

**"DRAFT Minnesota Academic Standards"
"September 4, 2003"
"History and Social Studies"**

Solicited Review by Erich Martel

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I. Introductory Statement: Why the Social Studies Standards are Fundamentally Good

The draft history standards posted on September 4, 2003 **are on target and fundamentally sound**, because they are centered on core subject area content, making them understandable to teachers and non-teachers alike. Behavioral goals and abstract themes are no longer the core of the standards as they were in the POLs.

The Government and Citizenship Draft Standards, evaluated on pp. 18-23, are embarrassing, poorly written, misinformed and factionally motivated. They should be discarded and replaced. The Department of Education should find writers who understand the historical role and meaning of the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution and the how it has evolved over time. This section of the draft social studies standards was more and more shocking as I read on. It is an ideological and behavioral document, just like the POLs.

Since the draft history standards are based on specific historical eras and events that are chronologically presented, they can be criticized by making reference to historical evidence. By the same measure, since the standards in the other social studies subject areas (geography, government and citizenship, economics) are listed within defined subject areas, they can be rationally evaluated. Thus, as the public discussion may get heated, it is a discussion about concrete specifics, which can be debated on their individual merits, rather than slippery concepts that defy common definition.

My basic premise is that good subject area standards in history must describe subject area knowledge centered on historical content, i.e. events, individuals, eras, that is organized chronologically. History standards have little value when centered on abstract skills or student performance.

II. What are Standards and What Defines Good Ones?

Good subject area standards describe and delineate the bodies of subject area content knowledge that students are required to master at given grade levels. They are described and delineated in language that is clear and value-free and that allows the level of mastery to be evaluated by a common set of objective assessments.

- A. Standards are **objective** when they are free from overt or implied partisan bias, slant or perspective.

Objectively stated standards **allow perspectives and opinions, both contemporary and present-day; they do not prescribe perspectives, viewpoints or interpretations.**

Standards that describe perspectives, opinions, behaviors or goals unrelated to mastery of knowledge cannot be fairly or equitably assessed by a common set of assessments.

- B. Standards in history should only describe **subject-area content knowledge**, not teaching methods or how students should demonstrate their mastery.

- C. **Standards are not a curriculum**; therefore, they don't have to list every detail within each standard that students are expected to know.

- D. **Standards presume that teachers have the background knowledge to teach their subjects.**

Large numbers of history teachers have neither a major nor a minor in any area of history, although many are certified as social studies teachers.

One of the biggest complaints of teachers around the country is the irrelevance of the coursework required for teaching degrees and to meet state licensing requirements.

This means that the Minnesota Department of Education will have to review teacher licensure requirements, determine which requirements are effective and which aren't and redesign them with a stronger focus on subject-area content. On the subject of licensure of history and social studies teachers, see "Can 'Social Studies Standards' Prepare History Teachers?" by this reviewer in "Perspectives," the newsmagazine of the American Historical Association (Martel, <http://www.theaha.org/perspectives/issues/1999/9910/9910VIE.CFM>).

- E. **Standards presume teacher professionalism, i.e. that they will not use their authority to promote their own views over an objective presentation of subject material.**

III. Introductory Remarks: My Review of the Minnesota Profiles of Learning (POLs).

In April 2000, I was one of approximately 20 educators contracted by the Council for Basic Education to review the social studies "Learning Areas" of the Minnesota POLs. I was shocked at how the traditional subject areas of history (U.S. and world), geography, government/civics and economics had been dissolved into two unrecognizable "Learning Areas" termed "Inquiry" and "Peoples and Culture."

In my "Summary of Findings," I wrote:

"The Minnesota Profiles of Learning are fatally flawed for the following reasons:

- They are **structurally confusing**, since the ten Learning Areas don't correspond to traditional and current divisions of the subject areas.
- they are **uneven and incomplete**, in that important historical thinking and analytical skills are omitted, while others receive excessive attention.
- (given the state curriculum ban) the **don't offer model subject area content scopes and sequences** that demonstrate how the Learning area process standards would typically mesh with subject area content.
- they are **unscientific**. The POL are guided by a philosophy of human cognitive growth and development known as "constructivism." Despite the claims of "constructivist" theorists, controlled studies do not demonstrate its greater effectiveness; rather, research finds it inferior to "direct instruction." Constructivists benefit from the layperson's [and many educators'] understandable confusion between the **status of the term "theory"** as used in the physical sciences and its use in the behavioral or social sciences, where its meaning is often closer to "hypothesis," i.e. an educated generalization yet to be proven.
- Constructivism and the POLs are **anti-scientific** in that they promote an epistemology or means of understanding the world that gives greater weight to subjective or impressionistic views than to empirical evidence. They assign greater authority to subjective classifications of knowledge than to substantive or tangible content by:
 - assigning greater value to students' opinions, impressions, social skills, and social views than to subject matter content and relevant analytical skills;
 - demeaning the accumulated knowledge of history, social studies, mathematics and the physical sciences by placing greater importance on "inquiry" or "discovery" skills;
 - fostering the illusion that inherently subjective process standards, abstracted from substantive bodies of knowledge, can be assessed by any fair and quantifiable set of objective standards;
 - elevating arbitrary and subjective classifications of humanity, e.g. "race" and gender, to the level of predictive traits, viz. "Diverse Perspectives."
- the POLs (and constructivism) are **ideological**, in that they place greater value on social, behavioral and psychological attitudes than on acquiring knowledge."

Since advocates of constructivism often quote John Dewey, I prefaced the review with a quotation from his 1899 presidential address before the American Psychological Association:

"[Without a] connection between ... the theorist and the practical workers - through the medium of the linking science ... [educators are compelled] to resort to purely arbitrary measures, to fall back upon mere routine traditions of school teaching, or to fly to the latest fad of pedagogical theorists - the latest panacea peddled out in school journals or teachers' institutes - just as the old physician relied upon his magical formula" (Anderson et al. 1998, 269).

