

# Trends in Social Studies Standards

A Scan in the Landscape and Analysis of the Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies.

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Edgagement

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## Introduction

In July 2020, the Colorado House Bill 20-1032 (section 22-7-1005(6) C.R.S.) provision regarding the regular review and revision of Colorado Academic Standards was amended. Previously, standards were revised within 6 years of the last cycle, the most recent revisions occurring in 2018. The amended provision adjusts this cycle, such that the state board must review and revise one third of the standards starting in 2022, then another one third every 2 years. One third of the standards adopted in 2018 that were anticipated for implementation in the 2020–2021 school year started to be reviewed and revised in spring 2021. The purpose of this review and revision cycle is to update the standards so that they align with all new legislation (HB19-1192, HB20-1336, SB21-067, and HB19-1110 & HB21-1103) impacting the social studies standards. The review and revision process will occur in three phases, the first phase including social studies standards, will be revised in 2021–2022 and implemented in the 2024–2025 school year.

The Colorado Department of Education (CDE) remains committed to providing rigorous academic standards of the highest quality. CDE has requested that third-party experts conduct an informal study to identify the quality of the social studies standards being implemented during the 2019–2020 school year and to determine how and to what degree Colorado’s current social studies standards compare with current trends in social studies since 2018–2019. This will be considered the first step in the standards review cycle. CDE requested assistance in identifying current international, national, and state trends that would inform CDE of the alignment to or gaps among the Colorado Social Studies Standards and the current trends and in addressing any changes to the current standards that may be considered in the future.

The findings and recommendations from this review are intended to inform CDE’s decision-making during its social studies standards revision process. Periodic standards review is critical to help ensure that the concepts and skills students are expected to learn reflect the changing priorities, needs, and values of the state and society more broadly, and to continue to prepare students for the challenges they will face in successive grades or postsecondary endeavors. The outcomes of this review of current trends are outlined in this report.

The first section of the report—The National and International Landscape—provides context for updating the content covered in the current Colorado standards in social studies. This section includes overviews of key national and international frameworks and standards in social studies. It also provides an overview of the current frameworks for national and international assessments.

The second section of the report—A Comparison of State Social Studies Standards—provides further national context. It includes an overview of the status of state social studies standards, how these standards are structured and organized, and their social studies graduation requirements and state assessments. Specifically, this section profiles three states from across the country that outline the approach each took in developing its social studies standards.

The third section of the report— Colorado Context—describes current social studies initiatives, state policies impacting social studies standards, and the history of social studies standards in Colorado. It includes an overview of the current social studies standards in Colorado. It concludes with a summary of the current trends in social studies and the strengths and gaps of the 2020 CAS-SS, including recommendations for next steps.

### **What Are Standards?**

Academic standards are learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at a specific grade level, by the end of a grade band, or for a specific course. High-quality standards provide guidance for districts, schools, teachers, parents, and students to ensure that what is taught will help students develop the skills and understanding necessary to be college and career ready and successful, engaged, and productive citizens. Although content standards provide a foundation for learning, they do not specify how to teach the content. Curricula give teachers an outline of what should be taught and how it should be taught in classrooms, including the instructional materials, resources, and practices needed to achieve a learning goal. High-quality curricula are student centered, with flexible opportunities for students to meet learning goals, and address students' individual skills or concept development. Standards-aligned assessments provide information about student achievement to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.

It is critical to have a common understanding of academic standards in order to begin to review, revise, or write standards. American Institutes for Research (AIR) created a tool (see Appendix C) to help clarify the criteria for high-quality standards. It outlines criteria regarding the holistic components of standards and the components for each individual standard.

### **Overview of Current Social Studies Education Research**

As detailed in the following sections, there is a history of almost three decades of national and individual state efforts to develop and refine social studies content standards. Current standards in social studies education have been impacted by long-standing frameworks and subsequent curriculum movements. For instance, elementary social studies standards were predominantly based on the expanding horizons, formerly expanding environments, framework in the late 1930s, where learning is initially built on students' experiences and expands to include local, state, and national contexts (Keirn, 2018).

The term *social studies* can be divided into two main approaches: social science and social education. Social science incorporates more dominant disciplines (e.g., history, geography, government, economics) along with secondary courses such as sociology, psychology, and anthropology. Disciplinary focus has encouraged an inquiry-based approach to teaching social studies. In contrast to the social science perspective, social education connects social studies to civic purpose, promoting political engagement and civic competency through the social sciences and humanities (Parker, 2010). Social education is largely associated with elementary school, whereas social science is prominent in secondary education.

More recently, social studies education has shifted to include an emphasis on incorporating global perspectives. The increase in globalization creates a need for studying international and global relations. Global perspectives address the environment and society, analyzing events, problems, issues, and ideas in the context of change and interdependence. International education develops students' cultural knowledge and understanding in a specific area or region. Both global and international education within social studies standards relate to developing students' participation in a democratic society and a global community. Research on global studies education has focused on identity development (i.e., students' identities), global awareness and citizenship, chronological understanding, and habits of mind (Girard & Harris, 2018).

The development of standards is an iterative process that continues to be guided by the successes and challenges of previous standards; social studies education research; shifts in cultural, political, and civic thinking; and ever-expanding diversity across the nation. While global and national contexts inevitably influence social studies education and standards revision processes, there are also local contexts that play into the development of state social studies standards and should be thoughtfully considered and used to inform standards revisions. Efforts to provide guiding frameworks for the revision of social studies standards include the *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*, first published in 1994—a 3-year, multistate effort producing the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework—and more recently released in 2013, and the Educating for American Democracy initiative, involving a diverse collaboration of more than 300 academics, historians, political scientists, K–12 educators, district and state administrators, civics providers, students, and others from across the country to develop a roadmap for civics and history education in 2021.

The national and state emphasis on the interrelationships among social studies subjects and English language arts (ELA) subject areas is reflected in many current state social studies standards. The writing and reading abilities necessary for social studies competency are strongly linked to comprehension and communication skills that bolster literacy and ELA achievement. In a study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute with 18,000

kindergarteners, researchers found that increased instructional time (approximately 30 minutes) each day in social studies from first through fifth grades correlated with improved reading ability, with girls and children from lower income homes benefiting the most (Tyner & Kabourek, 2020). Similarly, second graders who received 60 literacy-rich social studies lessons performed better on reading assessments, scoring 23% higher compared to other students (Halvorsen et al., 2012). Further, social studies standards can address the needs of students to be financially literate, to have civic-mindedness and be able to actively participate in democracy, and to develop skills to critically evaluate information across contexts.

The John Hopkins Institute for Education Policy released a Social Studies Knowledge Map that analyzed K–12 social studies curricula across 11 states and districts. The analysis divided trends into three categories: positive, neutral, and needs improvement. For positive trends, they found that most curricula provide a strong foundation in elementary grades with instruction in civics, government, and state and local history. For the neutral trends, only some curricula suggested providing an open classroom climate or gave attention to multiple perspectives. The Social Studies Knowledge Map identified four areas for improvement across most curricula: (1) elementary grades often lack primary sources, (2) units displayed topical incoherence across materials, (3) religion and philosophy were rarely incorporated, and (4) there is insufficient focus on Central American, South American, African, and Asian history.

As Colorado updates and revises its social studies standards, it can look to the growing body of social studies learning research, national and international frameworks for social studies standards and curriculum, and current state-adopted standards.

## **The National and International Landscape**

### **International Standards**

#### **Singapore**

The Singapore Ministry of Education manages the development of the national curriculum and desired outcomes that include student excellence in life skills, knowledge skills, and specific discipline knowledge. While the primary school curriculum has a heavy focus on mastering English, mother-tongue languages, and mathematics, civics and moral education are also included in the national curriculum. The character and citizenship education syllabi for the primary level is built on six core values: respect, responsibility, resilience, integrity, care, and harmony. Identity, relationships, and choice are three overarching categories of character and citizenship education, which are broken into self, family, school, community, nation, and world contexts. Citizenship competencies emphasized in the syllabi are related to civic literacy, global

awareness, and cross-cultural skills (e.g., sociocultural awareness) of the 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes framework.

