years of our nation's history. It also should include substantial coverage of America's and Alaska's common culture, integrated throughout its coverage of American and Alaskan history. The history of common culture is the history of what unites Americans and Alaskans, rather than what divides them. It is also the history of people enjoying themselves—their stories and their music—and students need to learn that history is more than a dour series of political and social problems and crises.

Western Civilization: The *Standards* should include a required Western Civilization sequence, consisting of spiraled instruction in Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and high school, which provides the coherent narrative of the ideals and institutions of liberty that formed America, as well as the histories of liberty, faith, science, and technology. The *Standards* would especially benefit from extended historical coverage of:

- I. The Renaissance rediscovery and elaboration of the concepts of liberty, individualism, republicanism, and tolerance
- II. England's history of liberty from Magna Carta to Henry VIII to John Wilkes, including common law, the growth of parliamentary power, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution, legal freedoms such as habeas corpus, and the expansion in England of a culture and society animated by the ideals of freedom.

This Western Civilization sequence should replace existing World History instruction.

World History: The *Standards* also should create a distinct World History sequence, which provides fuller coverage of Asian, African, and Latin American history.

Military, Religious, Economic, and Scientific History: Alaska students cannot understand the true history of the West, America, or Alaska if they do not learn full accounts of our wars, faiths, free markets, and scientific discoveries. The revised *Standards* should make central these fundamental themes of history.

²⁰ "Geography" should be defined as: "Geographers and students of geography learn how to make and understand maps, inform themselves of the natural and political contours of the world, and use this knowledge to illuminate their understanding of economics and history."

Primary Sources: The *Standards* should integrate a large number of primary sources into K-12 instruction, especially Grades 8-12 instruction, such as are provided by *American Birthright*.

Content-Rich Factual Standards: The *Standards* should provide content-rich, factual social studies standards, such as *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards* and the social studies standards of Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Virginia.²¹ The factual material should provide sufficient material for state and local assessment, teacher preparation, textbook creation, and other educational purposes.

Reading and Writing Expectations: The *Standards* should have firm and clear expectations for reading and writing, which parents may use to hold their schools and their teachers accountable.

- I. The *Standards* should integrate concrete reading expectations, which build toward students capable by graduation from high school of reading an intellectually and stylistically sophisticated 200-page history book, to demonstrate that they are prepared for an undergraduate history course.
- II. The *Standards* should integrate concrete writing expectations, which build toward students capable by graduation from high school of writing an intellectually and stylistically sophisticated 5-page history paper, to demonstrate that they are prepared for an undergraduate history course.

Format and Style: The *Standards* should be presented in a straightforward list format of content-rich Standards, without Anchor Standards, Grade-Band Standards, and Leveled Content Standards, or any other complicating categories that are not written as standards and that impede comprehension of what the *Standards* actually mandate. Wherever possible, concrete details should be presented as “i.e.” rather than “e.g.”, to make clear that what is mentioned is meant to be taught and assessed. The *Standards* should be lucid, concrete, and precise throughout.

Independent Commission

The Department’s regular personnel have failed so completely to provide adequate social studies standards that social studies standards revision should not be undertaken entirely by the Department.

Recommendation: The Department should ask Alaska’s policymakers to appoint an independent commission to redraft Alaska’s social studies standards. Effective revision of

²¹ *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, p. 18, <https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright/>; Louisiana Student Standards Social Studies, Louisiana Department of Education, https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academic-standards/02-08-2022---draft-louisiana-social-studies-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=52de6518_14; Oklahoma Academic Standards Social Studies, <https://bloximages.chicago2.vip.townnews.com/fox23.com/content/tncms/assets/v3/editorial/c/9b/c9b26f13-94af-475b-9c8b-e37a2551d7a0/680aad526bfd6.pdf.pdf>; South Dakota Social Studies Standards, South Dakota Department of Education, <https://doe.sd.gov/contentstandards/documents/SS-Standards-2023.pdf>; 2023 History and Social Science Standards of Learning, Virginia Department of Education, <https://www.doe.virginia.gov/teaching-learning-assessment/k-12-standards-instruction/history-and-social-science/standards-of-learning-1276>.

the *Standards* must be carried out by a commission independent of the Department personnel.

