

NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION
of SCHOLARS

Civics
Alliance

from NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of SCHOLARS

Director Charlene Williams
Oregon Department of Education
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310-0203

May 8, 2024

Dear Director Williams,

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Civics Alliance have been asked by Oregon citizens to comment on the Oregon Department of Education's *2024 Oregon Draft Social Science Standards* (hereafter *Draft Standards*).¹ We 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*.²

We conclude that the *Draft Standards* does a great disservice to the citizens, students, and teachers of Oregon. The *Draft Standards* possesses virtually no content knowledge. It consists largely of radical polemic. The Oregon Education Department 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 Western Civilization, America, and Oregon.

¹ *2024 Oregon Draft Social Science Standards*, https://www.oregon.gov/ode/educator-resources/standards/socialsciences/Documents/Draft%20Social%20Science%20Standards%204.18.24_.pdf?utm_medium=email&utm_source=govdelivery.

² *American Birthright: The Civics Alliance's Model K-12 Social Studies Standards*, Civics Alliance, <https://civicsalliance.org/american-birthright/>.

Pervasive Radicalization

The *Draft Standards* incorporate identity-politics ideology polemics throughout, and scant or subordinate actual social studies instruction to that ideology. This is stated explicitly as one of the Essential Social Science Skills and Practices: “Evaluate and assess how discrimination, racism, and inequality shape historical narratives, individual perspectives, intersecting identities, and an understanding of the past and present” (EP.5, p. 3; and see EP.6, p. 3 and EP.8, p. 3). The *Draft Standards* also state explicitly that they are to be integrated with the *Transformative Social Emotional Learning Framework and Standards*, which includes “Providing students with opportunities to reflect upon and understand the root cause of emotions related to our biases, stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination” and “supporting students to take actions that challenge and change systems” (p. 4). The *Draft Standards* likewise state that they will practice “Inclusive Social Science,” which demands that “Throughout the K-12 standards, students investigate how laws, policies, and other social interactions are often shaped by gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, class, and disability (p. 4).

These ambitions are antithetical to actual social studies instruction, which should not seek to impose a narrow, radicalizing, and factually inaccurate ideology on students. The *Draft Standards* effectively incorporate these misguided ambitions throughout the individual standards. A sampling of the results, far from comprehensive, includes:

- **Identity-Politics Ideology Imposed Throughout, and as Early as Kindergarten:** “Recognize and develop an understanding of the components of a person’s identity including race, gender, family, ethnicity, culture, religion, and ability” (K.C.IR.2, p. 5); “Use primary and secondary sources to evaluate how the intersectionality of identities including, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, race, ethnicity, religion, physical and mental ability, and class affect the living histories and experiences of peoples, groups, and events” (8.H.CE.9, p. 55; and see 2.G.HI.5, p. 14; 4.C.IR.3, p. 23; HS.US.CP.16, p. 68; HS.US.CP.21, p. 69).
- **Cheerleading of Radical Activism Substituted for Historical Analysis:** “Identify examples in stories and biographies of unfairness or injustice towards individuals or groups, and the changemakers working to make the world more just and fairer” (K.H.CC.2, p. 8; and see 2.H.CC.4, p. 17; 3.H.CC.3, p. 22; 6/7.C.IR.8, p. 38; 8.C.CE.14, p. 50).
- **Insertion of Radical Ideology into Economics Instruction:** “Examine the consequences of power and privilege on issues associated with poverty, income, and wealth accumulation” (4.E.ES.1, p. 25; and see 2.E.ES.2, p. 16; 5.E.IC.9, p. 32; 6/7.E.IC.9, p. 42; 8.E.ES.6, p. 52; 8.E.MI.9, p. 52; HS.E.ST.15, p. 64).
- **Removal of Basic Historical Analysis in Service of Identity-Politics Ideology:** The phrase “Time Immemorial” subordinates historical inquiry to radical Amerind polemics and political agendas (2.H.CH.1, p. 17; 2.H.CE.3, p. 17).
- **Subordination of Historical Analysis to Oppressor/Oppressed Ideology:** “Examine how the decisions of those in power affected those with less political/economic power in

past and current movements for equality, freedom, and justice with connections to the present-day” (5.H.CC.3, p. 33; and see 5.H.CEP.9, p. 34).