The POLs and similar theme-centered standards in other states have also been defended on the grounds that they promoted equity and social justice, an assertion unsupported by evidence. Civil rights pioneer and NAACP co-founder W.E.B. DuBois didn't mince words about this, when, in an address to the Georgia State [Colored] Teachers Convention in 1935, he said:

"[T]he school has again but one way, and that is, first and last, to teach them to read, write and count. And if the school fails to do that, and tries beyond that to do something for which a school is not adapted, it not only fails in its own function, but it fails in all other attempted functions. Because no school as such can organize industry, or settle the matter of wages and income, can found homes or furnish parents, can establish justice or make a civilized world" (King, 257).

No one would accuse DuBois of being soft on equity or social justice. His words are relevant here, because subject area standards can only be judged by their effectiveness in describing

- the bodies of knowledge that are important for students to learn; and
- how these bodies of knowledge will be divided and grouped into coherent and meaningful sequences of subject-area units that enhance teaching, learning and student achievement.

The standards reflect what the vast majority of people understand, which the words of DuBois merely serve to remind us, that without an education guarantees of equity and social justice have little meaning.

IV. What I Reviewed and Some Caveats

- A. I reviewed the U.S., Minnesota and World History and the Government and Citizenship Draft Standards. I did not review the Economics or the Geography Draft Standards.
- B. In order to avoid being influenced by other comments, I did not examine the public comments or the other solicited comments that were posted on the Minnesota Department of Education website.

C. Terms that will not appear in this review.

Quite a few of the posted comments used the terms "conservative" or "liberal" in their criticisms of parts of the draft standards or the entire document; occasionally stronger pejoratives were used. I find those characterizations of little value in evaluating standards. They stigmatize and stereotype and create artificial barriers between people who share a common interest in effective schools and educational programs and who believe that the schools, as DuBois suggested, have a mission to teach, not to preach.

Standards or benchmarks that depart from objective descriptions of the knowledge to be learned must be revised or dropped. In other words, standards and benchmarks should avoid the twin "p.c. temptations": "political correctness" and "patriotic correctness."

V. Review of the Draft U.S., Minnesota & World History Standards & Benchmarks

Although the history and social studies items in the draft standards are in need of improvement in some areas, as a whole, their strengths far outweigh their weaknesses. First the strengths will be described, then the weaknesses.

A. Strengths

A cursory overview shows the following strengths:

1. **The standards are organized into traditional subject areas:** U.S. history, world history, Minnesota history, geography, government/citizenship and economics. Although the subjects are labeled "strands," they are clearly recognizable as distinct subjects.

The traditional subjects and subject-area disciplines developed over long periods of time, in some cases centuries, are effective ways of organizing and teaching the social studies subjects, because they still offer the most logical and efficient ways of organizing and presenting bodies of knowledge. That is why most people expect to see discrete subjects when they look at standards and curricula.

There is also an important cognitive reason for this: the memory organizes information in clusters, each with its own inherent logic. It simply makes sense for schools to take advantage of the traditional divisions of knowledge, rather than dissolve all social studies subjects into unrecognizable strands of themes as part of a non-subject, called "social studies."

2. **The standards for U.S. history, Minnesota and world history are centered on the substantive content** (historical eras, patterns, events, documents, significant individuals, etc.) of that subject; they are not centered on general and non-specific lists of skills.

3. The standards of each subject area are organized into units based on the logic of that subject area or discipline:
 - a. The U.S., Minnesota & world history standards are organized into chronological sequences of eras and events.
 - b. The geography standards are organized around the five National Geographic geographic standards.
4. The draft standards do not combine subject-area skills with subject-area content. While subject-specific skills standards need to be added to the draft standards, they must be listed separately from the content standards, as explained in the next section.
5. **The draft standards call for the teaching of subject-area content**, starting in Kindergarten and grade 1.

The draft standards call for subject area content

- a. to be first introduced in K-2;
- b. expanded in grades 3-8;
- c. reaching greatest depth and complexity in grades 9-12.

The importance of this cannot be overstated. It is during the early childhood years (K to 2 or 3) that the school **MUST** lay the foundation of knowledge in history, geography, government, economics (AND literature, science and foreign language), because this is where the learning/achievement gap that limits disadvantaged, disproportionately minority children starts.

For purposes of this report, a "disadvantaged" child is one who enters school with a much smaller store of the knowledge compared to his or her "advantaged" same grade peers. When schools spend the first two to four years of social studies instruction on "expanding environments" curricula that have little history, geography or civics content, "disadvantaged" children stagnate, while "advantaged" children continue to build this knowledge at home by being read to, visiting museums, etc. The knowledge gap widens. By the time instruction in actual subjects starts in grade 3 or 4, the gap continues to wide.

As the schools lay the foundational reading/decoding skills (phonics) in K and 1, the schools must also start building or expanding subject area knowledge. (For a recent discussion of this problem, see "The Early Catastrophe: The 30 Million Word Gap" by Betty Hart and Todd R. Risley in The American Educator, (Spring 2003), publication of the American Federation of Teachers; http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html. The researchers discovered that, by age 3, a child of professional parents had heard 30 million more words than a child on welfare. The former child had a vocabulary and a number of different words per hour that were roughly twice the number of the child on welfare.

An article by E.D. Hirsch in the same issue reviews the research that explains the importance of vocabulary words and domain (subject-matter) knowledge, "Reading Comprehension Requires Knowledge - of Words and the World: Scientific Insights into the Fourth Grade Slump and Stagnant Reading Comprehension" by E.D. Hirsch, Jr.
http://www.aft.org/american_educator/spring2003/AE_SPRNG.pdf).

6. In contrast to the POLs, the draft standards are not an inherently politicized and behavioral document.
There are some politicized standards and benchmarks that weaken the draft standards; in contrast to the POLs, they can be revised.

B. Weaknesses

1. Except for chronology, the draft history standards do not list subject-area skills.

Recommendation:

A list of skills, not merged with historical content standards and benchmarks, needs to be added. One such list is the five groups of 34 "historical thinking skills" in the National Standards for History. That list is a good starting point for considering the skills and activities local curriculum documents will use as the historical content is taught. See the Addendum for an example of how to combine a history content standard with a history thinking skill.

