

Review of Minnesota's History/Social Studies Standards, by Jerry Martin

These are the first standards I have been asked to review about which I had no major concerns. In both American and world history, in geography, and in economics they are easily the best standards I have ever seen. They will be a model for the nation.

The only suggestions I have are quite minor.

In U.S. history, the story is somewhat President-centered. I would like to see more emphasis on the role of Congress and such leaders as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, John C. Calhoun. When then Senator John F. Kennedy chaired a committee to select five historic senators to be honored, he chose those three, plus Robert LaFollette (who is mentioned) and Robert Taft. One might add, as Senate majority leader, Lyndon Johnson, and his mentor, House Speaker Sam Rayburn. In the history of the House, Speaker Thomas B. Reed is the most important (after Clay).

It would also be good to emphasize the role of the Supreme Court, in particular, landmark decisions from *Marbury v. Madison* on, that have shaped American life, and influential justices such as John Marshall, Roger Taney, Oliver Wendell Holmes Jr., Louis Brandeis, Felix Frankfurter, and Earl Warren.

World history is very well handled. The development of Western civilization provides some narrative core, but the interaction of all civilizations is emphasized, and non-Western civilizations also receive careful attention. The great religions, which have been and continue to be so influential in shaping civilization, are given very appropriate and sensitive attention. One small point: The central institution in the history of China was bureaucracy, so that should be emphasized. Perhaps I just missed it, but the caste system is central to the society of India and to Hinduism- though challenged by Gandhi from within Hinduism.

The government sections are excellent, though the facts and principles about American government come through most concretely and dramatically in the history sections.

The geography and economics components are superb.

While it is always tempting to add things, there is a finite amount of time, and the draft standards present an excellent selection and sequencing of topics in history and social studies-far superior to standards found in any other state. My only fear now is that, as each group rides its pet hobby-horse, the standards will become cluttered and less coherent. I hope that no changes will be made simply to appease an interest group and that the coherence and focus of the draft standards is retained.

Dr. Jerry L. Martin

Chairman, American Council of Trustees and Alumni

Co-author, *Losing America's Memory: Historical Illiteracy in the 21st Century*