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ABSTRACT

This theme issue of "The Docket" is devoted to national standards and their effects on education reform. National standards may provide the first real opportunity for schools to address the issues of student assessment and achievement. As the touchstone for educational equity, they may be the first real opportunity for teachers to influence the agenda for educational reform. This volume includes six articles on national standards. The first on systemic reform of schools, summarizes the need for systemic reform of education in the United States and the need for national standards as established by the U.S. Department of Education. The next article describes the efforts of the civics standards task force and the timetable for the completion of civics standards. The article on the National History Standards Project examines the process of working toward national consensus to define excellence in the teaching and learning of history in U.S. schools. In the article on geography standards, "geography for life" demonstrates why geography standards must be useful, enriching, and an enduring part of life-long learning. The vice president for the program of the National Council on Economic Education describes the creation of a coherent vision to teach what it means to be economically literate in a global economy. In the final article the chair of the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force explores the development of social studies standards within which discipline based standards efforts can contribute to citizenship education for the 21st century.  
 (DK)

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# THE DOCKET

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Theme Issue:

National Standards and Education Reform

# Criteria for Submission to *The Docket*

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*The Docket* is the official journal of the New Jersey Council for the Social Studies and reaches more than one thousand NJCSS members who work within social studies education from nursery school through graduate education. In an effort to act as a voice through which its members can share and express their ideas, thoughts, experiences, and research, *The Docket* publishes four types of articles.

- (1) Practical articles with ideas for teaching such as units, lesson plans, and reports of innovative practices.
- (2) Scholarly articles which cite current theory and research as a basis for making recommendations for practice.
- (3) Reviews of educational materials: books, textbooks, computer software, CD-ROM titles, laser discs, and others.
- (4) Informational articles about the efforts and activities of NJCSS and its members.

Additionally, letters to the editor are welcomed.

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Manuscripts should be between 750 and 1,500 words in length (3 to 7 manuscript pages), though the editors may consider longer manuscripts in exceptional cases.

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# National Standards and Education Reform: Prospects and Sources

Henry Kiernan and John Pyne, editors

The past decade has witnessed a proliferation of studies — much of them apocalyptic — delineating what is wrong with our educational system, particularly in comparisons of student achievement with other advanced industrial states. Best known was the April 1983 publication of *A Nation At Risk* by the National Commission on Education. The report began: "Our nation is at risk. Our once unchallenged preeminence in commerce, industry, science and technological innovation is being overtaken by competitors throughout the world." It went on to state that "the educational foundations of our society are presently being eroded by a rising tide of mediocrity that threatens our very future as a nation and a people." In its most widely quoted passage, the commissioners noted: "If an unfriendly power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war." More recently, critics such as John H. Bishop, associate professor in the New York State School of Industrial and Labor Relations at Cornell University, have lamented the academic achievement of American students. Harold W. Stevenson writes, "Despite the emerging awareness that American students are not competitive with their peers in other countries, American parents, teachers, and students hold markedly lower standards for academic achievement than do their counterparts in Asia." (1)

Equally disconcerting is the number of business leaders, economists, and politicians who have joined the criticism of American educational practices. David T. Kearns, chairman of the Xerox Corporation, notes that: "Public education has put this country at a terrible competitive disadvantage." The 200 chief executives comprising the Business Roundtable spent an entire afternoon at their annual convention in Washington in 1989 discussing the troubles afflicting American schools and what businessmen could do to help. "The manual jobs of an industrial America no longer exists," declared John Sculley, chairman of Apple Computer. "We live in an information economy, where Americans have to live by what comes out of their minds. Improving schools is a matter of national survival." Lester Thurow, the noted economist and

head of the Sloan School of Business Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology writes: "America's high school drop out rate (29 percent) is positively Third World (Japan's rate is 6 percent; Germany's 9 percent) . . ." Worse yet, our drop-out rate approaches 50 percent in our inner cities and, when combined with the alarmingly high rate of functional illiteracy, contributes to serious concerns about our country's future. High-school dropouts alone are estimated to comprise almost one-third of America's frontline workforce. (2) As the competitive position of the United States in the global economy has eroded, a cacophony of voices has joined the chorus of calls for reform. Presidents George Bush and Bill Clinton and the National Governors' Association have called for reforming education. New Jersey legislators have mandated content standards in several disciplines and called for more demanding EWT, HSPT, and content-area tests. The explosion of knowledge in the late twentieth century has hiked the intellectual skills and functions workers must have to compete successfully in the ever-expanding information-processing global economy. Summarizing conclusions reached by the Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce, Ira Magaziner and Hillary Rodham Clinton write:

Our education statistics are as disappointing as our trade statistics. Our children rank at the bottom on most international tests — behind children in Europe and East Asia. Again, we heard the excuses: They have elite systems, but we educate everyone. They compare a small number of their best to our much larger average. The facts are otherwise: Many of the countries with the highest test scores have more of their students in school than we do. (3)

A recent solicitation (March, 1993) from Marshall Rose, chairman of the Board of the New York Public Library, begins:

Today, we are faced with a tragedy that is threatening our nation. Our educational system is breaking down. Right now, it is estimat-

ed that twenty-three million Americans cannot read above a fifth-grade level. Twenty percent of all Americans are unable to write a check that a bank can process. And millions of others cannot afford more than the most basic education. It's a twentieth-century nightmare. And it comes at a time when we need increasingly skilled workers . . . people who are not just literate, but able to meet the growing demands of our technologically sophisticated society. (4)

The prospects for the future are reported as equally bleak. Paul Kennedy of Yale University notes the pessimistic demographic trends boding ill for the future: "Of the new entrants into the work force, white males — currently the best educated sector of the population, especially in science, technology, and engineering — will comprise only 15 percent, and the rest will be women, minorities, and immigrants, with the latter two groups making up the two fastest-growing segments of the work-force." (5) These two groups have the most limited access to quality education and traditionally move into low-paying, unskilled jobs, thereby creating a potentially devastating mismatch between the kinds of jobs available and the advanced technical skills and education required for such positions. (6) Motorola estimates that 80 percent of its job candidates fail entry level tests at the levels of seventh-grade English and fifth-grade math. New York Telephone claims it tested 57,000 applicants to find 2,100 people to fill entry level jobs.