Social studies is further incorporated in later phases of the primary education system. Syllabi for primary social studies partition each primary level of education into overarching clusters, including relating and understanding self and connection to immediate environment, learning about historical and contemporary Singapore, and understanding the city, state, region, and larger environment.

Before transitioning to secondary education, students take the Primary School Leaving Examination, which is used to place students in a secondary school course based on their academic abilities. Regardless of track, students receive character and citizenship and humanities (i.e., geography, history, and literature) education, addressing various issues.

### [Ontario, Canada](#)

Similar to state responsibility for standards in the United States, Canada relies on provincial governments to establish the curriculum and standards for their schools. Ontario has developed achievement standards for social studies at the elementary level and Canadian and world studies standards at the secondary level. For each of the content areas, standards revision cycles take approximately 9 years. Published in 2018, the *Ontario Curriculum for Social Studies Grades 1 to 6 and History and Geography Grades 7 and 8* includes content standards and performance standards for social studies, history, and geography. The content standards provide both general and specific curriculum expectations for each subject and discipline, and the performance standards provide guidance on how to assess and evaluate student achievement in a particular subject or discipline. Specifically, the framework outlines four categories of knowledge and skills at four levels of achievement in social studies, history, and geography. These categories are knowledge and understanding (i.e., subject-specific content for each subject), thinking (i.e., critical and creative thinking skills), communication (i.e., conveying meaning and expression in various forms), and application (i.e., using knowledge and skills to make connections within and between contexts). To further guide curriculum development and educators, this framework includes a set of criteria for each of the aforementioned categories that are subsets of knowledge and skills that define that category. Additionally, this framework includes a set of descriptors, or the characteristics of students' performance, with respect to a criterion on which the assessment or evaluation is focused. For example, *effectiveness* is a descriptor that is used for the thinking, communication, and application category. Moreover, the framework identifies four levels of achievement that help to further group the descriptors, criteria, and categories.

This latest iteration of Ontario’s social studies standards builds on the framework published in 2013 but was revised in collaboration with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit educators; community members; and organizations. Accordingly, the revised standards have a greater emphasis and focus on broadening students’ knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, and ways of knowing, as well as the historical context of the residential school system, treaties, and the Indian Act in Canada.

### **British Columbia, Canada**

The British Columbia social studies standards for K–9 are guided by communication, thinking, and personal and social core competencies. Each grade level has a singular area of learning focus, such as Canadian Issues and Governance at Grade 5. Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies (what students should be able to do), and Content (what students should know) outline each area of learning. Additional elaborations on the Curricular Competencies and Content are provided to include key questions, sample topics, and sample activities for educators.

British Columbia integrates Indigenous knowledge and perspectives into the social studies curriculum through the [\*Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives: Social Studies K–12\*](#) document for educators. In this document, explicit (direct) and implicit (indirect) references are made to Indigenous knowledge and perspectives present in the Big Ideas, Curricular Competencies, and Content of the K–12 social studies curriculum. As a resource for educators, the document emphasizes discussion and learning that prioritize Indigenous knowledge and perspectives in British Columbia for the purpose of developing educated citizens. *Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives: K–12 Social Studies Curriculum* resources are influenced by *The First Peoples Principles of Learning*, which focus on learning related to student identity and interconnectedness of self, family, community, land, spirits, and ancestors, among other elements of Indigenous knowledge and perspectives.

### **National Standards/Frameworks**

This section of the report focuses on summarizing standards and frameworks that have been released since 2018. A summary of the C3 is also included but was reviewed as a part of the 2018 revisions. Appendix A has summaries of all other national standards and frameworks.

#### **Overview of the *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework***

Developed by more than 20 states and 15 national social studies organizations, the C3 Framework provides states with an outline for revising their existing social studies standards. This framework is centered on inquiry as a guiding principle for social studies education; specifically, the framework introduces the concept of an Inquiry Arc. The Inquiry Arc focuses on a set of interconnected ideas that act as the underlying structure for the framework’s four guiding dimensions and emphasizes concepts and practices that students need to analyze,

explain, and argue about topics in our social world. The guiding dimensions are (1) developing questions and planning inquiries, (2) applying disciplinary tools and concepts, (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action. These dimensions and their associated subcategories guide the organization of foundational content and skills for a social studies program. Alongside each dimension and subsection, this framework outlines a set of College, Career, and Civic Readiness Indicators to be achieved by the end of Grade 12. Each of these indicators has an associated K–12 pathway for how students could reach proficiency in that particular skill or concept by the end of Grades 2, 5, 8, and 12.

The C3 Framework was designed as a resource for states during the standards revision and upgrading process. It does not include details about curriculum or instructional content but instead focuses on the underlying concepts and skills of robust social studies education. Further, this framework is designed as a K–12 framework and therefore does not represent additional behavioral and social science disciplines (e.g., anthropology, psychology, sociology) outside of civics, economics, geography, and history, because additional behavioral and social science disciplines are most often taught solely at the high school level. Finally, the framework also does not specifically address the needs of children with different levels of ability. States, districts, and teachers should consider ways of adjusting and scaffolding this framework to suit the needs of all learners. More than one third of states have used the C3 Framework as a guide for their social studies standards.

### ***Overview of the [Educating for American Democracy Roadmap](#)***

Released in March 2021, the Educating for American Democracy (EAD) Roadmap is a K–12 inquiry-based framework that outlines major themes, questions, and key concepts for the integration of history and civics education. The roadmap contains seven themes, across four grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12), that center on civic participation; institutional/social change; human history in a political context; place of individuals in a global context; contemporary debates/civic agency; government; and geographic, social, economic, and political landscape. Each theme has history and civic thematic questions and key concepts, along with design challenges and corresponding questions.

The Educating for American Democracy Design Challenges are noted issues or dilemmas that educators may face when engaging with the EAD content themes and instructional guidance. There are five design challenges that span the seven themes: (1) motivating agency, sustaining the republic; (2) America’s plural yet shared story; (3) simultaneously celebrating and critiquing compromise; (4) civic honesty, reflective patriotism; and (5) balancing the concrete and the abstract. Each of these design challenges includes questions for educators to consider (e.g., “How can we help students pursue civic action that is authentic, responsible, and informed?”)

and is associated with a particular theme. EAD has completed a state by state analysis of standards as they align to the EAD framework. CO specific information can be found [here](#).

### **Overview of [Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework](#)**

*Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework*, by Learning for Justice, formerly known as Teaching Tolerance, is a K–12 roadmap for anti-bias education. The document contains age-appropriate (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12) anchor standards with associated learning outcomes divided into four domains: identity, diversity, justice, and action. Each domain, broken down into anchor standards, indicates what students should or will be able to do (e.g., “Students will respond to diversity by building empathy, respect, understanding and connection”). Anchor standards are paired with specific grade-level outcomes. For each domain, an anti-bias scenario is included to model anti-bias attitudes and behaviors in the classroom.

### **Overview of the Fordham Report: [The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021](#)**

Released in June 2021, the Fordham report evaluates the quality of K–12 civics and U.S. history state standards based on their content, rigor, clarity, and organization. Reviewers gave the 50 states and the District of Columbia summative grades in both subjects, which were combined for the overall scores discussed in the report. From this analysis, five jurisdictions were “exemplary” in both subjects: Alabama, California, Massachusetts, Tennessee, and D.C. States with an exemplary rating had standards documents that were well organized, easily understood, and user-friendly. These states required U.S. history and civics classes in high school and emphasized civics and U.S. history throughout elementary and middle school as well. Additionally, exemplary standards focused on civic dispositions and skills vital to informed citizenship, including problem-solving and critical thinking skills, respecting others’ opinions, and using evidence to inform arguments. Lastly, the exemplary states highlighted in the Fordham report had civics and U.S. history standards that articulated “what every American should know about this country’s democratic institutions, traditions, and history” (Stern et al., 2021, p. 14).

