

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION of SCHOLARS

Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
1201 North Third Street
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

February 14, 2022

Dear Louisiana State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education,

The National Association of Scholars (NAS) and the Civics Alliance works 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, and we were asked by Louisiana citizens to comment on the draft *Louisiana Standards: Social Studies* (LSSS). We read these standards (draft of September 23, 2021). We concluded that LSSS, unfortunately, used misguided pedagogical principles and had been politicized to forward a radical curriculum aligned with Critical Race Theory and Action Civics. Its substitution of World History for Western Civilization erased America's history of liberty and operated at too large a scale to allow teachers to teach effectively. We recommended that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) revise that draft thoroughly.¹

We are delighted that BESE has done so. BESE has produced an excellent final 2022 Louisiana Social Studies Standards.² These rigorous standards eschew misguided pedagogy and radical curriculum. The Standards possess a few small errors,³ and they fail to replace World History with Western Civilization, but we believe they will generally provide an excellent education for Louisiana students.

We wish to repeat some larger recommendations we made in our previous comment. We believe that these four (4) strategic reforms will allow BESE to build upon its fine work in these standards.

1. **State Autonomy.** National frameworks such as the National Council for the Social Studies' *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* and Educating for American Democracy's *The Roadmap to Educating for American Democracy* replace social studies pedagogy with identity politics and radical activism pedagogies.⁴ We recommend that LSSS detach itself from these frameworks.

¹ Peter Wood and David Randall, "Letter: Reforming Louisiana Social Studies Standards," October 18, 2021, <https://www.nas.org/blogs/article/letter-reforming-louisiana-social-studies-standards>.

² 2022 Louisiana Social Studies Standards, https://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/default-source/academic-standards/02-08-2022---draft-louisiana-social-studies-standards.pdf?sfvrsn=52de6518_14.

³ E.g., "Identify and locate geographical features of ancient Mesopotamia, including the Black Sea, Persian Gulf, Euphrates River, Tigris River, Mediterranean Sea, and Zagros Mountains." 2022 Louisiana Social Studies Standards, p. 16 [Standard 4.10.a]. The Standards should replace "ancient Mesopotamia" with "the ancient Near East".

⁴ 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/consensusby-surrender/>.

2. **Stronger Writing Expectations.** LSSS *Social Studies Skills and Practices* (p. 60) includes no assessable expectations that students write intellectually sophisticated history papers with full command of the English language. LSSS should add Writing Expectations, such as: “Students are expected by the end of 12th grade to write an intellectually sophisticated 10-page history paper with full command of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, and thereby demonstrate that they are prepared for an undergraduate history course.”
3. **Liberty’s History.** LSSS still compresses the history of liberty, which is the foundation of America. LSSS replaces Western Civilization with World History and so erases the coherent narrative that explains the source of America’s ideals and institutions of liberty. LSSS should replace World History instruction with Western Civilization instruction that identifies the ideals, institutions, and individual examples of human liberty, individualism, religious freedom, and republican self-government, and examines how they contributed to the formation of modern American ideals.
4. **State History.** LSSS distributes Louisiana state history in its World History and United States History instruction. This choice means students will not learn a coherent account of Louisiana’s history. LSSS should create a discrete one-semester State History course.

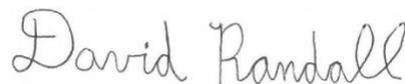
We also believe that Louisiana students will be well served if Louisiana policymakers give statutory support to the curricular changes embodied in the 2022 Louisiana Social Studies Standards and in our suggested strategic reforms. We urge BESE to request the Louisiana legislature to enact legislation based on the Civic Alliance’s model laws, including the Historical Documents Act, Partisanship Out of Civics Act, Schools Nondiscrimination Act, Social Studies Curriculum Act, and Western Civilization Act.⁵

We believe these recommendations would improve social studies instruction for Louisiana’s students—but only by building on the excellent work done to produce the 2022 Louisiana Social Studies Standards. BESE’s social studies standards are now a model for the nation.



Respectfully yours,

Peter Wood
President, National Association of Scholars



David Randall
Project Director, Civics Alliance

⁵ *Historical Documents Act*, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/historical-documents-act/>; *Partisanship Out of Civics Act*, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/partisanship-out-of-civics-act/>; *Schools Nondiscrimination Act*, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/schools-nondiscrimination-act/>; *Social Studies Curriculum Act*, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-palm-card/social-studies-curriculum-act/>; *Western Civilization Act*, <https://civicsalliance.org/model-k-12-civics-code/western-civilization-act/>.