Some of these skills are listed as content knowledge in the Government and Citizenship standards (see grade 5, sub-strand B, p. 16, the first five bulleted items). While they are also skills for the study of the Government, they should be included on a list of historical thinking skills.

I note that the solicited review of Harold Balsiger (posted on the MN Dept of Education website) criticizes the absence of activity or application terms in the "process words used in the benchmarks." That comment reflects a misunderstanding or disagreement over the role of core content standards. The activity or application words he is looking for would be on the separate list I am describing.

2. In a few draft standards and benchmarks, politicized phrases or terms create a distracting polemical tone. These will be described with suggested revisions in the next section.
3. The standards' terminology is misleading.
 - subjects are called "strands"; they should be called what they are, "subjects."
 - historical eras are called "sub-strands"; they, too, should be called what they are, "eras" or "historical eras."

4. Although the grade 3-8 U.S. history cluster runs from pre-colonial to the present, the grade 3-8 World History cluster ends with 1500. The grade 3-8 World History cluster must continue up to the present.
5. Scope and Sequence Confusion in U.S., Minnesota & World History.
 - a. The draft lists three U.S. and world history sequences, and one Minnesota sequence:

<u>Grade</u>	<u>US History</u>	<u>Minn. History</u>	<u>World History</u>
K-2	people & events mostly pre-CivWar	people & events (mostly pre-CW)	holidays, skills early civilizations
	<u>Era: Time Period</u>		<u>Era: Time Period</u>
3	1: preCol-1607 2: 1607-1763		1: prehist - 1000BC 2: 1000 BC - 500 AD
4	3: 1763-1791		3: 500 - 1000 AD
5	3: 1801-1861 4: 1850-1870s		4: 1000 - 1500 AD
6		Native Ams Explorers	2: 1000 BC - 500 AD 3: 500 - 1000 AD 4: 1000 - 1500 AD
7	3: 1775-1860 4: 1850-1870s	settlers pre-CW Civil War	
8	5: 1880-1900 6: 1896-1929 7: 1929-1945 8: 1945-1980 9: 1989-present	1880-1900 1900-1968 1968-2000 2000-present	
9-12	Eras 1-9		Eras 1-8

- b. Problems With the Above Three Sequences
 - i. US history eras have inconsistent dating/periodization.
 - ii. The grade 3-8 US history sequence repeats eras 3 & 4.
This is probably to account for the fact that the important formative period in US history is covered by non-specialist elementary teachers in grades 4 & 5. Nonetheless, this is inefficient time use.
 - iii. Minnesota history in grades 6 & 7 is not clearly periodized.
 - iv. In the grade 3-8 sequence, world history ends in 1500 in grade 6.
 - v. it's not clear from grade 8, whether Minnesota history is intended to be integrated into the US history units or taught as a separate course.
 - vi. The K-2 standards should be fleshed out more.
 - vii. The repetition of Eras 1-9 in both US and world history with expanded coverage and depth (in addition to government and economics and geography!) creates an impossible burden for grades 9-12.
 - viii. There is a danger of stuffing the standards, more specifically, the benchmarks, with too many specific events and individuals. This the danger that beset the National Standards for U.S. History.

c. Recommendations For Improved Periodization & Time Use

<u>Grade</u>	<u>US History</u>	<u>Minn. History</u>	<u>World History</u>
K-2	people & events mostly pre-CivWar AND RECENT	people & events (mostly pre-CW)	holidays, skills early civilizations AND RECENT
	<u>Era: Time Period</u>		<u>Era: Time Period</u>
3	1: preCol-1607 2: 1607-1763 3: 1763-1791	Native Ams Explorers	
4			1: prehist - 1000BC 2: 1000 BC - 500 AD 3: 500 - 1000 A 4: 1000 - 1500 AD
5	3: 1801-1861 3: 1775-1860 4: 1850-1870s 5: 1880-1900 6: 1896-1929 7: 1929-1945 8: 1945-1980 9: 1989-present	settlers pre-CW Civil War 1880-1900 1900-1968 1968-2000 2000-present	
6			5: 1500-1650 AD 6: 1650-1914 AD 7: 1914-1945 AD 8: 1945-present
7		Minn History (if it must be a discrete course)	
8	Eras 1-4 (preCol - 1870s)	merged with: Minn: (same period)	
9			Eras 1-5 (prehist - 1650)
10			Eras 6-8 (1650-present)
11	Eras 5-9 (1870s-present)	merged with: Minn: (same period)	
12	U.S. Government Economics		

d. Recommendations Explained

- i. In K-2, there should be equal attention given to more recent events and persons. At present, it is too concentrated on pre-colonial, colonial civilizations.

By including personalities and events from the recent past, children can use their own lives and those of parents and grandparents to develop a sense of chronology and the depth of time. They can construct chronologies working backward in time from their lives.

They should also build extended chronologies starting with a few events that cover millennia, e.g. dinosaurs, early humans, ancient civilizations [the concept of what that means, not all civilizations], Judaism, Christianity, Islam, knights & castles, Marco Polo & Silk

Road merchants, explorers, samurai, Martin Luther & the Reformation, Pilgrims & Puritans, Native Americans & settlers, American Revolution, Civil War, factories, settlement of Minnesota & the plains, immigration/internal migration (family histories of arrival - down to the present), WW I, Great Depression, WW II (great grandparents), Viet Nam (grandparents), MLK & the civil rights movement &, cold war, Gulf War (parents), their birth of child, 911, Iraq.

- ii. The grade 3-8 sequence of US history should be compressed into two years between grades 3 & 7. Why?
 - It takes up too much instructional time;
 - It weakens the sense of chronology. By teaching several eras sequenced together students get a stronger sense of how events from one era led to those of the next era. AND, students should learn that "eras" are arbitrary groupings of events and that others are used by historians. They can create their own eras based on their choices of events that have a common theme or connection.

- iii. World history in grades 3-8 should go up to the present AND should also be clustered into two grades between grades 3 & 7, for the same reasons.

The time period following the Renaissance gave rise to institutions and ideas whose impact on the U.S. and the world were enormous: Protestant Reformation, Enlightenment, national states, intensified exploration and commercial ventures, etc.