The United States achieved economic preeminence in the world economy at the beginning of the century in large part because of its abundance of raw materials, including foodstuffs, coal, iron, and oil — a significant advantage over resource-poor Japan and Europe. But the "green revolution" and "materials-science revolution" have limited the advantages of abundant natural resources in economic development. "In 1950," writes Lester Thurow, "the United States had a per capita GNP four times that of West Germany and fifteen times that of Japan." Today, conditions have changed, as the per capita GNPs of Japan and Germany measured in terms of purchasing power abroad are slightly larger than that of the U.S. Moreover, American advantages in natural resources will continue to shrink with the continued expansion of scientific knowledge. Those societies steadily improving the educational standards and technical

training of their work force will reap continuing economic benefits in the future. (7)

Though the efficacy of the "supply-side" revolution of the 1980s has been sharply criticized, it is also true that high income earners have done well because the demand for highly skilled, well-educated workers continues to increase. The market for low skill or no skill workers is shrinking, even in service industries, and increased competition from poor countries with dramatically lower wage levels, depresses wage rates and demand for such positions even further. (8) Furthermore, many studies demonstrate that substantial increases in productivity correlate highly with educational levels and competence. (9)

In addition to concerns about the correlation between the education of our future workforce and our continued economic strength as a nation, commentators have been quick to point to a body of data that indicates the low achievement of American students with their counterparts in other industrialized countries. Of equal concern is the apparent lack of understanding about basic civic, economic, geographical, historical, and literary knowledge on the part of our students. Every major reform proposal of recent years, including TheodoreSizer's Horace's Compromise (1984), The Paideia Program (1984), Ernest Boyer's High School (1984), the Council for Basic Education (1984), and the American Federation of Teachers' Education for Democracy: A Statement of Principles, (1987) has emphasized the need for more civic, geographical, and historical knowledge on the part of our students. (10) Concerns over the "two-tier tracking" system that has relegated many minority students to lower level classes and dead-end jobs have also received considerable attention in recent years. Andrew Hacker, for example, writes that "while black pupils represent 16 percent of all public school students, they make up almost 40 percent of those who are classed as mentally retarded, disabled, or otherwise deficient. As a result, many more black youngsters are consigned to 'special education' classes, which all but guarantee that they will fall behind their grade levels." The consequences for American competitiveness in the global economy are dire indeed! It is estimated that some college education may be required for the approximately 52 percent of new jobs available by the end of this century. Thus, a major impetus of the reform movement in American education concerns the issue of educational equity. (11)

Opinion polls clearly show that the majority of

American citizens believe conditions have worsened virtually across the board — in race relations, economic competitiveness, public education, health care, drug abuse, and crime — and will continue to worsen for their children and grandchildren. The 1992 presidential campaign clearly underscored the American malaise; citizens demanded change and supported candidates challenging the gridlock in Washington. Public education continues to be a centerpiece for vocal calls for change. Ernest L. Boyer, head of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, in his major study of secondary education in the United States, declared: "Educators have added to the crisis that has swirled around them. Lack of leadership, confusion over goals, a smorgasbord curriculum, a decline of academic standards all have contributed to the weakening of public education." It is estimated that only two-thirds of our citizens are literate (whereas the illiteracy rate in Japan is estimated at 0.7 percent). (12)

Thus, many Americans—across the political spectrum—are convinced that schools have to do better; students have to work much harder and parents and educators have to demand more. Yet, Peter Schrag, editor of the *Sacramento Bee*, summarizes the tremendous burden placed on American schools in a recent article:

No nation. Henry [Steele] Commager once wrote, demands as much of its schools — expects them not only to teach reading and writing, but patriotism, morality, the evils of alcohol and tobacco (to which we have now added the dangers of drugs and AIDS), not to mention driver education, good citizenship, racial tolerance, self-esteem, and a hundred other things. And never have the schools been required to do it with a population as diverse—not to say troubled—as the schools do now. In 1970, one child in seven fell below the poverty line; now it is close to one in five, and in the elementary grades it's closer to one in four. In 1970, 15 percent of the nation's school age population was nonwhite; now it's well over 20 percent. In states like California, where whites are now a minority of the public school enrollment, one child in four is on welfare: one in four comes from a home where English is not the primary language. Los Angeles, the country's second largest school system, now enrolls children speaking some 80

different languages. Of the 185,000 new children who entered the state's schools in fall 1992, less than half came from homes where the primary language is English. (13)

The increased social burdens of American society in recent years has strained two institutions in particular: schools and prisons. Chester Finn reminds us: "Effective though they can be in the province of cognitive learning, even good schools are not powerful-enough instruments to accomplish all these other worthy objectives. Schools cannot repair a broken family, prevent abuse in the home, or make an addict quit a habit. They cannot redistribute income, cure mental illness, or restore peace to communities torn by gunfire." Paul Kennedy notes, "Lacking a national health system, the U.S. has the highest incidence of child mortality among the major industrialized countries and also has the lowest position among these countries in life expectancy and visits to the doctor, although it probably leads the world in politicians who talk about 'family values.'" And Lester Thurow writes: "Local governments don't want to pay for first-class schools. They know that less than half the population has children in school at any one time, that students will leave home and use their skills in different geographic regions of the country, and that the high taxes necessary to pay for good schools would drive industry away. Firms would locate next door and free ride on their well-educated work force. Someone else should make the necessary investments." And, Linda Darling-Hammond reminds us of the two very different theories of school reform currently in the limelight and often at cross-purposes with each other. One theory emphasizes more standards, more tests, more directive curriculum, while the other stresses improving the qualifications and capacities of teachers and site based management. (14)