In contrast to the highest rated states, 10 states received “good” ratings in both subjects, eight states were “good,” and 20 states received “inadequate” ratings on their civics and U.S. history standards. For states with weaker standards, the Fordham report provides a series of recommendations, which mirror the exemplary criteria: Focus on a more user-friendly approach to the organization of standards that provides more specific and detailed guidance in both civics and U.S. history. The Fordham report notes that some states have large content gaps in civics and U.S. history across grade bands that should be addressed by more specific or

explicit guidance on content from both subject standards. Additionally, it recommends that states address the gaps in content by revisiting the sequence of standards (i.e., revisiting topics across grade levels) and by maximizing civics and U.S. history content coverage in early grades with class requirements for both subjects in high school. Moreover, the Fordham report recommends that states put a greater emphasis on writing, argumentation, problem-solving skills, and finding ways to connect core content to current events. You can find the Colorado specific review [here](#).

## A Comparison of State Social Studies Standards

This section provides an overview of key trends in state social studies standards and profiles three states across the country (see additional nine states in Appendix B), outlining the approach each state took in the development of its social studies standards as well as assessment and graduation requirements in social studies. The information in the state profiles came from each state’s department of education website (see Table 1 for an outline of the content covered in the state profiles). The heading above each state profile is hyperlinked to the corresponding state website.

**Table 1. Outline of Content Covered in the State Profiles**

1. In what year did the state adopt and implement its latest social studies standards?
2. Description of the approach, structure, and content of the state’s new standards:
  - a. What is the grade-level structure (e.g., grade specific, course specific, grade bands) of the standards?
  - b. Are there themes that cut across the standards?
3. What are the state’s assessment and graduation requirements in social studies?

### Overview of State Standards Trends

Fifteen states have revised their social studies standards since 2019. At least 24 states have incorporated the C3 (College, Career, and Civic Life) Framework into their standards, which provides guidance to states for revising social studies standards with a focus on inquiry. The curricular focus of what is taught in each grade varies widely from state to state. Twenty states do not have a defined thematic focus for each grade level; instead, these states identify how the different strands (e.g., history, civics, geography) will be taught in each grade.

For states that do identify a thematic focus for each grade level, there are recognizable trends in what is taught in each grade. In kindergarten through Grade 3, state standards often emphasize broad concepts such as citizenship, the community, sense of self, spaces and places,

culture, or local government. Standards in later elementary grades typically shift to more specific courses of study starting in Grade 4. Standards in Grade 4 usually outline a study of the state's history and geography. Grade 5 is commonly reserved for the subject of early U.S. history, typically from pre-Columbian Native American societies until right after the American Revolution in the late 1700s.

Standards for Grade 6 generally expose students to more global studies through either a world history or geography course. In Grade 7, many states offer a continuation of world studies from Grade 6 or alternatively a state-specific history course. Grade 8 has more variation across states, with the majority offering standards for U.S. history until 1877, state history, or a global studies course. While not a common trend, some states have started to create standards for a stand-alone civics course or integrated civics into the U.S. history standards for middle school.

In Grades 9–12, many states require one credit of U.S. history, one credit of world history or world geography, a half-credit of U.S. government/civics, and a half-credit of economics. Forty-six states and D.C. mandate a certain number of completed social studies credits for high school graduation. The average number of credits required is 3.08, but it ranges from 2 to 4 depending on the state. A few states do not have specific credit requirements for graduation. Colorado, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania leave the decision up to local school boards, and Vermont is implementing proficiency-based standards.

Twenty states have a state assessment in social studies, and many of these states give one assessment in elementary school, one in middle school, and one in high school. Assessment topics are usually U.S. civics, history, or government, although there are assessments in world history or geography in some states. Ten states have a compulsory end-of-course exam in at least one grade, usually in U.S. history or government. Recently, 15 states have started to require that students take a civics test (based on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services civics test) for high school graduation. Louisiana, Minnesota, and Indiana require that students take the test, but they do not have to pass to graduate.

Several trends in content and structure emerge across selected national (C3 Framework, EAD Roadmap), state (Kentucky, Maine, Washington), and international (British Columbia, Singapore, Ontario) standards (see Table 2). Maine is the largest outlier in many of the trends because it leaves many curricular decisions up to local school boards. In terms of content, the majority of standards used an inquiry-based instructional approach. Both the national (Washington) and international standards place some emphasis on taking social action; however, Kentucky and Maine do not. The EAD Roadmap, British Columbia, Ontario, Maine, and Washington all incorporate ethnic studies or diverse perspectives, often through a special focus on Indigenous peoples' history. In terms of structure, all standards except for Maine's

have anchor standards. Excluding Maine, all selected state and international standards present grade-specific social studies themes. Among state and international standards, only Singapore and Kentucky require a student assessment based on the standards.

**Table 2. Content and Structure Standards Comparison**

Standards	Content			Structure		
	Focus on inquiry	Include ethnic studies or diverse perspectives	Emphasis on taking social action	Anchor standards	Grade-specific themes	State/national assessment in social studies
<b>C3 Framework</b>	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N/A
<b>EAD Roadmap</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	N/A
<b>British Columbia</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Singapore</b>	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
<b>Ontario</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N
<b>Kentucky</b>	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y
<b>Maine</b>	N	Y	N	N	N	N
<b>Washington</b>	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	N

### Kentucky

Kentucky adopted its current set of social studies standards in 2018 and began implementing them in the 2019–2020 school year. These standards were written by grade level for kindergarten through eighth grade and are discipline specific in high school (i.e., civics, economics, geography, and history). Across grade levels, the standards are organized around

four inquiry practices—questioning, investigating, using evidence, and communicating conclusions—that are included throughout the grade-level standards. These inquiry practices are skills that are necessary to acquire knowledge and competencies in each of the four disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history. The standards are further grouped by these disciplinary strands across the grades. Within each disciplinary strand, there is a set of disciplinary concepts, or broad ideas that enable students to understand the language of that specific discipline, and disciplinary practices, or the skills students should learn and apply across disciplines. For example, Roles and Responsibilities of a Citizen is a disciplinary concept and practice for civics.

High school students in Kentucky must complete three social studies credits to graduate, but Kentucky does not require specific courses or a specific course sequence. The credits must incorporate the inquiry practices and cover the four social studies disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history (and their associated standards). Kentucky uses summative assessments to evaluate students' learning and academic achievement in social studies for students in 11th grade.

## Maine

In [June 2019](#), Maine adopted new social studies standards centered around four main content strands: civics and government, personal finance and economics, geography, and history. The standards documents note that students will see the same topics throughout their school career. Therefore, the social studies standards and performance expectations are spiraled to reflect a progression from kindergarten through 12th grade. Under the content strands, specific standards are laid out by grade level in Grades K–5. Each grade level specifies key performance standards (i.e., what students understand and can do). Comparatively, standards and performance standards are grouped by grade bands for the middle grades (6–8) and high school grades (9–12).

Within the standards, there are major enduring themes, which school administrators can determine how to utilize across grade levels (e.g., freedom and justice, conflict and compromise, technology and innovation, unity and diversity, continuity and change over time, supply and demand). Additionally, the standards specify eras in U.S. history and world history that school administrative units can use to develop coherent curriculum throughout the spiraled K–12 grades. Currently, Maine does not assess social studies at the state level in any grade. For graduation, Maine requires students to complete at least 2 years in social studies and history, including U.S. history, government, civics, and personal finance.

## Washington

Washington developed five sets of learning standards for social studies (last revised in 2019): civics, economics, geography, and history, with one overarching set for social studies skills. Each set of learning standards outlines research, reasoning, and analytical skills that students should be able to apply across each of these disciplines. The standards are organized by grade band (K–5, 6–8, and 9–12) and provide a grade-by-grade sequence of concepts, regional areas, and chronological periods. The C3 Framework is incorporated throughout these standards by including enduring understandings, or key concepts that are organized by the focus of study, and sample questions, which are open-ended questions designed to encourage inquiry. Throughout the standards, there are also specific references to Since Time Immemorial curriculum and tribal sovereignty in Washington to ensure alignment with this specific curriculum.