The scope of events suggested for grade 6, above, provides context for understanding the religious conflicts in England that led to the Pilgrim's emigration in search of religious freedom.

- iv. Minnesota history: The discrete units of Minnesota history should be merged into U.S. history.

- v. The final sequences of US & world history presently in grades 9-12 should be expanded to grades 8-12, as follows:
 - U.S. History, part I, through 1877 or 1896 in grade 8 or 9;
 - U.S. History, part II, 1877 or 1896 to the present in grade 11.
 - World history, part I, through 1500 or 1650/1689 in grade 8 or 9;
 - World history, part II, 1500/1650/1689 to the present.

- vi. Possible scopes and sequences of world history:

World history presents a number of difficulties, especially with the problem of coverage. It is important that sufficient time be allotted for European history, so that students will understand the historical roots of U.S. institutions, while giving adequate time to learn about cultural regions outside the U.S. and Europe.

One possibility is to divide the second year of world history into one semester of Europe since 1500 and a second semester into one or two world regions: Latin America, a region of Africa, China/East Asia, India. The goal of maximum global coverage in world history classes has resulted in shallow coverage of great expanses of time.

C. U.S. History Standards: Specific Recommendations

1. In the case of almost every recommendation, the language this reviewer describes as "politicized" represents a valid interpretation of the historical events, but it is not the only reasonable interpretation and, therefore, should not be built into the standards as a mandate subject to assessment.
2. Example of a well-written standard:
 - a. Grade 4, Era 3, p. 11: "Student will demonstrate understanding of the causes and course of the American Revolution"
It is well written, because it calls for specific information, but that specificity still allows for individual teacher and student interpretation over which causes were more important than others.

D. Benchmarks Needing Revision

These benchmarks are problematic and need to be corrected or revised. Most are either ambiguous in the knowledge they are describing, historically inaccurate or politicized. Most can be easily corrected

1. Gr 2, Famous Americans, p. 5: "Students will explain how explorations and expansion have shaped U.S. history."
 - i. too vague - even though it is 2nd grade, the benchmark needs to be linked to a time period and its events.
 - ii. "will explain" -
There should be a common, introductory phrase for all of the standards that keeps the focus on **what** is to be known, not how the way it is to be presented.
Example:
"Students will be able to describe ..." or "... able to list and explain ..." or, as some of the standards show, "Students will know how ..."
This phrase can be placed at the head of each benchmark column.
 - iii. "Students will know and understand ..."
"know" is more specific: a student is responsible for knowing a body of information; whereas, "understand" is more subjective.
"Understand" also can convey the meaning of empathy or acknowledgement.
For example: Gr 5, Era 4, p 14: "Students will know and understand the roles of Jefferson Davis, Ulysses S. Grant, Robert E. Lee, an Abraham Lincoln in events leading to and during the war."
- "know" or "describe" or even "explain" create less ambiguity.

This will be more important when looking at issues closer to the present that provoke more partisan reactions.

2. Gr 7, Era 3, p. 23: "Students will know and understand the relationship between the religious, social and political ideas of the Great Awakening and the development of *revolutionary fervor in western political thought*."
 - a. This is unclear: what is "western political thought"? The U.S. west or western civilization?
 - b. The Great Awakening was a powerful force that promoted **religious** fervor and the idea of congregations selecting their own ministers. In the 1760s & 1770's, that experience began to include the idea of having a voice in political decision-making.

3. Gr 7, Era 4; p. 2: "... creation of Liberia and the 'Back to Africa Movement.'"
 - a. The "Back to Africa" movement was associated with Marcus Garvey in the 1920s, not Liberia in the pre-Civil War period.

4. Gr 8, Minnesota History, 1900-1968, pp. 28-29: Most of these are overly specific down to the minutest details, which therefore provokes questions about the exclusion of other minute and not so minute details:
Regarding "significant events that took place between 1914 and 1968 and their impact on Minnesota," the only ones listed are;
 - "resistance of some Minnesotans to entering into World War I" and
 - "participation and motivation of Native Americans in enlisting to fight in World War I."This is problematic, because:
 - a. The greatest impact on Minnesota was the number of soldiers who enlisted and went to war. That number outweighs those who resisted. Resistance to WWI was not uncommon and deserves mention, but in the larger context.
 - b. Why is a benchmark questioning the "motivation of Native Americans in enlisting"? Native Americans have fought in all U.S. wars. As is the case with most Americans, Native Americans undoubtedly had a variety of motives. That is the context in which they can be explored.
A benchmark or standard should avoid generalizations about demographic groups that verge on stereotyping.
By failing to list the larger and more significant historical event, minutiae like this has little meaning.

5. Gr 5, Era 4, p. 14: "Students will know and understand provisions of the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments to the Constitution *and their impact on the expansion of freedom in America*."
The italicized clause is historically inaccurate; as Reconstruction ended and the Supreme Court limited the scope of the amendments, freedom was severely curtailed. The intended "freedom" was cut short.
The italicized words should be deleted.

- a. In a standards document, the phrase, "*freedom in America*" is an abstraction, because it is written as a non-specific generalization, and should be avoided.
 - b. It is only accurate if tied to the 13th Amendment or tied in some other way to the actual historical events.
 - c. "What impact did the 14th & 15th amendments have on the expansion of freedom in America during the late 19th century?"
 - d. Was this a reference to the 14th Amendment in "Near v. Minnesota" (1931), which was an expansion of freedom of the press?
There's no way to tell.
6. Gr 7, Era 3, p. 24: "... how the conflicts between Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton resulted in the emergence of two political parties."
Misleading and oversimplified, because
 - a. The parties emerged out of partisan differences, in which both men played prominent roles, but were not the sole forces.
 7. Gr. 7, Era 3, p. 24: "... the significance of domestic resistance movements and the ways the central government responded to such movements (e.g. Shay's Rebellion, the Whiskey Rebellion)."
 - a. "resistance movements" is a politicized characterization.
 - b. more importantly, lumping them together without specifying that Shay's was an indirect challenge to the Articles of Confederation government (a direct challenge to the government of Massachusetts) that helped build sentiment for a stronger central government, while the Whiskey Rebellion was against the U.S. government's excise tax, established under the authority of the new Constitution.
 - c. That question could be illuminating as a way of explaining that adoption of the U.S. Constitution didn't automatically end all previous problems or controversies.
 8. Gr. 7, Era 3, p. 24: "... how the Constitution provides numerous opportunities for citizens to participate in the political process and to monitor and influence the government ..."
Historically [in the context of the 1790s] inaccurate, because
 - a. This is true today; but it wasn't true in the 1776-1815 period;
 - b. This must have been placed in this era in error; this belongs in the Government standards.
 9. Gr. 7, Era 3, p. 24: "... the functions and responsibilities of a free press."
Historically [in the context of the 1790s] inaccurate, because
 - a. This, too, must have been placed here in error; place this in the Government standards;
 - b. The Sedition Act of 1798 curtailed freedom of the press and greatly threatened the unity of the new government.