And yet, we speak of national standards. The mere mention of "standards" sends shivers up the spines of many educators. Children already are "dragged through the curriculum," and schools are required to do more and more, often with less and less. Critics remind us that "money is not the solution to our educational malaise" and calls for "vouchers" and support for "choice," with the expectation that bringing the "free market" to education would end all our present difficulties, create consternation in the eyes of many educators. Yet, it is important to remember that

the push for national standards is not a "neo-conservative" plot orchestrated by a coterie of Reagan-Bush zealots out to "homogenize" our schools and indoctrinate our students with "politically correct values." The movement for national standards is a broad-based movement supported by a variety of people representing all sections, classes, races, and political viewpoints. As this issue documents, an impressive group of creative, intelligent, and articulate individuals are actively involved in developing standards in social studies and its constituent disciplines. In addition, each of the projects has incorporated procedures for insuring feedback and responses from a wide network of classroom teachers, department chairs, supervisors, administrators, and members of the public. The National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) initiated the process by inviting classroom teachers, curriculum and learning specialists, and others to write K-12 standards in math. Already, over 40 states have begun revising their curriculum frameworks to bring them in line with the new standards. The U.S. Department of Education is presently funding projects to develop voluntary national standards in the subjects of English, civics, geography, history, science, and the arts.

The research on effective schools, by such writers as John Goodlad and TheodoreSizer, and on effective classrooms, by writers including Morris Cogan, Arthur Costa, Robert Garmston, Madeline Hunter, Spencer Kagan, and Robert Slavin, have created a body of research to support more effective practices and learning environments. Bernice McCarthy and other writers have contributed substantially to our knowledge about learning styles, while Edward DeBono, Reuven Feuerstein, Howard Gardner, Matthew Lipman, Robert Sternberg, and others have improved our understanding of intelligence, cognition, and strategies for thinking and reasoning. We presently know a great deal about the "science of teaching"; more problematic has been the determination of "what to teach." For too many classroom teachers, the textbook often becomes the "curriculum." The setting of national standards will not, in and of themselves, solve the problem. As Charlotte Crabtree has repeatedly reminded those of us working on the National History Standards Project, teacher training and preparation, in-service training and support, and new materials and technology need to be accessible to staff members. And certainly, the essential resources and support for effecting the kinds of changes neces-

sary to improving the educational achievement of our students are needed. Our educational infrastructure demands serious investment and restructuring, not lip service.

But the push for national standards has opened a national dialogue on what is most important to teach. Social studies teachers have always had to make choices about what to include and what to leave out. Standards will define the essential core that all students need to learn. The United States is the only major industrialized country presently lacking nationally mandated education standards. Most countries, in fact, not only have national standards, but assess their students' achievement through uniform, high-stake, national examinations. (15) "To fail to hold our students to high standards," writes David T. Kearns and Dennis P. Doyle, "is an act of cynicism that a democracy cannot afford. It works a cruel hoax on the student, and leaves everyone the poorer for it." (16)

Many see standards as a catalyst to systemic reform of public education. After a decade of reform the "emphasis has shifted from fixing schools to breaking the mold." (17) Students are held to real standards in the workplace and on the athletic field. In fact, the sports metaphor is frequently employed to illustrate the need for standards in education. Chester Finn, notes, for example:

If we handled academics as we do athletics, our children would learn more. On the playing field, we find clear goals and high expectations, uniform standards, explicit rules, and referees to enforce them. We savor the keen sense of competitiveness and we applaud the resolute drive toward success and victory (so long as these operate within set limits of acceptable behavior and fair play). We employ coaches who understand that they must balance multiple objectives but that their top priority is to build a winning team. And when it comes to that team's actual performance, we receive prompt, ample, and precise information, data we can easily analyze a hundred ways: in relation to the immediate event, in the context of past performance, and in comparison with the performance of other teams. (18)

Content standards are, in the words of Warren Simmons, "narrative descriptions of desired out-

comes," while performance standards "provide examples and explicit definitions of what students must do to show that they have learned to an adequate level the specified skills, strategies, and knowledge" they need to know. New Jersey has joined Lauren Resnick's New Standards Project, a consortium of 17 states and several leading school districts, working with a team of teachers, researchers, curriculum spe-

***"As the touchstone for educational equity, national standards may provide the first real opportunity for schools to address the issues of student assessment and achievement and the first real opportunity for teachers to influence the agenda for educational reform."***

cialists, and learning and assessment experts, to design and eventually implement a system of performance standards, authentic assessments, and staff development to "break the mold" and bring about systemic reform. More importantly for the present, as Resnick argues, we are finally having a "reasoned discussion" about what is worth teaching and what students should know. And, as Simmons adds, "students are held to high standards by someone." If not the schools, "they're certainly going to be held to high standards by employers, by their communities, and so forth." (19) National standards are not the educational panacea we have all been waiting for; they are, however, an important step in defining the "common core" of understandings and skills our students will need to learn if they are to lead happy and productive lives in the 21st century.

The editors are grateful to the authors who have agreed to make time in their busy schedules to prepare articles on national standards for this special issue of *The Docket*. Paul Gagnon, Assistant

Secretary for Educational Research and Improvement in the U.S. Department of Education, summarizes the need for systemic reform of American education and the need for national standards as established by the U.S. Department of Education. Charles Bahmueller, Director of Special Projects for the Center for Civic Education, describes the efforts of the civics standards task force and the timetable for the completion of civics standards. Charlotte Crabtree, Director of the National History Standards Project at UCLA, examines the process of working toward national consensus to define excellence in the teaching and learning of history in our nation's schools. Roger Downs, Professor of Geography at Penn State University, demonstrates why geography standards must be useful, enriching, and an enduring part of life-long learning. Robert Highsmith, Vice President for Program of the National Council on Economic Education, describes the creation of a coherent vision to teach what it means to be economically literate in a global economy. Donald Schneider, Chair of the National Council for the Social Studies Task Force, explores the development of social studies standards within which discipline-based standards efforts can contribute to citizenship education for the 21st century.