To graduate from high school in Washington, students must complete three credits of social studies, including one credit of U.S. history and government; a half-credit of contemporary world history, geography, and problems; a half-credit of civics; and one credit of a social studies elective. Students must also complete Washington State History, which is a noncredit requirement. Washington has no statewide required assessments for social studies.

## **Colorado Context**

The mission and vision of the Colorado Department of Education is to ensure that “all students in Colorado will become educated and productive citizens capable of succeeding in society, the workforce, and life” by providing “excellent leadership, service, and support to schools, districts, and communities across the state.” In the 2020–2021 school year, Colorado’s K–12 education system served 883,199 students across 178 districts; 149 districts are considered small rural or rural, with 88 districts serving fewer than 500 students. Currently, there are 1,914 public schools: 1,109 elementary, 286 middle, and 519 high schools. Colorado has 260 public charter schools along with 106 innovation and 49 online schools.

Regarding Colorado statutes related to social studies education, all public and private schools must provide “regular courses of instruction in the constitution of the United States.” The history and civil government of the United States and Colorado must be taught in all public schools. The overall history incorporates the history, culture, and social contributions of minorities, including the diversities within these minority groups (e.g., lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals). In addition to these requirements, education on civil government for U.S. history and Colorado must include instruction related to (1) the three branches of government; how laws are enacted at federal, state, and local levels; and how citizens influence government actions; and (2) the formation and development of the U.S. and Colorado governments using federal and state foundational documents and relating these documents to

modern society. In order to advance teaching in history, culture, social contributions, and civil government, the CDE provides assistance to school districts in creating elementary- and secondary-level programs aligned to the state’s history and civics standards.

Beginning in 2023, Colorado schools will be required to incorporate standards related to Holocaust and Genocide studies into an existing course for high school graduation. To support this effort, the Holocaust and Genocide Committee was formed to provide recommendations for adopting Holocaust and Genocide standards and reviewing materials associated with the Holocaust and Genocide Resource Bank available for educators. Committee members included representatives from middle schools, high schools, and universities (e.g., University of Colorado, Denver) and professionals (e.g., Colorado Holocaust Educators). Per the committee’s recommendations, Holocaust and Genocide Standards were adopted by the state board in June, 2021. These standards include required elements for Grades 6–12. For example, the inquiry question “How can laws, governments, peacekeeping organizations, and citizens work to identify instances of genocide, and work to prevent and eliminate them in the future?” must be included in the 7th Grade Civics, Standard 4.

In a typical administration year, students in Grades 4 and 7 take the Colorado Measures of Academic Success in social studies. However, due to COVID-related impacts on testing, the social studies assessment was not administered for the 2020–2021 school year. Aside from assessments, all high school students are required to pass a civics course on the civil government of the United States and the state of Colorado.

## **Overview of Current Social Studies Standards in Colorado**

The Colorado social studies standards were updated in 2018, with the intent for implementation in 2021. Due to recent legislation, the review and revision process has been updated such that social studies standards will be revised in 2021–2022 for implementation in the 2024–2025 school year.

Since Colorado’s adoption of the most recent standards, a study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute has been released. In this study, all 50 states’ K–12 civics and U.S. history standards were evaluated based on content, rigor, clarity, and organization. Colorado’s standards earned a D in both civics and U.S. history, rating the standards as inadequate. A strength of the civics standards was the age-appropriateness and specific content taught in early grades. However, while the content was generally specific, the report noted that many of the standards appeared broad or vague. “Essential content” or knowledge is missing or mitigated at the high school level, such as a lack of standards on the judicial system, federalism, equal protection, and so on. For U.S. history standards, there was a positive strong emphasis on history-related analytical and research skills. Even so, the report stated that “historical content guidance is extremely thin, thematically scattered, and stripped of context” and that the

Colonial era was confined to Grade 5 (Stern et al., 2021, p. 76). For both civics and U.S. history, the standard organizational structure was viewed as complex, confusing, and sometimes redundant.

Prior to the Fordham report, the Colorado Department of Education also conducted a review of the CDE Social Studies Standards, focusing on their alignment with the C3 Framework. *The Colorado Academic Standards: Social Studies Benchmarking Report*, released in April 2017, identified eight areas for consideration or development, such as the need for inquiry in the early grades, deeper connections to 21st-century skills, integration of disciplinary literacy, and increased opportunities for taking informed action.

The 2020 Colorado Academic Standards for Social Studies are organized by content area (i.e., history, geography, economics, and civics) from prekindergarten through Grade 12. Each standard is aligned to a prepared graduates concept and grade-level expectation, except for PreK, which has learning and development expectations. There are eight prepared graduates concepts in social studies that focus on understanding the nature of historical knowledge; analyzing historical time periods; applying geographic representations; examining place and region characteristics; applying economic reasoning skills; demonstrating an understanding of civic participation; analyzing the origins, structures, and functions of government; and understanding the allocation of scarce resources. In addition to the prepared graduates and grade-level expectations, each standard has evidence outcomes and academic contexts and connections (i.e., Colorado essential skills, inquiry questions, nature and skills of the standard's content area and disciplinary, information, and media literacy).

## **Analysis of 2020 CDE Social Studies Standards**

### **Findings and Recommendations**

The comparison was intended to serve as a holistic review of the similarities and differences between each trend and the CAS-SS in its current 2018 form. These data may be used to inform the CDE during the upcoming CAS-SS revision process. Specifically, comparisons were documented for two criteria, organization/structure and content. Analysts' considerations for judging each are defined as follows:

- **Organization/Structure.** Analyst's considerations related to standards organization and structure included design/format (organization and structure of standards), and ways in which intended knowledge and skills are communicated.
- **Content and Concepts.** Analyst's considerations related to standards concepts and skills included similarities and differences in standards scope and sequence (the depth and breadth

of concepts and skills described in the standards), the sequencing and distribution of concepts and skills within and across the grade spans, and wording.

This section contains findings and recommendations related to the level of alignment of the current CAS-SS to current trends identified in the analysis of international, national and state social studies work. Detailed resources to address recommendations can be found in Appendix D of the report.

There are numerous areas where noticeable differences between CAS –SS and the current trends identified can be observed. It is in these areas that we anticipate the most discussion in considering revisions to the CAS-SS and provide observations for consideration. The chart below outlines the key trends identified based on a review of the international, national and state social studies work outlined in this report.

Table 1. Summary of CAS-SS 2018 as aligned to current trends

Trend	Strengths	Gaps	Recommendations/ Opportunities
<b>CONTENT AND CONCEPTS</b>			
Focus on Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Evidence that standards emphasize prepared graduates must engage in social studies inquiry. Inquiry is mentioned several times within the standards.</li> <li>● Document includes sample inquiry questions in the <i>context and connections sections</i> to help teachers and students engage in disciplinary questions.</li> <li>● Recognizes the relationship of inquiry within specific social studies disciplines (civics, economics,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Doesn't offer a framework by which teachers can engage students in inquiry in a variety of ways.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Create stand-alone inquiry standards within the K-12 social studies to model a progression of inquiry-based skills necessary for prepared graduates.</li> </ul>

	geography, history)		
Inclusion of ethnic studies or diverse perspectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear evidence of standards which recognize and celebrate diversity and diverse perspectives in the standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards only mention race one time throughout the document and this is in preschool. Standards only mention slavery one time and this is in fourth grade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greater inclusion of “hard history” and recognition of how teachers can use disciplinary practices (analyzing primary sources, for example) to engage in examining diverse perspectives.</li> </ul>
Emphasis on Social Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Standards promote disciplinary practices and inquiry questions which could lead to students taking action.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking social/ informed action is not called out in the standards.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Include taking social/ informed action within inquiry standards and show clear progression across K-12 standards so students feel confident in their role as engaged members of society.</li> </ul>
Inclusion of State History K-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colorado history is present and clearly articulated in 4th grade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colorado history appears to only be taught in one grade level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Think about how to incorporate Colorado history into other elements/ grade levels of the standards. This might help students see the local/state connections to what they are learning and not silo the learning to one grade level.</li> </ul>
Emphasis and focus on	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native Americans appear in two</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Although Native Americans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider greater inclusion of</li> </ul>