10. Gr 8, Era 6, p. 29: "... Wilson's 14 Points and the failure of post-war internationalism, which helped set the stage for World War II."
- The first two facts don't necessarily lead to the conclusion of "set the stage." That's an interpretation, a fairly reasonable one, but still an interpretation, one that could be in a model lesson plan as a guiding question:
"Did the U.S. failure to join the League of Nations after WWI and its turn to isolationism help set the stage for World War II?"
 - Teachers should help students avoid facile interpretations by explaining that changing one decision, albeit a major one, doesn't necessarily alter the consequences that took place 20 years later.
11. Gr 7, Minn Hist, p.22: "Students will know and understand how Minnesota's people came to govern themselves as a territory."
Historically inaccurate and potentially inflammatory, because
- The procedure for becoming a territory is described in the Constitution;
 - As a territory, "Minnesota's people" didn't fully "govern themselves," since they remained under federal jurisdiction (just ask people in the District of Columbia about that (:>)), with an appointed governor;
 - Since most, if not all, Native Americans did not have the right to vote in the elections to the territorial legislature, it's inaccurate and potentially inflammatory.
It leads to the type of controversy that is unnecessary: the rhetorical question, "Just who were 'Minnesota's people' in the 1850s?"
 - It could be rewritten as,
"Students will know and understand the steps that led to the establishment of the Minnesota Territory."
The teacher can then explain all of the issues and controversies, such as what the voter qualifications were, etc. No one can then accuse the standards of promoting a biased definition of "Minnesota's people."
12. Gr. 8, Era 6, p 29: "... understand the reasons for ... the Spanish American War."
Ambiguously worded, because
- The phrase "understand the reasons for" implies that the reasons were just and above question.
 - In fact, there was great debate in Congress about the U.S. decision to declare war on Spain, a controversy students should examine.
 - The phrase should read, "understand the causes of ..."
13. Gr 8; Era 6, p. 29: "reaction to the U.S. entry into the Pacific by the people of the Philippines and China, e.g. the guerrilla war in the Philippines and the Boxer Rebellion in China, as well as Russia and Japan."
Historically inaccurate and confusing, because
- The syntax is confusing ("as well as Russia and Japan");
 - "the people of ..." implies a united people rising up in opposition;

"the people of..." is a figment of political rhetoric. In fact, many welcomed the U.S. Nonetheless, the resistance to the U.S. takeover was significant and important for students to study.

- c. There was a bloody and vicious war in the Philippines; one of the U.S. Army units was the 13th Minnesota Volunteers.
 - d. In this unit, students should study the debate between the imperialists and the anti-imperialists.
 - e. The Boxer Rebellion was anti-foreigner and a response to entry into China, not the Pacific.
14. Gr. 8, Era 8, p.31: "... the role of America's military and veterans in defending freedom during the Cold War, including the wars in Korea and Vietnam, the Cuban missile crisis, and the collapse of communism in Europe."
- This is a polemical statement and an interpretation:
- a. This is a politicized statement presented as fact;
 - b. Problem 1: it conflates into one overarching generalization, two wars, a threat of war and a collapse, each one different;
 - c. Vietnam divided the country over many aspects of the war, including over the question of "defending freedom";
 - d. It uses veterans as a foil, "the role [and implied sacrifices] of America's military and veterans..." to block any possible discussion of the statement, because "the role of American's military and veterans..." is not a statement that is designed to encourage discussion by teachers or students:
 - i. What exactly is the "role" that is to be taught?
 - ii. This is an overtly polemical statement focused not on the historical events, but an oversimplified evaluation, one that all veterans do not share.
 - e. If the purpose is to salute veterans, that noble goal does not belong in a standards document.
 - f. This benchmark should be removed.
15. Gr 8, Era 9; p. 31: "... causes of the fall of the Soviet Union, including the significance of the role of Ronald Reagan."
- This is ambiguous and politicized, because
- a. This is an interpretation;
 - b. There is debate among historians about Reagan's role, which was considerable;
 - c. By not linking Pres. Reagan to specific policies, he is being rhetorically elevated;
 - d. With a focus on the historical events, including the meetings between Reagan and Gorbachev, and the long-term stagnation of the Soviet economy, the impact of arms competition on the Soviet Union, the costly war in Afghanistan (during which Presidents Carter and Reagan supplied the mujahadeen) all contributed to the fall of the Soviet Union.