The careful development of national standards may prove to be one of the most powerful reform movements of the 1990s. As the touchstone for educational equity, national standards may provide the first real opportunity for schools to address the issues of student assessment and achievement and the first real opportunity for teachers to influence the agenda for educational reform. It is for this reason we have included the addresses for all the standards task forces within each article. We hope our readers will add their voices to this agenda.

#### Notes:

1. National Commission on Excellence in the Schools. *A Nation at Risk* (Washington, D.C., 1983). 1: John H. Bishop. "Why U.S. Students Need Incentives to Learn." *Educational Leadership*. 49 (March 1992). 15-18; Harold W. Stevenson. "Why Asian Students Still Outdistance American." *Ibid.* 50 (February 1993). 63. For a recent expression of an opposite viewpoint, see David C. Berliner. "Are our schools really failing?" *NIEA Review*. 66 (January 1993). 12-19.

2. David T. Kearns and Dennis P. Doyle. *Winning the Brain Race: A Bold Plan to Make Our Schools Competitive* (San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1989). 1; Fred M. Hechinger. "About Education." *New York Times*. 7 June

1989. B6: Lester Thurow. Head to Head: The Coming Economic Battle Among Japan, Europe and America (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1992). 276-277; Ira Magaziner and Hillary Rodman Clinton. "Will America Choose High Skills or Low Wages?" Educational Leadership, 49 (March 1992), 12; E. D. Hirsch, Jr.. "The Primal Scene of Education." The New York Review of Books, 36 (March 2, 1989), 29.

3. Magaziner and Clinton. "Will America Choose High Skills or Low Wages?" 10. See also, Arnold H. Packer. "Taking Action on the SCANS Report." Ibid., 27-31; Ernest L. Boyer. High School: A Report on Secondary Education in America (New York: Harper & Row, 1983); E.D. Hirsch, Jr.. Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).

4. Marshall Rose. "Dear Friend." New York Public Library, March 1993.

5. See Paul Kennedy. Preparing for the 21st Century (New York: Random House, 1993). Parts of Kennedy's book are excerpted in two recent issues of The New York Review of Books: "Preparing for the 21st Century: Winners and Losers." 40 (February 11, 1993), 32-44; and, "The American Prospect." (March 4, 1993), 42-53.

6. Kennedy. "The American Prospect." 51. See also, Alice M. Rivlin. Revising the American Dream: The Economy, the States, and the Federal Government (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1993); Robert M. Solow. "Dr. Rivlin's Diagnosis and Mr. Clinton's Remedy." The New York Review of Books, 40 (March 25, 1993), 12-18; Task Force on International Education. America in Transition: The International Frontier (Washington, D. C. : National Governors' Association, 1989); Thurow. Head to Head.

7. Chester E. Finn, Jr. We Must Take Charge: Our Schools and Our Future (New York: The Free Press, 1991), 18; Kennedy. "The American Prospect." 51; Thurow. Head to Head, 16, 29 and passim; Kennedy. Preparing for the 21st Century, 290-325.

8. Paul Krugman. "The Rich, the Right, and the Facts." The American Prospect, 11 (Fall 1992), 19-31; Kevin Phillips. The Politics of Rich and Poor: Wealth and the American Electorate in the Reagan Aftermath (New York: Random House, 1990); Andrew Hacker. Two Nations: Black and White, Separate, Hostile, Unequal (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1992); Harvey Kantor and Barbara Brenzel. "Urban Education and the 'Truly Disadvantaged' : The Historical Roots of the Contemporary Crisis, 1945-1990." in Michael B. Katz, ed., The "Underclass" Debate: Views from History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), 366-402.

9. Bishop. "Why U.S. Students Need Incentives to Learn." 15.

10. Charlotte Crabtree, et. al. . Lessons From History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire (Los Angeles: UCLA/National Center for History in the Schools, 1992), 8; and passim. For the lack of knowledge and understandings about basic civics, economics, geographical, and historical concepts, see, for example, Russell Allen, et. al., The

Geographic Learning of High School Seniors (Princeton: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1990); Lee Anderson, et. al. . The Civics Report Card (Princeton: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1990); Lynne V. Cheney. American Memory: A Report on the Humanities in the Nation's Public Schools (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1987); Paul Gagnon, ed., Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1989); Gilbert M. Grosvenor. "The Case for Geography Education." Educational Leadership, 47 (November 1989), 29-32; David C. Hammack, et. al., The U.S. History Report Card (Princeton: National Assessment of Educational Progress, Educational Testing Service, 1990); Ina V. S. Mullis, Eugene H. Owen, and Gary W. Phillips. America's Challenge: Accelerating Academic Achievement (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1990) ; John J. Patrick. "Student Achievement in Core Subjects of the School Curriculum." ERIC Digest, (April 1991); and, "Achievement of Knowledge by High School Students in Core Subjects of the High School." Ibid., (January 1991); Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr. . What Do Our 17-Year Olds Know? A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature (New York: Harper & Row, 1986); Christopher L. Salter. Missing the Magic Carpet: The Real Significance of Geographic Ignorance (Princeton: Educational Testing Service, 1990); Cordell M. Svengalis. National Survey of Course Offerings and Testing in Social Studies, Kindergarten—Grade 12 (Washington, D.C.: Council of State Social Studies Specialists, 1992); Task Force on Education. State Strategies for Achieving the National Education Goals (Washington, D.C.: National Governors' Association, 1990); William B. Walstad and John C. Soper. A Report Card on the Economic Literacy of U.S. High School Students (New York: Joint Council on Economic Education, 1988).