<p>broadening students' knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, and ways of knowing</p>	<p>standards throughout the document.</p>	<p>appear in two standards throughout the document- once in 4th grade and once in 6th grade, in both cases, the standards present Indigenous peoples in past context and do not emphasize native sovereignty nor present day concerns of Indigenous peoples</p>	<p>Indigenous voices and representation of a more complete history and view of present-day thinking of Indigenous peoples.</p>
<p>Inclusion of global perspectives - including a focus on Central American, South American, African, and Asian history</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● An emphasis on a global society is called out in the “prepared graduates” statements.</li> <li>● The standards highlight global cultures and connections to the world.</li> <li>● In the K-5 standards, there is a specific emphasis on introducing young students to global perspectives and moving away from an “expanding horizons” approach.</li> <li>● In the 6-12 standards, there is specific emphasis on global perspectives in 6th and 7th grade and in HS History standard 1.2.3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Lack of specificity within the standards about Central America, South America, Africa, and Asia. This is particularly absent at the elementary level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Consider more specificity within the standards on Central American, South American, African, and Asian history, particularly at the K-5 level.</li> </ul>

ORGANIZATION/STRUCTURE			
Anchor Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is some attempt at anchor standards through the “prepared graduates” statements in order to align the document K-12 and show progressions within the document.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The anchor standards are not specific enough to show K-12 learning progressions and vertical and horizontal alignment throughout the document.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider creating inquiry and content anchor standards to show clear progressions throughout the document.</li> </ul>
Grade Specific Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There appear to be some grade level themes.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although you could “read between the lines” and find themes within specific grade level themes, these are not called out within the document.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Call out specific grade level themes in order to make the purpose of grade level standards clear and implementation more effective.</li> </ul>
Inclusion of Skills Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Clear evidence of skills expectations inclusion in the <i>context and connections section</i>- particularly calling out discipline specific skills students need for success in college, career, and civic life.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Difficult to see how skills standards progress in each grade level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Show how skills progress throughout the document.</li> <li>Think about creating standards that focus on skills and/or incorporate more skill based language in the stem of the evidence outcomes.</li> </ul>
Interconnected - ness of all four disciplines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Standards emphasize core disciplines of social studies - civics, economics, geography and history.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Although the four core disciplines are present within the standards, there is no interconnectedn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Think about how to show interconnectedness of all four disciplines within each grade level.</li> </ul>

		ess intentionally shown to model how the disciplines of social studies work together.	
Other			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In current structure, a guide on how to read the standards as part of the introduction would be helpful in order to ensure successful implementation.</li> <li>• Think about consistency in the wording of the grade level expectations, some start with verbs and some do not..</li> </ul>

### Summary

This landscape scan provides an overview of the current research in social studies education as well as a national and international look at current social studies standards and assessment. This document presents a series of profiles regarding how other select states are approaching the development and structure of their social studies standards to provide insight into the various approaches and best practices for social studies standards revision. The Colorado Department of Education, the standards writing committee, and other key stakeholders may use this landscape scan as a resource in determining how to approach updating the social studies standards in Colorado.

## **Appendix A - National Standards and Assessment Frameworks**

### ***Overview of the NCSS [National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies](#)***

First published in 1994, the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies have been widely used for social studies curriculum development and alignment. This framework is designed for use by educators, parents, and policymakers to aid in curriculum design and develop a robust social studies curriculum to prepare the next generation of informed and active citizens.

These curriculum standards are organized around 10 thematic strands: (1) culture; (2) time, continuity, and change; (3) people, places, and environments; (4) individual development and identity; (5) individuals, groups, and institutions; (6) power, authority, and governance; (7) production, distribution, and consumption; (8) science, technology, and society; (9) global connections; and (10) civic ideals and practices. These themes are designed to be woven throughout a social studies program from prekindergarten through Grade 12 and to support the implementation of content standards. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) framework also provides learning expectations to illustrate what students' knowledge proficiencies should be at each level of the curriculum (i.e., early years, middle school, and high school). The learning expectations provide the rationale for why each theme is important for students to study.

### ***Overview of the [Center for Civic Education Standards](#)***

The Center for Civic Education developed a set of Voluntary National Standards for Civics and Government for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. These content standards are "exit" standards, specifying what students' knowledge and proficiencies should be as they complete Grades 4, 8, and 12. The Civic Education Standards comprise both content and performance standards. The content standards focus on students' civic knowledge, proficiencies, and skills, and the performance standards outline criteria for students' levels of achievement. The Civic Education Standards also outline standards for teachers, schools, and state and local education agencies, describing criteria for determining the capacity of these groups.

### ***Overview of the [National Standards for History](#)***

First published in 1996, the National Standards for History were developed with input from history teachers, supervisors, state social studies specialists, chief state school officers, academic historians, and civic and public interest groups. These standards focus on students' historical thinking skills (e.g., ability to evaluate evidence and construct sound historical arguments or perspectives) and historical understandings (i.e., what students should know about the history of their nation and the world). Further, the National Standards for History contain standards for U.S. history, with 10 periodized eras, and world history, with nine

periodized eras. Although these standards provide an outline of appropriate grade levels for study of each of the standards, when the eras should be studied should be under local or state control.

### ***Overview of the [Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics](#)***

First published in 1997 and updated in 2010 by the Council for Economic Education, the Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics consist of 20 content standards for Grades 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. These standards are designed to help students develop economic thinking and problem-solving skills to prepare them to be wise consumers, investors, and savers. Each standard includes a set of benchmarks, which are divided into achievement levels for Grades 4, 8, and 12. Assessments, including the National Assessment of Educational Progress for Economics, align well with the content found in these standards.

### ***Overview of [National Geography Standards](#)***

The National Geography Standards were developed by the Geography Education National Implementation Project. They are designed to encourage students to become geographically informed through knowledge and mastery of factual knowledge, mental maps and tools, and ways of thinking. There are 18 standards grouped by six themes: (1) the world in spatial terms, (2) places and regions, (3) physical systems, (4) human systems, (5) environment and society, and (6) the uses of geography.

## **National Assessment Frameworks**

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) assesses children in Grades 4, 8, and 12 in various subject areas, including mathematics, reading, science, writing, technology and engineering literacy, arts, civics, geography, economics, and U.S. history. Also known as the Nation's Report Card, this assessment is congressionally mandated and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics, overseen by the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB).

NAGB is responsible for the assessment frameworks administered by NAEP and, for each framework, works with a committee of subject matter experts, practitioners, researchers, educators, business leaders, and policymakers to create a set of assessment standards that define what U.S. students should know and be able to do in a given subject. With the goal of NAEP being able to report on trends in student achievement, these frameworks are designed to remain stable for as long as possible. However, given shifts in national and international standards and curricula, the assessment frameworks used are periodically updated. Additionally, given the trends in social studies education and topics taught to specific grade bands, some NAEP assessments are administered to only a certain age group. For example, the economics assessment is administered to only 12th-grade students.

The civic knowledge component of NAEP is based on the National Standards for Civics and Government by the Center for Civic Education. The five central themes underlying this assessment are expressed as questions: (1) What are civic life, politics, and government?, (2) What are the foundations of the American political system?, (3) How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?, (4) What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?, and (5) What are the roles of citizens in American democracy? The NAEP Civics Assessment seeks to assess students' intellectual skills (e.g., evaluating, taking, and defending positions) that allow them to appropriately apply their civics knowledge. Participatory skills (i.e., interacting, monitoring, and influencing) and civic disposition (i.e., dispositions that contribute to individual political efficacy) are additional components of the assessment framework. However, direct assessment of civic participation is outside the assessment's scope, such that questions focus on students' abilities to identify or explain how to use these skills. In 2018, the most recent administration, NAEP was given to only eighth-grade students.