- **Mechanical Distortion of Social Studies Instruction in Service of Identity Politics Ideology:** most egregiously, the extraordinarily vague standards for World History, with copy-and-paste insertion of the phrase *with attention to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and individuals*: “Describe the rights and roles of citizens in civilizations and empires to 900 CE, with attention to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and individuals” (6/7.C.IR.6, p. 36) and “Describe the rights and roles of citizens in civilizations and empires after 600 CE, with attention to the inclusion of historically underrepresented groups and individuals” (6/7.C.IR.7, p. 37). But see also 2.H.CP.5, p. 17; 6/7.G.HE.7, p. 40; 8.C.PI.5, p. 48; 8.C.DP.10, p. 49; 8.C.CE.13, p. 49; 8.C.CE.14, p. 50; HS.G.HE.11, p. 62; HS.US.CH.1, p. 65; HS.US.CP.12, p. 67.
- **Boiler-Plate Radical Polemic:** “Explain the differences between allies and bystanders exploring how individuals can promote democratic values such as liberty, equality, and justice when they see someone targeted for who they are” (3.C.IR.2, p. 18; and see 3.H.CE.4, p. 22; 6/7.C.DP.9, p. 38; 8.H.CC.3, p. 54).
- **Incomprehension of the Meaning of the Word “Democratic”:** “Explain the democratic principle of a smaller voting group (the minority) having rights that the larger voting group (the majority) cannot take away” (3.C.DP.6, p. 19).
- **Promotion of Action Civics:** “Explain how active citizens and political or social movements can affect the lawmaking process locally, nationally, and internationally” (HS.C.CE.17, p. 59; and see 4.C.CE.5, p. 23; HS.C.IR.9, p. 57; HS.C.CE.18, p. 59).
- **Framing Bias, Racism, and Oppression as Fundamental Features of America’s and Oregon’s past and present:** “Identify and explain how ideas such as “Manifest Destiny,” and racism contributed to bias, prejudice, and discrimination in Oregon’s past and continues to affect the current experience of residents of Oregon” (4.H.CC.3, p. 27; and see 4.H.CP.7, p. 28; 8.C.PI.5, p. 48; 8.E.MI.9, p. 52; HS.C.DP.14, p. 58; HS.US.CP.15, p. 68).
- **Blindness to the Possibility that People Would Move to America Because It Offers a Good Life of Liberty and Prosperity:** “Investigate the causes behind domestic and global migration, distinguishing between voluntary relocation and forced displacement, including scenarios like refugees. individuals compelled to leave their homeland and those who were enslaved” (5.G.MM.5, p. 30).
- **Radical Ideological Vocabulary:** *cultural genocide* (5.H.CC.5, p. 34; 8.H.CH.2, p. 53); *decolonize* (HS.WR.CC.6, p. 71); *equity* (1.C.DP.4, p. 9; 2.C.DP.5, p. 13; 2.E.ES.2, p. 16; 2.H.CC.4, p. 17; 3.H.CC.3, p. 22; 6/7.C.PI.5, p. 36; 8.C.DP.10, p. 49; 8.C.CE.13, p. 49; 8.C.CE.14, p. 50; HS.C.DP.13, p. 58; HS.C.DP.14, p. 58); *LGBTQ2IA+* (HS.C.CE.18, p. 59; HS.US.CH.2, p. 65; HS.US.CC.5, p. 66; HS.US.CP.16, p. 68; HS.US.CP.21, p. 69); *settler colonialism* (8.H.CH.2, p. 53).

- **Distortingly Excessive Reference to the Iroquois, and False Statement of their Influence on American Government:** 6/7.C.PI.5, p. 36; 6/7.C.IR.7, p. 37; 6/7.G.GR.1, p. 38; 6/7.G.GR.2, p. 38; 6/7.G.MM.3, p. 39; 6/7.G.HI.4, p. 39; 6/7.G.HE.6, p. 40; 6/7.EF.10.ST, p. 42; 8.C.PI.2, p. 47; HS.C.PI.1, p. 56.³
- **Distortion of Jewish History:** The *Draft Standards* uses the bizarre phrase “*communities identifying as Jewish*” rather than “Jews” (6/7.H.CP.11, p. 45); its discussion of anti-Judaism and anti-Semitism, even in the aftermath of the Hamas butchery of Jews in October 2023, makes no mention of Muslim Jew-hatred (6/7.H.CP.11, p. 45; HS.US.CP.18, p. 69; HS.WR.CP.14, p. 73).

The *Draft Standards*, meanwhile, provide extraordinarily vague outlines of world history, United States history, and Oregon history; the *Draft Standards* provide an ideological commentary on history rather than an outline of history. The standards suggest “thematic” approaches to world history, which will facilitate the subordination of all that remains of world history to polemical instruction (p. 35). The *Draft Standards* do not include a coherent narrative of Western Civilization, and hence provide no framework for understanding the ideals and institutions of liberty, civic virtue, and republican self-government that undergird America’s history and government.

Independent Commission

The Oregon Education 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: Oregon’s Education Department should ask Oregon’s policymakers to appoint an independent commission to redraft Oregon’s social studies standards. Effective revision of the *Standards* must be carried out by a commission independent of the Department personnel.

Legislative Revision

Recent Oregon legislation, especially revisions to ORS 329.045, mandate an identity-politics focus to social studies instruction, and thereby cripple the ability of the Oregon Education Department to provide adequate social studies standards.

Recommendation: Oregon’s Education Department should ask Oregon’s policymakers to rescind this legislation.

³ Philip A. Levy, “Exemplars of Taking Liberties: The Iroquois Influence Thesis and the Problem of Evidence,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 53, 3 (1996): 588-604, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2947206>.

Conclusion

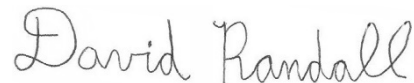
The Oregon Department of Education's should rescind the *Draft Standards* and replace it with a content-rich, unpoliticized social studies standard that replaces inculcation of radical polemic with teaching the history of America and Oregon. Its revision should follow all the Recommendations we have 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, South Dakota, and Virginia.⁴ The Department also should request Oregon policymakers both to rescind statutes that radicalize social studies standards and to appoint an independent commission to redraft new social studies standards.

Respectfully yours,



Peter Wood

President, National Association of Scholars



David Randall

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⁴ 2022 K-12 Louisiana Student Standards for Social Studies, Louisiana Department of Education, https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academic-curriculum/k-12-louisiana-student-standards-for-social-studies.pdf?sfvrsn=df396518_38; South Dakota Social Studies Standards (2023), 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>.