11. Hacker. Two Nations, 164, and supplementary tables pages 232-236; Julie Johnson. "Panel Says Blacks Are Taught Poorly." New York Times, 24 May 1989, B8; Amy Scott Wells. "For Slow Learners, an Accelerated Curriculum." Ibid., 31 May 1989, B6; E.D. Hirsch, Jr., The Cultural Literacy Network Newsletter, 2 (Summer 1989), 2; "Helping Black Students Aim Higher." (editorial) Ibid., 1 June 1989, A 22; Jonathan Kozol. Savage Inequalities: Children in American Schools (New York: Crown Publishers, 1991), passim; Kennedy. Preparing for the 21st Century, 314; Workforce 2000: Work and Workers for the Twenty-First Century, Hudson Institute (Indianapolis, 1991), 98; Cheney. American Memory, 10; Kearns and Doyle. Winning the Brain Race, 70.

12. Boyer. High School, 38. The Japanese illiteracy rate is taken from Kennedy. Preparing for the 21st Century, 139. See also, Lynne V. Cheney. Tyrannical Machines: A Report on Educational Practices Gone Wrong and Our Best Hopes for Setting Them Right (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1990).

13. Peter Schrag. "The Great School Sell-Off." The American Prospect, 12 (Winter 1993), 34-43; quoted passage may be found on p. 37. Likewise, Chester Finn writes: "In the 1980s, among many other assignments we wanted . . . [schools] to end drug

abuse and youth suicide, diminish stress, increase self-esteem, lower the incidence of AIDS, eliminate pregnancy among young teens, and make children conscious of the environment." Finn, We Must Take Charge, 26.

14. Finn, Ibid.; Kennedy, "The American Prospect," 46; Thurow, Head to Head, 274; Linda Darling-Hammond, "Reframing the School Reform Agenda: New Paradigms Must Restore Discourse With Local Educators," The School Administrator, (November 1992), 22-27; and, "Achieving the national education goals," NJEA Review, 65 (September 1991), 18-24.

15. See, for example, Bishop, "Why U.S. Students Need Incentives to Learn," 16; Henry Kiernan, "National Standards: What They Will Mean for School Leaders," NJASA Perspective 9 (Winter 1993), 34-36. For an example of such tests, see National Endowment for the Humanities, National Tests: What Other Countries Expect Their Students to Know (Washington, D.C.: National Endowment for the Humanities, 1991), which includes samples from France, Germany, England and Wales, Japan, and the European Community.

16. Kearns and Doyle, Winning the Brain Race, 73. Meanwhile,

critics of national standards frequently allude to the gross inequalities among schools, particularly in comparisons between suburban and inner city districts, and reasonably ask if such inequalities persist won't students in poor districts pay an additional price to the already major socio-economic problems they face? See, Kozol, Savage Inequalities; John O'Neil, "Can National Standards Make a Difference?" Educational Leadership, 50 (February 1993), 4-8.

17. Francie Alexander, "National Standards: A New Conventional Wisdom," Educational Leadership, 50 (February 1993), 9-10.

18. Finn, We Must Take Charge, 144; Bishop, "Why U.S. Students Need Incentives to Learn," 17.

19. John O'Neil, "On the New Standards Project: A Conversation with Lauren Resnick and Warren Simmons," Educational Leadership, 50 (February 1993), 17-21; Warren Simmons and Lauren Resnick, "Assessment as the Catalyst of School Reform," Ibid., 11-15; Lauren B. Resnick, "Breaking the mold in student testing," NJEA Review, 66 (December 1992), 12-17.

# PUBLISHING FOR A CHANGING WORLD



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# Systemic Reforms of Schools: From National Standards to the Classroom Down the Hall

Paul Gagnon

## The Questions

**W**hat is systemic reform, why do we need it, and how does it reach the classroom? Why start with national standards for subject matter content? Why do we also need state curriculum frameworks? Who should put such frameworks together? What would a good one look like? What would be in it and what would be left out? How should we expect national standards and curriculum frameworks to help teachers improve the quality, and equality, of schooling?

## The Context: Systemic Reform

To begin with, these questions need to be addressed in the context of today's campaign to improve American schooling, for which the magic word is "systemic." The word argues that the educational system is a seamless fabric that must be looked at and worked on as a whole. Piecemeal change, however sensible or popular, will not bring lasting improvement. To make and keep real change in one piece of the whole, the neighboring pieces must also change, in directly related ways, and so until most or all of the educational system is affected.

Why must we keep all levels of schooling, pre-school to Ph.D. in our minds all at once? Why do we need to pull together all strands of reform, from national standards to throwing out the classroom loudspeaker? Let us take a case, hypothetical but in sufficient detail to show just how seamless education is:

The 8th grade United States history course in Room 2B of the Horace Mann Middle School of Anytown, AnyState USA cannot become, and remain, markedly more effective than it has been unless several related pieces are in place:

- (1) its students have had good earlier instruction in American history, biography, and literature, the content of which is well known to the 8th grade teacher because the substance and sequence of courses, K-8 of Anytown schools have been worked out cooperatively with all the teachers concerned,
- (2) the 8th grade teacher also knows what students will confront in the following years because the course content and sequences of Anytown High School have been designed in collaboration with teachers from the town's elementary and middle schools,

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***"Piecemeal change, however sensible or popular, will not bring lasting improvement."***

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- (3) and, as a consequence, the 8th grade course has its own clear role, not as a one-year dash from the Ice Age to yesterday but as an integrated part of a two or three-year continuum. In addition, many of its themes and significant questions are linked to those of history and literature courses preceding and following it,
- (4) consistent with the assigned era and main themes (both decided upon collaboratively), the teacher in Room 2B has the authority to add or emphasize particular themes, topics, and questions, to decide their sequence, to choose textbooks and other materials to pursue various pedagogical strategies; in sum, to design the whole course according to the students and resources at hand and out of the teacher's own strengths,
- (5) in preparation for such a role — in school gover-

nance curriculum-making, and course design — the 8th grade teacher has experienced a rigorous, imaginative liberal education, with particular attention to history and related subjects, including the arts and literature,