The geography component of NAEP centers on two primary dimensions: content and cognitive. The content dimensions focus on three areas: (1) space and place to measure students' understanding of geographical regions on Earth and the physical and human processes that shape spatial patterns, (2) environment and society to measure students' understanding of the relationship between people and the natural environment, and (3) spatial dynamics and connections that measure students' knowledge of how geography relates to spatial variations. The cognitive dimension of the assessment also includes three categories: (1) knowing questions, (2) understanding questions, and (3) applying questions. Items for this assessment were developed by applying each cognitive dimension to each content dimension.

The U.S. history component of NAEP was developed to measure students' knowledge in the context of democracy, culture, and technological and economic changes. The underlying framework of the assessment organizes items around themes, time periods, and ways of knowing and thinking about U.S. history. The most recent U.S. history assessment was administered to eighth-grade students in 2018.

The economics component of NAEP, most recently administered in 2012, seeks to assess 12th-grade students' understanding and knowledge proficiency in the workings of domestic and international economics. Items measure how well students understand economics and markets, costs and benefits of economic interaction and interdependence, and peoples' choices regarding limited resources.

For NAEP, there are also demarcations for how students may attain NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, and NAEP Advanced levels of achievement. However, it is important to note that

NAEP achievement levels do not represent grade-level proficiency for all states or districts because they may have their own assessment standards for proficiency.

## Appendix B - Summaries of States That Revised Post 2018

### Arizona

Arizona last adopted social studies standards in 2018 for history, political science, geography, and economics, with the goal of full implementation during the 2020–2021 school year (i.e., 2-year implementation timeline). Arizona provides standards by grade bands (K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12). Each elementary and middle school grade level (but not high school) has a storyline and content focus for the year. The standards are organized under four disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history. Within each of these disciplines are four to five core concepts, or anchor standards. In addition, there are four anchor standards that apply to the disciplinary skills and practices that students should be able to apply to any historical era, context, or content area.

Beginning in 2017, in order to graduate from high school, students in Arizona have been required to pass a civics test, which mirrors the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. In addition, high school graduation requires, at a minimum, three credits of social studies: one credit of U.S. history, including Arizona history; one credit of world history or geography; a half-credit of government, including civics and Arizona government; and a half-credit of economics.

### Indiana

Indiana adopted its current social studies standards in 2020. Indiana’s standards are outlined by grade for K–8 and by course in high school, including economics, geography and history of the world, global economics, psychology, sociology, U.S. government, U.S. history, world geography, world history and civilization, Indiana studies, and ethnic studies. The K–8 standards are organized by four content areas: history, civics and government, geography, and economics. Each content area has one standard that is divided into topics (except for economics) with specific objectives. For example, the Grade 8 civics and government standard is divided into foundations of government, functions of government, and roles of citizens, with objectives under each topic. The Grades 6–12 standards include academic standards for history and social studies literacy, which focus on six literacy elements: (1) key ideas and textual support, (2) structural elements and organization, (3) synthesis and connection of ideas, (4) writing genres, (5) the writing process, and (6) the research process. High school social studies generally focuses on one of the five content areas: history, government, geography, economics and individuals, society and culture (i.e., psychology, sociology, and anthropology). A commonality between the courses is that each develops students’ skills related to thinking (e.g., historical or geographic thinking), inquiry and research, and participation in a democratic society. Standards are organized into topics or overarching concepts with specific objectives, except in ethnic studies, where the standards appear similar to overarching ideas. For example, standard 1 in ethnic studies is “cultural self-awareness,” as opposed to standard 1 in U.S. history, which is

“students review and summarize key ideas, events, people, and developments from the Founding Era through the Civil War and Reconstruction (1775-1877).” For Indiana studies, standards are defined as history, civics and government, geography, economics and individuals, and society and culture. World geography incorporates elements of the National Geography Standards, including The World in Spatial Terms, Places and Regions, Physical Systems, Human Systems, and Environment and Society.

High school graduation requirements in Indiana include six social studies credits: two credits for U.S. history, one credit for U.S. government, one credit for economics, and two credits for world history and civilization or geography and history of the world. Grade 5 students take a social studies assessment through ILEARN, with an optional ILEARN U.S. government end-of-course assessment available in high school.

### Kansas

In 2020, Kansas adopted its history, government, and social studies standards, centered around the mission of preparing students to be informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens. These standards are written by grade level for K–5 and are organized by grade bands and disciplines in the middle grades and upper grades. In K–4, each grade level has a focus standard that acts as a theme for focus content in social studies instruction. For example, in kindergarten the focus content is centered around exploring the theme Sense of Self using the focus standard Choices Have Consequences. In Grade 5, focus standards that were taught in previous grades are reinforced, along with new focus content. The focus standards continue to be revisited and reinforced in Grades 6–12, along with new focus content being introduced at each grade level in K–5 and each grade band and discipline in the middle and upper grades.

For graduation from high school, Kansas requires students to take three units of history and government, including world history, U.S. history, U.S. government, and concepts on economics and geography. Currently, there is no state assessment in social studies, history, or government, but the social studies standards identify five standards of critical thinking that are assessed through the Kansas Social Studies Classroom-Based Assessment, which allows local districts, classroom teachers, and students to design their own product that displays students’ understanding of the standards and benchmarks.

### Michigan

In 2013, Michigan began revising its social studies content expectations with the mindset of “clearer, fewer, and higher” standards. Adopted in 2019, the social studies standards were paired with C3 Framework skills and Inquiry Arc. The K–8 sequence is organized as follows: kindergarten: Myself and Others; first grade: Families and Schools; second grade: The Local Community; third grade: Michigan Studies; fourth grade: United States Studies; fifth grade:

Integrated United States History; sixth grade: World Geography; seventh grade: World History and Geography; and eighth grade: Integrated United States History. High school students are required to take world history and geography, U.S. history and geography, civics, and economics, with options for AP courses and other social studies electives. Additionally, according to Michigan law (i.e., Michigan Public Act No. 170 of 2016), a recommended total of 6 hours of age- and grade-appropriate instruction on genocide, such as the Holocaust and the Armenian genocide, will be included in Grades 8–12 social studies curriculum.

Social studies content expectations for K–8 are organized by discipline (i.e., history, geography, civics and government, economics and public discourse, decision making and citizen involvement) and include sample compelling and supporting questions connected to the standards (e.g., Grade 5: Does geography determine destiny?). Grade bands (i.e., K–2, 3–5, 6–8) have social studies process and skills standards focused on (1) reading and communication; (2) inquiry, research, and analysis; (3) public discourse and decision making; and (4) civic participation. Each grade band also centers around four dimensions of the Inquiry Arc: (1) developing questions and planning inquiries, (2) applying disciplinary concepts and tools, (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action. High school has a similar structure, including connections to the Inquiry Arc, process and skills standards, and sample compelling and supporting questions, but for social studies strands.

For high school graduation, Michigan requires three social studies credits, including one credit of world history and geography, one credit of U.S. history and geography, a half-credit of civics, and a half-credit of economics. Students take the Michigan Student Test of Educational Progress (M-STEP) for social studies in Grades 5, 8 and 11.

## Montana

In 2020, Montana adopted new social studies standards with an implementation date of July 2021. For the newly adopted standards, Grades K–12 have updated information and focused the standards around key content areas (i.e., civics and government, economics, geography, and history). The K–12 standards are also focused on specific skill areas, such as developing questions, planning inquiries, and using sources. Standards are grade-level specific for Grades K–5, incorporating standards across content and skill areas. After K–5, standards are grouped by grade bands 6–8 and 9–12. The grade band standards incorporate standards across the content and skill areas mentioned previously. Additionally, the new social studies standards across Grades K–12 clarify learning expectations for teachers while allowing for flexibility of staffing and program delivery in Grades 6–12. The new standards integrate Montana’s Indian Education for All across grade levels as well.