16. Gr 8, Era 9, p. 31: "... clash of civilizations in a post-communist world and the challenges it represents to the United States."
This is an inflammatory interpretation, because
- a. it is not defined: the teacher has to fill in the blanks;
 - b. The phrase "clash of civilizations" is one that historians are hesitant to use and only after the long passage of time that allows for an objective perspective.
 - c. the term "civilization" is a huge generalization and an invitation to stereotyping, which is why historians are reluctant to use it.
 - d. Consider what a teacher has to do with this:
 - i. It has to be presented as a "clash of civilizations"
 - ii. Which "civilizations" are on each side?
 - iii. Is the U.S. being defined as a "civilization"?
 - iv. Or, is it "the West"?
 - v. Which "civilization" is on the other side"?
 - e. How would this question be assessed?
17. Grade 5, Era 3, p. 14: "Student will demonstrate knowledge of western expansion, conflict, and reform in America from 1801-1861."
It is poorly written, because
- a. it attempts too much: western expansion, conflict, and reform;
 - b. if "expansion" is the focus, the dates would be 1803-1853;
 - c. is "reform" in some way causally linked to "expansion" or "conflict" or are they discrete and parallel forces?
 - d. An example of greater focus might be:
"Student will demonstrate knowledge of how western expansion contributed to sectional conflict, 1848-1861."
18. Grade 7, Era 3, p. 24: "Student will understand the challenges to gaining and preserving **our** independence."
According to the benchmarks, it is referring to the period, 1763-1815, and included causes of the American Revolution, the Articles of Confederation, the writing of the Constitution, including details about the compromises, the development of the two party system, events leading up to and the course of the War of 1812."
It is poorly written, because
- a. it is vague;
 - b. it should be broken down into several discrete standards;
 - c. it is inappropriately personalized with the pronoun, "our."
What's wrong with that? Don't many of us teachers talk like that?
It's a problem, because
 - i. This is a public document, not a classroom discussion;
 - ii. While we are the beneficiaries of those events, we were not involved;
 - iii. Students should understand that "our history" is the entire past, since the U.S. today is the product of all of the forces of the past. When language, such as "our" is used, it creates an expectation that only the events we

consider today to be positive or good will be emphasized. That is divisive and does nothing to strengthen that benchmark.

- iv. When in doubt, apply the "common standard" test for **every historical event** in that time period, including those that we don't personally identify with. For example:

"In 1775, Governor Dunmore of Virginia provoked anger when he endangered **our** cause by offering freedom to any loyalist slave who supported the king against his master."

- 19. Gr 7, p.25: "the role Lincoln's assassination played in hardening the North's attitude toward the South";
 - a. This is an opinion contradicted by 7 decades of research;
 - b. It's a minor factor in the development of Congressional or Radical Reconstruction; far more significant were the Black Codes, the threat of the Republican Party losing control of Congress, etc.
 - c. "hardening the North's attitude toward the South" reduces the complex period of Reconstruction to "South as victim of North."

- 20. Gr 7, p. 25: "...the roles of Abraham Lincoln, Jefferson Davis, Robert E. Lee and Sojourner Truth in events leading to and during the war."
Why is Sojourner Truth placed in the same category as the others?
 - a. Sojourner Truth was a fiery abolitionist, but not among the influential?
 - b. What was her "role ... during the Civil War?"

- 21. Gr 7, p. 25: "... the influence of the Monroe Doctrine"
Historically inaccurate:
 - a. This is found in benchmarks dealing with the early 1800s;
 - b. The "influence of the Monroe Doctrine" was nil during this time period.
 - c. Of much greater importance are the events leading to the Monroe Doctrine.
 - d. This needs to be reworded or deleted.

V. REVIEW OF THE DRAFT STANDARDS FOR GOVERNMENT & CITIZENSHIP

A. Introductory Comments

Government Standards should provide students with knowledge of the theory, structure, and major functions of the U.S. government, the state and local government, the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights and landmark interpretations of those documents by the U.S. Supreme Court. In addition, government standards should address other major forms of government in history and at present.

Citizenship or Citizenship Standards address both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship as well as the process of becoming a citizen. Citizenship also describes the active participation process of the citizen in public affairs, from being aware of

the local, national and international events to voting to attending public meetings and seeking to influence governmental decisions.

Attempting to craft "Citizenship Standards" runs into difficulty when trying to define what the schools should teach about participation, other than, "participation in all of the above is good." That's because people participate in a partisan manner. That's where conflict develops, since parents have different views of what constitutes good citizenship. Some think it's supporting the U.S. efforts in Iraq; other's think it's publicly protesting against it.

Where citizenship standards fail is on the bottom line: objective assessment. That is the problem that undermines citizenship standards and benchmarks in the draft standards.

The citizenship standards and benchmarks for the early grades are unfortunate. The drumbeat insistence on instilling patriotism does not instill patriotism. They resemble the behavioral focus of the POLs. Most importantly, they only peripherally describe knowledge that children will have to learn.

B. Civics Education: The "Tug of War" by James B. Murphy

James B. Murphy is a professor of government at Dartmouth College who has studied the effectiveness of civic education in developing citizenship value. He reports his conclusions Fall 2003 issue of "Education Next":

"A fierce debate over civic education in America's public schools has erupted in response to the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Broadly speaking, liberal approaches to civic education have emphasized the need to resist jingoism and to explore why America induces such hatred in certain parts of the world. By contrast, conservative responses to 9/11 have emphasized our national virtues and the need to defend them in times of danger. Conservatives tend to caricature liberal civics lessons as the toleration of the intolerable, while liberals often criticize conservative civics lessons as a knee-jerk brand of patriotism. ... My view, briefly stated, is that the attempt to inculcate civic values in our schools is at best ineffective and often undermines the intrinsic moral purpose of schooling" (Murphy, 70).

According to two studies he cites, "civics courses have some small effect on students' knowledge but virtually none on attitudes" (Murphy, 72).

He concludes, "[E]ven if we could all agree about the proper civic virtues, the very attempt to inculcate them undermines the integrity of the academic curriculum. The quest for truth is quickly subordinated to civic uplift when teachers see their role as fostering certain civic dispositions in their students."

C. Government and Citizenship Draft Standards & Benchmarks: Recommendations

Taken together as a single, discrete set of standards, the Government and Citizenship Standards describe a severely flawed document, which will be summarized in section D, below.