(6) and has had the benefit of instruction from university faculty members (both subject matter scholars and learning specialists) who are themselves broadly-educated, and whose knowledge of the schools' cur-

***“The broad acceptance of national standards saying what we most want to teach — standards that other advanced democratic societies have long had in place— is the beginning of systemic reform, step one.”***

ricula and teaching conditions enabled them to design their own courses — in content and in methods — to be of particular help to prospective school teachers (this implies, in turn, a graduate education for college and university faculty members that is much more attentive to liberal education, and to breadth and practicality, than most doctoral programs are now),

(7) for teachers already in service, the Anytown School District has a program of professional development designed and carried out by tripartite teams of equals: experienced classroom teachers; subject matter scholars; and learning specialists. Their work, like that of similar teams helping to put together the K-12 course sequences for Anytown, has been guided by national content standards for each major academic subject, and by the curriculum framework — consistent with the standards — issued by the AnyState Department of Education.

(8) finally, the Anytown School District supports the same kind of tripartite team of equals — teachers, scholars, and specialists — to restructure the daily conditions of teaching. Each change is dedicated to the better teaching of vital skills and subject matter. Each change is directly aimed at reducing or cutting away obstacles to better teaching, whether they be rigid class schedules or teacher overloads or noxious loudspeakers.

#### **Where to Begin? The National Standards**

Two questions impose themselves. First, if reform of American schooling has to be systemic, where to begin? Second, what is the proper role of national

standards and curriculum frameworks in that reform?

Since ancient times, educated people have begun with the obvious: what is most worth teaching? Now Americans are tackling the question. In an unprecedented national focus on content, teachers and scholars are asking each other what is most worth knowing and being able to do, out of those subjects that best prepare us for the three roles we play in life — as workers, as citizens, and as cultivated persons.

This first step in systemic reform, setting priorities on what is most worth learning, is being taken by the several projects now seeking national consensus on content standards for the arts, civics, English, foreign language, geography, history, mathematics, and the natural sciences (foreign languages are expected to follow shortly). Each project engages classroom teachers, scholars, learning specialists, and a wide range of interested parties from parents to policymakers. Their task is to set voluntary national standards by which to measure student and school achievement. Each is asking, in regard to its own subject, what all students should have the equal opportunity to know and to be able to do, throughout a democratic school system.

The broad acceptance of national standards saying what we most want to teach — standards that other advanced democratic societies have long had in place— is the beginning of systemic reform, step one. All else follows. All other changes, from school restructuring and the use of time, to applications of technology, to systems of assessment and accountability, must be aimed at helping millions of American school children to acquire the knowledge and skills that high academic standards demand. As American education is organized, it is up to the states and localities to take the next step toward making such changes for themselves. But change cannot start just anywhere. Step two needs to be a curriculum framework, setting specific guidelines — consistent with national content standards — for the scope and sequence of core academic subjects in the given state or district.

Without such a curriculum framework, teachers and students will remain distracted by courses and activities spilling out in all directions, in no discernible order of importance. They will remain confused and undereducated in the aimless, incoherent programs full of gaps, repetitions, and trivialities that so often mark the curricula in schools attended by the mass of American children and adolescents. Without

curriculum frameworks that require a common core of serious learning for all students. American schooling will remain drastically unequal, and thus undemocratic.

### A Curriculum Framework: The Bridge

What, again, is a curriculum framework? It is the state or district-built bridge between national standards at one end and what happens in the classroom at the other. But what sort of bridge? What should make it up? Who should put it together? How ought it to help local schools and teachers? How do we recognize a good one when we see it? Let us back up and start with the dictionary:

**Curriculum** — the courses offered by an educational institution or one of its branches.

**Framework** — a skeletal, openwork, or structural frame; a basic structure (as of ideas).

For our purposes, a curriculum framework is a structure of courses, a program of studies, from kindergarten through high school. It can take many forms and still satisfy the dictionary, for which nothing more than a bare list of courses required, grade by grade, would be enough. Enough for the dictionary, perhaps, but not enough for teachers: something so spare would help them very little.

Framework authors who want to be helpful, by building a coherent structure "as of ideas," will move well beyond a list of courses. They will spell out under each course title the essential skills and understandings to be developed, and some of the major themes and questions to be explored, course by course, grade by grade, for each core subject.

How much detail should a framework include? The two key phrases above are "essential skills and understandings" and "major themes and questions." A framework cannot cover or prescribe everything to be taught or it ceases to be a framework. It becomes an obstacle, not a help, to teachers. A proper curriculum framework leaves wide open spaces, a good many of them, for local schools and classroom teachers to fill in for themselves.

They will ask and answer their own questions on many points. Which of the major themes, topics, and issues shall we stress? Which may we deal with quickly and in general, and which might our students explore in depth? Which might we like to add? Out of which

can essential skills and understandings be best developed? What is the best topic sequence to lay out over the term or year? What textbooks sources, auxiliary materials, or technology would be most helpful? How much time, and what mixture of pedagogical approaches should we apply?

A curriculum framework is not a manual to be looked into on Monday morning. In practice, teachers produce their own manuals, to remind them what to say and do when they close the classroom door. A good state or district subject matter framework is nonetheless a powerful help to teachers' daily work. By definition, it should be an easily-read map of ideas. Clearly expressed, the ideas suggest a range of alternative next steps that teachers may choose for themselves, free to bring their students along by any

***"It cannot be said often enough: national standards do not mean a national curriculum; and, in turn, state or district curriculum frameworks do not mean top-down prescriptions for the classroom teacher's course designs, or materials, or teaching methods."***

paths they think best. Moreover, teachers can improvise with confidence, because the frame, the map, is always there to return to for the next stage of the journey.