School districts can set their own requirements for graduation, but at minimum, students must take two credits of social studies courses to graduate from high school. Currently, Montana does not have a statewide assessment in social studies or history.

### Nebraska

In 2019, Nebraska adopted a new set of social studies standards that reflect a two-tier structure that includes standards and indicators. The standards across all grade levels reflect long-term goals for learning, and the indicators give guidance related to the assessment of student learning. For Grades K–8, each set of standards and indicators is written at the grade level and organized around four disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history. Within a discipline, the standards and indicators are grouped by big ideas, which are concepts, themes, or issues that connect to facts and skills. The high school standards and indicators are written within one larger grade band (9–12) but are similarly grouped by discipline and big ideas.

In order to graduate, high school students must have 30 credit hours of social studies or history, with course content focusing on civics and government, geography, U.S. and world history, and the economy. Nebraska has no statewide assessments in social studies or history.

### New Jersey

New Jersey revises its social studies standards every 5 years and adopted its current standards in 2020. The current standards are organized by grade bands: K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12. Four disciplinary concepts are carried throughout each grade band: civics, government, and human rights; geography, people, and the environment; economics, innovation, and technology; and history, culture, and perspectives. Each disciplinary concept has different focuses, such as global interconnections, civic mindedness, economic ways of thinking, and understanding perspectives. There are also seven social studies practices, which are the skills that individuals in social sciences use on a regular basis: (1) developing questions and planning inquiry, (2) gathering and evaluating success, (3) seeking diverse perspectives, (4) developing claims and using evidence, (5) presenting arguments and explanations, (6) engaging in civil discourse and critiquing conclusions, and (7) taking informed action. The standards are made up of a set of core ideas and associated performance expectations to be met by the end of each grade band, further organized by each disciplinary concept.

For high school graduation, New Jersey requires 15 credits of social studies, including five credits of world history; completion of a 2-year course sequence in U.S. history (including New Jersey history); and the integration of civics, economics, geography, and global content in all course offerings. New Jersey participated in NAEP in 2010, 2012, and 2014 in economics, U.S. history, civics, and geography.

## North Carolina

North Carolina revised and adopted new social studies standards for implementation in fall 2021. Specific social studies courses are attributed to Grades K–8: kindergarten: The World Around Us; Grade 1: People, Places, and the Environment; Grade 2: America: Our Nation; Grade 3: Our Community and State; Grade 4: North Carolina History; Grade 5: United States History; Grade 6: World Studies I; Grade 7: World Studies II; and Grade 8: North Carolina and United States History. For Grades 9–12, students are required to take U.S. history, economics and personal finance, founding principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: civic literacy and world history. Standards are organized by six lenses: inquiry, behavioral sciences, civics and government, economics, geography, and history. The inquiry lens is outlined by grade band (i.e., K–2, 3–5, 6–8, 9–12) and indicators, while all other lenses, except economics and personal finance, are grade-level (K–8) or course (9–12) specific and contain objectives. Economics and personal finance does not contain inquiry standards. Standards and objectives are organized under economics, income and education, money and credit management, financial planning, and critical consumerism instead of disciplinary lenses.

For high school graduation, students must complete four social studies credits, including one credit of founding principles of the United States of America and North Carolina: civic literacy; one credit of economics and personal finance; one credit of U.S. history; and one credit of world history. North Carolina has no statewide assessment for social studies or history.

## Oklahoma

Oklahoma revises its academic subject matter standards every 6 years, most recently adopting new standards in 2019. The updated Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies comprise content standards from four major social science disciplines (i.e., history, geography, civics, and economics) and social studies practices. The following social studies practices are intended to provide students with the key skills and disciplinary tools needed for college, career, and civic life: (1) engage in democratic processes; (2) analyze and address authentic civic issues; (3) acquire, apply, and evaluate evidence; (4) read critically and interpret information sources; and (5) engage in evidence-based writing. Each practice is intended to be integrated into content standard instruction throughout the grade levels. The suggested progression of social studies practices is divided by grade band (PreK–1, 2–3, 4–5, 6–8, and 9–12) with two to three objectives in each overarching practice. For example, the Analyze and Address Authentic Civics Issues focuses on how “students will determine the kinds of sources that will be helpful in answering essential, compelling, and supporting questions addressing authentic civic issues” and is divided into two objectives, one being that “students will demonstrate the capability for developing essential, compelling, and supporting questions that address authentic civic issues”

(Oklahoma State Department of Education, 2019). The progress of this skill moves from asking and responding to enduring essential questions in Grades PreK–1 to developing, investigating, and evaluating answers to essential questions in Grades 9–12. Aside from practices, content standards are delineated into objectives and outlined by grade level for PreK–8 and by course for 9–12, such as Economics, Oklahoma History, Psychology, United States Government, United States History, World Geography, World History, and Sociology.

High school graduation in Oklahoma requires three units of history and citizenship, including one credit of U.S. history, a half-credit of Oklahoma history, a half-credit of government, and one credit of another approved social science course. Students in Grade 11 also take the College- and Career-Readiness Assessment, which is divided into two parts that include a U.S. history assessment aligned to Oklahoma’s U.S. history standards.

## Appendix C - Review Criteria for Academic Standards

The actual review process should include a review of the *individual* standards and their components (shaded in blue) and a review of the *document as a whole* (shaded in green).

Criteria	Description	Key Questions to Ask
<p><b>Rigor:</b> A standard should help students understand knowledge and concepts that are complex, ambiguous, or contentious and acquire skills that can be applied in a variety of educational, career, and civic contexts throughout their lives.</p>	<p>Rigor is the measure of how closely a set of standards represents the content and cognitive demand necessary for students to succeed in credit-bearing college courses without remediation and in entry-level, quality high-growth jobs. If a standard is rigorous, it includes high-level cognitive demands and asks students to demonstrate deep conceptual understanding through the application of content knowledge and skills to new situations. High-level cognitive demand includes reasoning, justification, synthesis, analysis, and problem solving.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What is the intellectual demand of the standard?</li> <li>• Is the DOK level appropriate?*</li> <li>• Does the standard ask students to engage with the content at a deep conceptual level?</li> </ul> <p>* DOK levels are <i>not</i> developmental. All students, including the youngest preschoolers, are capable of strategic and extended thinking tasks. What these tasks look like will differ, and what is a Level 3 task to a kindergartener may be a Level 1 task for a middle schooler. All students, however, should have opportunities to do complex reasoning.</p>
<p><b>Focus:</b> A standard should address what is most important for students to learn.</p>	<p>Focus is the establishment of priorities about the concepts and skills that should be acquired by the time students graduate from high school. Choices should be based on the knowledge and skills essential for students to succeed in postsecondary education and the world of work.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why is this important? Realistically, are they ever going to have to know this, do this, or use this?</li> <li>• Have decisions been made about what is most important for students to learn?</li> <li>• Does the standard represent what is essential for students to learn?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Specificity:</b> A standard should be specific enough to convey the level of performance expected of students.</p>	<p>Specificity is when a standard is precise and provides sufficient detail to convey the level of performance expected without being overly prescriptive. Standards that maintain a relatively consistent level of precision (“grain size”) are easier to understand and use. Those that are overly broad or vague leave too much open to interpretation, increasing the likelihood that students will be held to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is the standard specific enough to convey what is expected of students?</li> <li>• Is the grain size appropriate—not too broad*/vague and not too specific?</li> </ul> <p>* Specificity is closely linked to Depth and Breadth criteria, and standards written for larger entities such as states tend to be broader than curriculum goals written by</p>

