

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

Governor Kristi Noem
500 E. Capitol Drive
Pierre, SD 57501

October 12, 2021

Dear Governor Noem,

We are delighted to learn that you have decided to delay South Dakota's Social Studies Standards revision process. The National Association of Scholars works to ensure that every state has academic standards that promote first-rate education and protect school children from political indoctrination. We endorse your decision as an excellent move for South Dakota's public K-12 schools.

We urge you to build on this fine decision by pausing the adoption of other standards currently in the revision process. We are afraid that South Dakota's dependence on status-quo procedures will continue to facilitate the capture of South Dakota's public K-12 schools by a highly radical national education establishment. Just as South Dakota's draft social studies standards are built on the progressive framework of the National Council for the Social Studies' *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, we also note distressing aspects (for example) of South Dakota's draft Fine Arts Standards. Items such as "Evaluate how society became a catalyst for the direction of an art movement or how art transformed or influenced society." (HSa.VA.Cn.11.2) invite abuse by radical teachers. The Fine Arts standards, moreover, vaguely mandate students to 'Relate artistic ideas and work with societal, historical, cultural, and personal context to deepen understanding.' (Anchor Standard 11: K-12.Cn.11).

Instead the Fine Arts standards should direct students to study the history of the fine arts and aesthetic analysis, rooted in the Western culture that formed America's conception of the fine arts. The very concept of Fine Arts, after all, comes from this tradition—the French Enlightenment term *beaux arts*, translated into English as *fine arts*. South Dakota's proposed draft Fine Art standards need substantial revision—and this will take time. As with the social studies standards, South Dakota should also pause before adopting the proposed Fine Arts standards. It is better to start anew than attempt to reform structurally flawed standards.

In general, South Dakota should pause before adopting ANY further standards, and establish a new procedure by which to draft and evaluate K-12 standards. We recommend using a process similar to that used in Massachusetts in the late 1990s and early 2000s that yielded nationally recognized standards. We are happy to recommend names of individuals who share your 1776 Action vision to help with this process if you would like.

We are grateful for your strong stand on South Dakota Social Studies Standards. You will ensure the success of your fine work to improve South Dakota education if you undertake these further measures.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Wood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Peter Wood
President, National Association of Scholars

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Randall". The signature is more formal and legible than the one above, with clear letter shapes.

David Randall
Project Director, Civics Alliance