



The Ohio Council for the Social Studies

Educating Tomorrow's Citizens

Position Statement and Action Agenda From The Ohio Council for the Social Studies, February 8th, 2010

The Ohio Council for the Social Studies (OCSS) is interested in seeing Ohio develop a world-class social studies program that includes rigorous standards, engaging instruction, and accountability through standardized assessments that gauge student mastery of knowledge and skills necessary to be participatory citizens, civic leaders, and innovative workers in a global economy. We believe the draft content standard revision produced by the Ohio Department of Education fails to meet the needs of Ohio's students to be successful in a complex, interdependent world and global economy.

OCSS has been actively engaged in all aspects of the revision process established by the Ohio Department of Education. Our members served on the advisory committee(s) and working groups and hosted several of the focus group sessions. We have also been in continual contact with The ODE consultants and leadership from the beginning of the process and have addressed concerns through meetings with officials, multiple phone conversations, and multiple letters. We are now at the end of the public input process and believe the only way avert the implementation of flawed standards is to work through the Ohio State Board of Education and the Ohio General Assembly.

Amended Substitute House Bill 1 established clear guidelines for the development of academic standards in social studies. **In an attempt to meet the one-year timeline established by H.B.1 the Ohio Department of Education narrowed the scope of the standards revision process. The decision to focus all conversation on content statements meant that the standards lack key components of H.B. 1.**

- The ODE design for the standards eliminated essential civic and academic skills such as research, critical thinking, collaboration, problem-solving, and communication from the draft revised standards and focused only on broad content statements.
- Critical cross-curricular content and skills connections are not a focus of the standards revision process.
- The 21st century academic, career-readiness, and civic skills described in H.B.1 are not part of the draft standards and are not evident in sample curriculum model templates presented with the draft.
- Effective curriculum design requires a concurrent conversation about the assessments, content standards, and model curricula. The ODE decision to limit committee discussions and input from stakeholders to the draft content statements creates a disconnect in the development process. Stakeholders could not determine if the content statements effectively met the goals of H.B. 1 without knowing the goals and parameters of the new assessments.

OCSS notes these key concerns with the draft revised content standards and the proposed assessment model:

- 1. Marginalization of modern world studies:** World history is required for success on the OGT thus making it a required course, but is relegated to an elective course in the new content standards. If the likely scenario of end-of-course exams only for American History and American Government is implemented, students will be able to earn a diploma in Ohio without studying globalization, modern world history, world cultures or contemporary issues such as global terrorism at the high school level.
- 2. Overly-broad content statements and a lack of performance verbs provide little guidance to teachers about essential understandings and no indication of the level of mastery expected of students.** Most of the content statements offer little more guidance to teachers than the table of contents from a standard history or geography textbook. They do not capture what Grant Wiggins refers to as "essential understandings" of social studies content that would allow them to make connections, draw conclusions, and apply the content to daily life. With the decision to eliminate performance verbs from the standards, The ODE removed a key component that moved social studies instruction forward in the previous standards. While The ODE consultants state that these will be found in the model curricula, no evidence has been shown to-date to illustrate that this will take place.

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3. **Lack of alignment between curricular areas.** Most of the 21st century skills are trans-disciplinary and can be reinforced throughout the K-12 curricula. As drafted, the revised standards do not provide meaningful opportunities for cross-curricular instruction or skill reinforcement. The draft standards therefore promote isolated instruction and inhibit interdisciplinary application of knowledge.
4. **Essential 21st century skills , civic skills, and trans-disciplinary academic skills are lacking.** Conversations about skills were deferred by The ODE plan until the next stage of the development process-model curricula. However, the model curriculum templates provided for review offer little hope of building the coordinated, sequential, and spiraled program that ensures students are engaged with key skills at each grade level and develop skill mastery.
5. **Suspension of K-8 assessments in social studies:** Without assessments in social studies for grades K-8, schools have already reallocated funding and instructional time away from social studies to areas that are assessed. We accept that a budget crisis necessitated painful decisions but also recognize that the suspension of social studies assessments will negatively impact the instruction time allocated to the subject. Improved standards will only be effective if there is accountability for their implementation.

Adoption of flawed content standards will limit how Ohio can assess student mastery of core content and skills, making it more difficult for teachers to determine essential understandings to instruct, and providing opportunities for teachers or schools to offer a less rigorous and less In order to resolve these fundamental problems with the revision process, we recommend a one-year extension in the adoption timeline in order for The ODE to address the weaknesses in the draft standards. An extension of the timeline will not negatively impact Ohio's students and would benefit Ohio because:

1. The current academic content standards are more effective at communicating high expectations and a comprehensive program than the revised standards.
2. Ohio has already implemented assessments for 5th and 8th grades that can remain in-place during the extended revision process and provide meaningful data for value-added analysis.
3. Schools have programs and materials in-place to continue implementing the current standards and preparing students for the current assessments.
4. Ohio would be able to defer the development and implementation costs of new assessments until the end of the next biennium.
5. School districts would not incur curriculum development costs, staff development costs, and purchase costs for new resources to match a revised scope and sequence until an effective set of standards is adopted, easing their financial burden during a difficult economic downturn.

The Ohio Council for the Social Studies requests that the Ohio State Board of Education delay the implementation of the revised social studies content standards for one year. We further ask that the Ohio State Board of education direct The Ohio Department of Education to address the concerns addressed above.