A curriculum framework thus provides the bridge between voluntary national content standards in core academic subjects and the daily work of teaching those subjects in the classroom. Putting it that way already tells us who should be the authors of such frameworks. Three kinds of people are required: experienced classroom teachers who know the conditions of the "daily work of teaching"; subject matter scholars wholly familiar with the national standards; specialists in the problems of learning and retention. Each of the three has things to tell the others that the

others do not know, or know too little about. So they need to work as equals, learning from each other as they build.

The very existence of nationally agreed-upon standards, articulated and accepted by concerned Americans from coast to coast, poses a challenge to every state and school district: to offer all the young—regardless of their background or school “track”—a common academic curriculum that will enable them to reach those standards. But each state or district is expected to take its own approach to building such a curriculum.

It cannot be said often enough: national standards do not mean a national curriculum; and, in turn, state or district curriculum frameworks do not mean top-down prescriptions for the classroom teacher’s course designs, or materials, or teaching methods. But the three elements, working consistently together, can mean greater quality, and equality, for all kinds of schools across the country.

#### Criteria for National Content Standards Projects

- (1) The purpose of each project is to establish a broad national consensus on subject matter content standards for students’ outcomes: what should students know and be able to do from their K-12 study of the given subject?
- (2) The objectives and procedures of each project are to be consistent with the relevant recommendations of the National Council on Standards and Testing.
- (3) Each project is to be led by the nation’s recognized scholarly organizations and is to reach genuine national consensus across regions, through the participation of all interested and affected parties: classroom teachers and school administrators; subject matter scholars; teacher educators and learning specialists; parents; all major relevant professional organizations; scholarly and teachers’ associations; state and local policy-makers; school board members and civic leaders; recent high school graduates; and the general public.
- (4) Each project is to assemble a broadly inclusive advisory or governing board possessing the ultimate authority over the content standards statement to be issued. Unanimity of all participants is not required.
- (5) Each project should strive to include on its advisory or governing board and/or on its working teams, representatives of the above groups, plus representative “users” or “consumers” of the given subject matter competence.
- (6) Each project is to be designed and carried out by a tripartite alliance of equals: experienced classroom teachers, subject matter scholars, and learning specialists.
- (7) Each project is to examine carefully all relevant prior work, including extant state curricular frameworks and standards-setting procedures and results in other advanced democratic societies elsewhere in the world.
- (8) Each project is expected to produce a series of draft documents on content standards—what is most worth knowing, and most worth being able to do—in each subject. These drafts are to be reviewed by the participants listed above, and also subject to open hearings.
- (9) Directors of each project and their principal investigators are to meet with their counterparts periodically to concert their efforts to
  - a) consider the whole curriculum.
  - b) devise means of regular reviews of standards in the future.
  - c) develop common definitions of terms and consistent format for final standards documents.
- (10) Standards documents are to be so framed as to facilitate state and local construction of their own curricular frameworks, K-12; of programs for teacher education and certification that meet both the national standards and the demands of the state curriculum; and of systems of assessment to measure student achievement against the national standards and state expectations.

# National Standards for Civics and Government

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The Center for Civic Education, supported by the U.S. Department of Education and the Pew Charitable Trusts, is developing and disseminating national standards in civics and government. Since the announcement of the development of standards in civics and government, questions have been asked about what the standards are, why and how they are being prepared, when they will be completed, and what relationship, if any, there is among the various standards projects. We hope that this article will clarify these questions.

We might first ask why civics should be included among the subjects for which standards should be developed. The answer is that we believe that "civics and government" is a core subject which should be required of all students at all grade levels. We believe that there is a body of knowledge essential to the effective functioning of every citizen and that every citizen needs to understand the central, shared values that undergird the nation. Only then can citizens participate intelligently and effectively in the political process and deal with increasingly complex and controversial issues.

It has been recognized since the founding of the republic that education has a civic mission. It is the responsibility of the schools to prepare informed, rational, humane, and participating citizens committed to the values and principles of American constitutional democracy. The National Education Goals Report of October 1991 recognized that responsibility in its third goal entitled "Student Achievement and Citizenship." It proclaimed that "By the year 2000...every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship...."

On what body of knowledge should standards in civics and government be based? That is the question addressed by CIVITAS, A Framework for Civic Education developed by the Center for Civic Education in collaboration with the Council for the Advancement of Citizenship and supported by The Pew Charitable Trusts. Published in 1991 and widely

distributed by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), CIVITAS has been well received by teachers, legislators, scholars and concerned citizens. Accordingly, CIVITAS will serve as an important resource in developing the national standards project.

If there was ever a time that cried out for "responsible citizenship" it is now. Disenchantment, apathy, and anger too often describe the feelings of substantial numbers of the electorate. Young people appear even more disconnected from political life. Responsibility lies with all of us to realize the gravity of this situation

***"Standards will "raise the ceiling" for students who are currently above average and "lift the floor" for those least successful in school."***

and respond appropriately. We believe that the creation and implementation of national standards in civics and government is just such an appropriate response. It would be the ultimate irony of the twentieth century's world-wide democratic revolutions if the American republic should be endangered by disaffection or self-indulgence just when dictatorships are collapsing and democratic ideals and liberties are being sought in the ideas of Jefferson, Madison, and Lincoln.

National standards are intended to provide direction and focus to education in civics and government. They are expressions of what is valued in education and serve as important means of insuring quality education for all students. Standards will "raise the ceiling" for students who are currently above average and "lift the floor" for those least successful in school. Standards can be used as yardsticks to measure the quality of a curriculum and of methods of evaluation. They will function as clear definitions of what is expected of students. Raised expectations should lead

to higher achievement in a subject that has in many cases fallen into desuetude, competing with a dozen new additions to an already overcrowded curriculum.

National Standards in Civics and Government will state what students should know and be able to do, as well as the characteristics and dispositions they should exhibit as competent and responsible citizens in our constitutional democracy. These standards are being developed through a broad consensual process which will lead to their acceptance and implementation. But they are not mandates, and they are not a national curriculum.