1. Kindergarten, p. 1:
"Recognize from literature ... patriotism and individual responsibility."
"Recognize symbols ..."
"Recognize and name the President"
 - a. Since they are examples of objective knowledge, they are OK.
2. Kindergarten, p. 1:
"... exhibit good citizen behaviors such as respect, kindness, self-control, cooperation, and good manners."
 - a. These are behavior standards; they should not be grouped under Government standards.
 - b. Behavior is not an academic standard; it belongs in the school system's code of rules and behavior.
 - c. Since it is not an academic standard, it cannot be objectively assessed.
3. Grade 1, p. 3: "...define what it means to be a citizen in terms of loyalty, membership and self-government."
 - a. "loyalty" - A child can certainly give a definition of loyalty;
 - b. " - "loyalty" to what? the Constitution, governmental decisions, pledging allegiance to the flag?
4. Gr 1, p. 3: "... Declaration of Independence and U.S. Constitution are the founding documents of our government and that they outline the rights, responsibilities and privileges of being a citizen."
 - a. The Declaration is not a legal document; it "outlines" some rights, but they have no legal status.
5. Gr 1, p.3: "... describe how Americans show respect for national symbols such as the flag and national anthem."
 - a. What is meant by "show respect"?
 - b. This is a behavior and can't be assessed.
 - c. Is the emphasis on "describe"?
The fact is that many American have different ideas about how to "show respect ..."
Furthermore, not all Americans believe in "showing respect for national symbols..."
That means that asking a child "to describe ..." is asking the child to be dishonest.

6. Gr 2, p. 5: "... will understand that the Constitution establishes how our nation is governed according to principles of the Declaration of Independence."
 - a. This statement is meaningless and mostly inaccurate.
 - b. It is asking children to affirm something that is simply not true; it is asking them to affirm a falsehood.
 - c. "our nation" - see earlier comments

7. Gr 3, p. 8: "trustworthiness, honesty, courtesy, respect, responsibility," etc.
 - a. These describe behavior. All teachers are responsible for teaching them. They should not be part of a Government Standard.

8. Gr. 2, p. 8: "...recognize that 'inalienable rights' are derived from fundamental (sic) worth and dignity of the individual."
 - a. What is this supposed to mean?
 - b. the entire phrase is "they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights,..."
 - c. That is a philosophical statement, based on the historical evolution of the idea of individual rights.
The way it is written, it is made to appear as a static truth. That is how the writers of the Declaration phrased it, because they were writing an advocacy document, a polemic.
 - d. The Declaration says nothing about rights being derived from the "dignity and worth of the individual"; rather, it says from "the Creator."
 - e. As written, it is a Biblical concept.
 - f. The rights we enjoy are guaranteed in the Bill of Rights and the Constitution.
 - g. This benchmark is, therefore, out of place; it would amount to a form of preaching.
 - h. It is a good idea to familiarize 3rd graders with the important phrases in the Declaration, but they should not be given misleading or inaccurate information.

9. Gr 3, p. 8: "Respecting differing opinions in a diverse society."
 - a. "respecting differing opinions" stands by itself; it does not rest upon "diverse society."
 - b. What is meant by "diverse society" (repeated 3 times)?
 - c. Suggestion: delete "in a diverse society."

10. Gr 3, 4, 5
 - a. There is an excessive amount of repetition in the Gov't standards for grades 3-5.
 - b. Also the hammering away at "patriotic" and semi-concealed religious themes is excessive. This is reminiscent of the POLs attempts to rigidly apply "multiple perspectives" to all areas of subjects and time periods.

11. Gr.5, p. 16: The five social studies skills at the top of the page.
These are good - again, they should be on a separate list.
 - a. They are termed "social studies citizenship skills"

12. Gr. 8, p. 32: "...separation of power and its purpose to limit government"
 - a. "separation" creates checks and balances; "limited" refers to the concept that the government only holds those powers that are delegated to it by a constitution.

13. Gr 9-12, p. 48: "Federalism and the doctrine of *designated powers*"
 - a. it should read, "delegated powers."

14. Gr 9-12, p. 49: "...why the Arts of Confed was a failed social contract with the people of the U.S., while the Const was a successful social contract."
 - a. "a failed/successful social contract with the people of the U.S." is a misleading way of characterizing the replacement of the former with the latter.
 - b. "social contract" is a philosophical/political science theory that describes the logic of governmental power: "the people" through their representatives delegate to the central government a written list of powers and other powers that are "implied" by the "delegated" powers.
The powers left over are "reserved" to the states and the people.
The logic implies that there was a time of no government when "the people" hadn't delegated any power, but held on to all of it. There never was such a time.
 - c. The Arts were replaced because the majority of the political leadership of the country saw them as ineffective; it wasn't a real government like the real ones in GB and France that remained potential problems.
 - d. By narrowly focusing the change on the theory of "social contract", the actual process is distorted.
 - e. This should be rewritten.

15. Gr 9-12, p. 49: "... the activities of daily life ..., and setting an example of freedom in the world community."
 - a. "setting an example of freedom in the world community" is not only an interpretation of the civic responsibility, it is a distortion.
Where does the Constitution mandate this?
 - b. This clause projects the role of students as missionaries to the world who have to always be conscious that they are setting an example.
 - c. How can this be objectively assessed?
 - d. It's out of place and should be deleted.

16. Gr. 9-12, p. 50: "...tensions between large and small states, and the compromises that kept the Union together, such as the Electoral College, ..."
 - a. There are no "tensions between large and small states."
That problem ended with the Great Compromise;

- b. How is the Electoral College a prime example of "compromises that keep the Union together"?
 - c. This is confusing.
17. Gr 9-12, p. 50: "... identify major milestones in U.S. and Minnesota development of political thought (and traditions that arose along the way), including but not limited to: Washington's election; Jackson; the Depression; FDR (including impact of New Deal on voters' future expectations of government role); 15th & 19th Amendments; Earl Warren court; Nixon and Watergate; Reagan; and judicial activism."
- a. What is "Minnesota development of political thought"? Harold Stassen, Hubert Humphrey?
 - b. This is a confusing grab bag of names and ideas.
 - c. What is being mandated here?
18. Gr. 9-12, p. 50: "... inalienable rights as described in the U.S. Decl of Ind and Bill of Rights..."
- a. "inalienable" rights are not "described" in the Bill of Rights.