	<p>different levels of performance, whereas highly specific standards encourage a checklist approach to teaching and learning that undermines students' overall understanding of the discipline. Also, standards that contain multiple expectations may be hard to translate into specific performances.</p>	<p>districts or individual teachers for their classrooms.</p>
<p><b>Clarity/Accessibility: Standards should be clear, measurable, observable, or verifiable in some way and in language that students and parents can understand.</b></p>	<p>Clarity requires more than just plain and jargon-free prose that is free of errors. First, the standard should focus on student attainment that is observable and verifiable. It can be used to develop broader assessment frameworks. Second, the standard must be communicated in language that can gain widespread acceptance not only by postsecondary faculty but also by employers, teachers, parents, school boards, legislators, and others who have a stake in schooling. A straightforward, functional format facilitates user access.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Should this knowledge or skill be assessed?</li> <li>● Is the standard measurable and/or observable?</li> <li>● Is the standard clearly written and free of jargon?</li> <li>● Can the standard be easily understood by educators?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Disciplinary Literacy: Standards as a whole should clearly articulate what is required of students to read, write, and communicate within the specific discipline.</b></p>	<p>Disciplinary literacy is defined as the convergence of content knowledge, experiences, and skills demonstrated through the ability to read, write, communicate, and think critically using processes unique to a specific discipline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do the standards ask students to show the ability to read, write, and communicate critically using the concepts of the discipline?</li> <li>● Do the standards articulate the ideas, concepts, theories, and principles of the discipline by using them to interpret and explain specific, concrete information or events?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coherence: Standards as a whole should be organized in a unified structure/framework devoid of gaps in learning expectations.</b></p>	<p>The standards should be categorized and broken out into supporting strands and should reflect a coherent structure of the discipline and/or reveal significant relationships among the strands and how the study of one complements the study of another.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Is this knowledge or skill essential for postsecondary success?</li> <li>● Is this knowledge or skill essential for becoming a productive citizen? How or why?</li> <li>● Do the standards convey a systematic, intentional progression of learning offering students a logical pathway for learning and enabling them to master increasingly complex concepts?</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do the standards exhibit construction parallel to that of referent standards and standards in other subject areas?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Depth:</b> Standards as a whole should illustrate robust, well-integrated understandings of fundamental concepts essential to the attainment of literacy and fluency in a discipline</p>	<p>Sufficient 'depth' includes developmentally appropriate levels of investigation that <i>reinforce and revisit core concepts</i> and that provide a firm foundation for students to learn and understand more advanced concepts and transfer their knowledge in other contexts while increasing in complexity, across the standards document.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do the standards drive <i>deep learning</i> by addressing core concepts from <i>multiple perspectives</i>?</li> <li>● Do the standards support a <i>deep investigation</i> of developmentally appropriate literacy and fluency in the content area explored?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standards <i>reinforce and revisit</i> core concepts and demand <i>transfer of prior knowledge</i> in order to understand more advanced concepts?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standards promote <i>inquiry-based learning</i>?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standard targets specific learning objectives, which can be observed and assessed for <i>levels of student mastery</i> of content and learning goals?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Breadth:</b> Standards as a whole should illustrate a logical and consistent structure that addresses the key content, concepts, and skills of the discipline.</p>	<p>Breadth refers to a logically scaffolded and sequenced set of standards in which essential content is explored through a wide array of interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Do the standards provide a logical sequence to build learner knowledge and skills through a variety of related experiences over time?</li> <li>● Do the standards provide interrelated ideas, facts, and perspectives?</li> <li>● To what extent do the standards provide a continuum of knowledge and skills necessary for progressively sophisticated levels of literacy and fluency? Are there any gaps or redundancies?</li> </ul>

## Appendix D - Resources to Support Recommendations

Trend	Resources and Examples
1. Focus on Inquiry	<p>Grade by grade standards <a href="#">KY</a> and <a href="#">IA</a></p> <p>Grade banded <a href="#">HI</a></p>
2. Inclusion of ethnic studies or diverse perspectives	<p><a href="#">Social Justice Standards: The Teaching Tolerance Anti-Bias Framework</a></p> <p><a href="#">Indiana</a> (ethnic studies)</p> <p><b><i>Great Lakes Equity Center Criteria: <a href="#">Assessing Bias in Standards and Curricular Materials</a></i></b></p> <p>The Assessing Bias in Standards &amp; Curricular Materials Tool allows individuals to review standards and curricular materials to determine their reflection of educational equity. The tool includes standards and curricular materials rubrics. The Standards rubric is divided into three domains: build consciousness; reflect students’ cultural repertoires and view them as worthy of sustaining, and; social improvement. The curricular materials rubric is divided into seven domains: invisibility; stereotyping; imbalance and selectivity; historical whitewashing; fragmentation and isolation; linguistic bias; and cosmetic bias. For each domain, users rate on a scale of 0–3 whether they strongly agree or disagree with whether the standards or curricular materials align with domain components (e.g., “Curricular materials include narratives and historical accounts that feature racial, ethnic, and sex-based groups as societal and/or political actors within the general text”). Space is also provided for users to provide a rationale, explanation, or evidence of their score level and any additional recommendations or considerations. Users total the points to produce a score indicating if the standards or curricular materials demonstrate little or extensive evidence of curricular bias.</p>

<p>3. Emphasis on Social Action</p>	<p>National Civics and Government Standards  <a href="https://www.civiced.org/standards">https://www.civiced.org/standards</a>. The section on how to participate in civic life might be especially helpful  <a href="https://www.civiced.org/standards?page=58erica#10">https://www.civiced.org/standards?page=58erica#10</a>.</p> <p>EAD <a href="https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/7themes/">https://www.educatingforamericandemocracy.org/the-roadmap/7themes/</a> You might find connections in various parts of the roadmap, but you may find the most helpful language under theme 1- Civic Participation.</p> <p>C3 Framework  <a href="https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.pdf">https://www.socialstudies.org/sites/default/files/c3/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.pdf</a> you may find some good language under the Taking Informed Action anchor standard.</p> <p>Action Civics Collaborative  <a href="https://actioncivicscollaborative.org/why-action-civics/theory-of-change/">https://actioncivicscollaborative.org/why-action-civics/theory-of-change/</a> This theory of change could be helpful or some of the resources in the Action Civics Toolbox  <a href="http://actioncivicscollaborative.org/resources/toolbox/">http://actioncivicscollaborative.org/resources/toolbox/</a>.</p>
<p>4. Inclusion of State History K-12</p>	<p><a href="#">KY</a> and <a href="#">IA</a></p> <p><a href="#">Why teach local history</a></p>
<p>5. Emphasis and focus on broadening students' knowledge and understanding of Indigenous histories, cultures, perspectives, contributions, and ways of knowing</p>	<p><a href="#">Ontario, Canada</a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>Indigenous Knowledge and Perspectives: Social Studies K-12</i></a></p> <p><a href="#">Washington</a></p> <p><a href="#">Maine</a></p>
<p>6. Inclusion of global perspectives - including a focus on Central American, South American, African, and Asian history</p>	<p><a href="#">National standards for guidance from UCLA</a></p> <p><a href="#">Asia society</a></p> <p><a href="#">OECD PISA Global Competency Framework</a></p>

<p>7. Anchor Standards</p>	<p><a href="#">List of states that have anchor standards</a></p>
<p>8. Grade Specific Themes</p>	<p><a href="#">National scan of state standards</a></p> <p><a href="#">Educating for American Democracy Roadmap</a></p> <p><a href="#"><i>National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies</i></a></p>
<p>9. Inclusion of Skills Standards</p>	<p>Can do it either by verbs like <a href="#">NJ</a> and <a href="#">UT</a> or as a set of separate standards as outlined in the inquiry recommendations section</p> <p><a href="#">Oklahoma</a> - focuses on one set of social studies practices that flow throughout</p>
<p>10. Interconnectedness of all four disciplines</p>	<p>This really helps particularly in elementary - one way to do this is through organizing by topic and theme - similar to <a href="#">HI</a></p> <p><a href="#">National scan of state standards</a> - Can be used to see what other states are doing</p>

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