Strategic Recommendations

We have provided the above recommendations for revision to the *Standards*, but we do not believe that social studies standards revision can or should be undertaken entirely by the Department. We make two strategic recommendations to the Department and Alaska policymakers.

Licensure Requirements and Professional Development: The Department should also update its licensure requirements and professional development to ensure that its teachers are equipped to teach curriculum that aligns with our suggested emphases.

Statutory Reform: The Department should ask state policymakers to enact laws that ensure proper social studies instruction in all Alaska public K-12 schools.²²

Conclusion

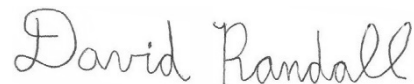
The Alaska Department of Education should rescind the Draft Standards and replace it with a content-rich, unpoliticized social studies standard that replaces inculcation of radical polemic with teaching the history of America and Alaska. Its revision should follow all the Recommendations we have made in this public comment. We suggest that the Department examine our model *American Birthright* social studies standards, but we also suggest that it examine the fine alternate models of Louisiana, Oklahoma, South Dakota, and Virginia. The Department also should request Alaska policymakers to appoint an independent commission to redraft new social studies standards.

Respectfully yours,



Peter Wood

President, National Association of Scholars



David Randall

Executive Director, Civics Alliance

²² Civics Alliance: Social Studies Curriculum Act, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-palm-card/social-studies-curriculum-act/>; Civics Course Act, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/civics-course-act/>; United States History Act, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/united-states-history-act/>; Western Civilization Act, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/western-civilization-act/>; Historical Documents Act, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/historical-documents-act/>; and more broadly, the Model K-12 Civics Code, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/>.

Appendix 1: Recommended Historical Documents

Founding Documents, Intellectual Background

Magna Carta (1215)
 Petition of Right (1628)
 English Bill of Rights (1689)
 Toleration Act (1689)
 John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* (1690)
 Montesquieu, *The Spirit of Laws* (1748)

United States Documents

Articles, Laws, and Orders of Virginia (1610)
 Fundamental Orders of Connecticut (1639)
 Massachusetts Body of Liberties (1641)
 Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges (1701),
 John Woolman, *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754)
 John Adams, *Braintree Resolves* (1765)
Common Sense (1776)
 Virginia Declaration of Rights (1776)
 Massachusetts Constitution and Declaration of Rights (1780)
 Virginia Statute for Religious Freedom (1786)
 Northwest Ordinance (1787)
 Anti-Federalist Papers: Brutus No. 1 (1787)
 The Federal Farmer, *Letter III* (1787)
 The Federalist Nos. 9 (Alexander Hamilton), 39 (James Madison), and 78 (Alexander Hamilton) (1787-88)
 Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (1791)
 Thomas Jefferson, First Inaugural Address (1801)
 Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America, Volume I* (1835) and *Volume II* (1839)

Abraham Lincoln, “Speech on the Dred Scott Decision” (1857)
 Abraham Lincoln, “House Divided” speech (1858)
 Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address (1865)
 Niagara Movement Declaration of Principles (1905)
 Theodore Roosevelt, “The Man with the Muck-rake,” speech (1906)
 Woodrow Wilson, “Peace Without Victory,” speech (1917)
Schenck v. United States (1919)
 Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes’ dissenting opinion in the case of *Abrams v. United States* (1919)
 Herbert Hoover, *Rugged Individualism* (1928)
 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, First Inaugural Address (1933)
 Franklin Delano Roosevelt, “Four Freedoms” speech (1941)
 Justice Robert M. Jackson’s opinion for the Supreme Court in *West Virginia State Board of Education v. Barnette* (1943)
 Learned Hand, *The Spirit of Liberty* (1944)
 The Truman Doctrine (1947)
 George Kennan, “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” (1947)
 John F. Kennedy, Inaugural Address (1961)
 Ronald Reagan, Berlin Wall Speech (1987)
 Ronald Reagan, Speech at Moscow State University (1988)
 George W. Bush, Second Inaugural Address (2005)
District of Columbia v. Heller (2008)
Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization (2022)