D. The "Government and Citizenship Draft Standards" Need to be Redone

If we remove all of the Gov & Cit standards and put them into a single G & S Draft Standards document, a pattern emerges showing a concentration on

1. religion (that is the significance of the emphasis on "inalienable rights" and the "worth and dignity of the individual");
NOTE: This reviewer strongly supports inclusion of the role of religion, religious motivation and religious figures in history courses. It is important that the teaching of this role not be used as an excuse for partisan advocacy.
2. patriotic display - memorizing patriotic songs;
NOTE: This reviewer is not criticizing the teaching of patriotic songs, per se. It is the narrow, insistent and repetitious emphasis on inculcating patriotism that is out of place in a standards document.
3. excessive focus on the Declaration of Independence, in some places implying that it is a legal document - and completely failing to understand that this is a historical document that functioned in a particular role at the time it was written:
 - a. to announce independence;
 - b. to promote unity during a time a great division (Loyalists, fence sitters);
 - c. to divide the opposition (friend and foes in Parliament);
 - d. to seek allies.

The role of the Decl of Ind as a propaganda document is completely misunderstood. Instead, the Decl is treated as a sacred text. It is, indeed, a powerful and eloquent founding document, but, as a historical document, it also needs to be understood in the context of its time. There is a great deal more to it than "inalienable (sic) rights."

4. There is little mention of the Supreme Court; on page 50, "judicial activism" is mentioned, thus completing the circle with the writers revealing their hands.
5. This document (Govt & Citizenship) attests to the concern that Prof. Murphy raised. It is in the same category as the POLs: a factional document with partisan goals, whose writers are poorly informed and who intend to force this upon the people of Minnesota.
6. This entire Govt & Citizenship section needs to be discarded and rewritten by people who understand the history and structure of the U.S. Constitution and Government and how it has evolved over the past 200+ years.

VI. SOURCES CITED

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DuBois, W.E.B. "Curriculum Revision" (address to the Georgia State [i.e. Colored] Teacher's Convention, April 12, 1935) in DuBois Papers, Park Johnson Archives, Fisk University; quoted in King, Kenneth James, Pan-Africanism and Education in the Southern States and East Africa. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1971), p. 257.

Martel, Erich "Can 'Social Studies Standards' Prepare History Teachers?" in AHA Perspectives (October 1999), (<http://www.theaha.org/perspectives/issues/1999/9910/9910VIE.CFM>). This article reviewed the limitations of the social studies standards developed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Educators (NCATE). I wrote that article while serving on the Interstate New Teacher Assessment Consortium (INTASC), which has never completed its social studies report.

An important study that examined the links between teacher certification requirements and teacher effectiveness is "Teacher Certification Reconsidered: Stumbling for Quality" by Kate Walsh for the Baltimore, Maryland Abell Foundation

(http://www.abell.org/pubsitems/ed_cert_1101.pdf). She reviewed 40 years of studies purporting to demonstrate a link between teacher licensure standards and teacher effectiveness and found that most of the studies were

"flawed, sloppy, aged, and sometimes academically dishonest ... The same limited research is quoted repeatedly, with frequent mistakes in interpretation; and one cannot help but conclude that the research was not actually read (or not read carefully)" (Walsh, 13).

The study had this to say about the importance of background knowledge in specific subject areas:

"At the secondary level, teachers who know more about their subject matter are generally more effective, at least in science and mathematics. ... Very little research has been done on the importance of teacher's subject matter knowledge in English and social studies" (Walsh, 7).

Murphy, James B. "Tug of War" in *Education Next* (3, 4) Fall 2003, 70-76, (<http://www.educationnext.org/20034/70.html>).

VI. ADDENDUM

NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR HISTORY: HOW HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDINGS (i.e. historical events) ARE COMBINED WITH HISTORICAL THINKING SKILLS.

1. Within Era 3 ("Revolution and the New Nation, 1754-1820; the National Standards for U.S. History list 10 eras), there are three chronologically sequenced subdivisions, called "Standards". For example:

"Students should understand (this same descriptor precedes each standard; that keeps the focus on the content that is to be learned without tying it to a skill or an activity [that comes later])

Standard 1: **"The causes of the American Revolution, the ideas and interests involved in forging the revolutionary movement, and the reasons for the American victory."**

Notice that the "standard":

- a. describes a time period, "causes of the American Revolution";
- b. describes historical content: "ideas," "interests" that led to a specific set of events called "forging the revolutionary movement" and events ("reasons") the led to another event, "American victory."
- c. allows for flexibility on the part of the teacher and the student: there can be different emphases on which "causes" and which "reasons" were most important.
- d. is written in "knowledge" language and does not list an activity, such as "analyze," "list," "compare," etc.

2. HOW EACH "STANDARD" IS DIVIDED INTO SMALLER, CHRONOLOGICAL SEQUENCES CALLED "COMPONENT STANDARDS" (**In the Minnesota draft, this is the equivalent to benchmarks, i.e. descriptions of knowledge that must be mastered**)

Within "Standard 1" (above), there are three **component standards**, labeled 1A, 1B, 1C. For example, 1A:

"Standard 1A: The student understands the causes of the American Revolution."

Notice again, that the **component standard** describes a defined time period, defined historical content (a sequence of events), is flexible, and is written in "knowledge language," not in "activity" or "performance" language.

3. HOW EACH "COMPONENT STANDARD" IS FOLLOWED BY EXAMPLES THAT COMBINE:

a. **Historical Content Knowledge;**

b. **Historical Thinking Skills;**

c. **Activity Language, Beginning with the Phrase, "Therefore the student is able to."**

For example:

Figure 1: "Therefore, the student is able to"

5-12	Reconstruct the chronology of the critical events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and England. [Establish temporal order]
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Figure 1 shows how the following elements of good historical standards are combined into an activity:

1. historical content: "critical events leading to the outbreak of armed conflict between the American colonies and England"
2. historical thinking skills: "...chronology of the critical events leading to..."
3. language denoting a lesson plan activity: "Reconstruct the chronology..."
4. a single common phrase describing the expectation: "Therefore, the student is able to..."

The standards document does not tie a knowledge standard into a specific teaching method or pedagogy, nor does it describe how the student is to demonstrate that he or she "is able to ..."

That is left to the school district curriculum supervisor or individual school principal or department chair or the individual teacher.