Although standards will be voluntary, experience with standards in mathematics, developed by the National Council for Teachers of Mathematics, demonstrates that they are accepted with enthusiasm. Standards are national but not "federal." The process of their preparation is completely open to public view. Anyone is welcome to advance copies of successive

***"Far from being imposed upon the unwilling, if they are to gain acceptance, standards will have to earn it."***

preliminary drafts and to submit critical commentary. Comments received will be given careful attention. As will be described in more detail below, standards will be the subject of scrutiny by teachers, scholars, educators, and civic organizations.

Far from being imposed upon the unwilling, if they are to gain acceptance, standards will have to earn it. They must gain whatever influence they can muster from their character and quality alone. National standards in civics and government in no way compromises the tradition of local decision making in American schools. This does not mean, of course, that they are not intended to effect change in American education. The change they intend is the widespread voluntary substitution of well-thought-out criteria for what is required for quality education in the subject for the current hodge-podge of learning outcomes.

Will there be a single standard or more than one? A final decision about the number of levels that standards should prescribe has not been made. Some argue that a single set of standards will necessarily be

low standards; others differ. There may be either two or three levels. In any case, we believe that proposing low standards as national norms would be a disservice; students and teachers alike can and should aspire to higher levels of learning.

We expect that Standards will be written for about two dozen topics. Each topic will be introduced by a rationale that explains why citizens should be informed about the topic being treated. The standards are explicit statements of what students should know or skills they should have. The final document is expected to be about two hundred pages in length, divided into elementary, middle, and high school sections.

To illustrate what the completed standards will probably look like, the Center has developed a draft model standard for critical review. The topic of the draft is "What are alternative means of organizing governments?" It is our intention to render standards in a clear, straightforward fashion that will be easily understood. In addition, there will be a glossary of terms at the end of the document. A copy of this draft model standard is appended to this article.

#### The Developmental Process

The Center for Civic Education will make every effort to reach national consensus on the standards for which it is responsible. To that end, the developmental process will involve a great number of individuals and groups. This process also provides opportunities for any interested person or group to have a voice at various stages.

Center for Civic Education. Overall administration of the project will be the responsibility of the Center. The NCSS will assist by gathering comments on draft documents from its committees such as those on Citizenship, Curriculum, Equity and Social Justice, Early Childhood/Elementary Education, and Testing and Evaluation. NCSS also will seek comments from its associated groups such as the Council of State Social Studies Supervisors, the National Social Studies Supervisors Association, and the College and University Faculty Association. In addition, NCSS will hold hearings and seek comments at meetings of its 110 affiliated state and local councils. NCSS will publish and distribute successive drafts of the standards and the completed document.

The following groups have been or will be formed to

assist in the developmental process.

- **National Advisory Committee.** This 25-member committee will be composed of educators, scholars, and teachers. It will meet in Washington, D.C., twice annually.

- **National Review Committee.** This committee, which will meet annually, will be comprised of representatives of a number of organizations interested in participating in the developmental process.

- **Standards Coordination Committee.** This committee will consist of representatives of groups developing standards in the arts, English, civics and government, economics, geography, history, and science, along with the group that developed standards in mathematics. It provides a means of exchanging ideas, establishing compatible formats for the standards documents, and promoting the general goals of the movement to establish national standards.

- **Review Panels.** The following panels have been or will be established to review the document at various stages of its development:

- **Scholars.** This panel will be composed of scholars in political science and the humanities (history and jurisprudence). Several members of this group will also serve on the National Advisory Committee.

- **Teachers.** Two panels of teachers will be established.

- A group of ten teachers in the Los Angeles area will meet periodically at the Center with staff and consultants including scholars as noted above.

- A second, and larger group of teachers, will be established by the Center in consultation with the NCSS and the National Advisory Committee.

- **State Curriculum Supervisors.** This panel will be composed of one representative from each of eight state departments of education influential in the establishment of national curriculum goals and policy. States to be invited to serve on this panel are California, Florida, Kansas, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, and Ohio. Each of these eight state representatives will appoint a three to five member committee of teachers, curriculum experts, and scholars to review and critique the document at several stages in its development.

- **NCSS committees.** The NCSS will coordinate the

review and critique of the document by the NCSS committees mentioned earlier.

- **Panel of the Center for Civic Education's state and congressional district coordinators.** This panel is composed of the approximately 500 coordinators of the Center's nationwide programs in civic education. The panel reviews the document at its annual meetings.

- **International Review Panel.** This panel will be composed of scholars from advanced industrialized democracies as well as from emerging democracies. These scholars will provide written commentary on the document at several points in its development.

- **Evaluation experts.** This panel will insure the development of standards compatible with a system of assessments.

#### Schedule for Completion

The Center for Civic Education began the initial stages of development in August 1992. Meetings of the National Advisory Committee and the National Review Committee were held in the autumn. Presentations on the project were made at the annual meeting of the NCSS in November. Open hearings on the standards were held in eight state and regional meetings throughout the nation in March and April 1993. A first draft of the standards will be completed by April 1993, and a second draft, taking into account reviewers' comments will be produced by June 1993. After the second draft is reviewed by all interested parties, a third draft will be produced and reviewed by October 1993. The Center, the NCSS, and cooperating organizations will publicize the availability of the third draft to the general public for review.

A fourth draft will be completed by January 1994. This draft will be reviewed by all interested groups and by representatives of those groups at an open forum to be held in Washington, D.C. conducted by the Center and the NCSS. This draft will also be reviewed by the international panel of scholars. A revised version of the document will be prepared for a final review by selected individuals and groups. The results of this final review will be used in preparing the manuscript for publication, scheduled for April 1994. In addition, in February 1994 application will be made through procedures established by the National Education Goals Panel for certification of

the Civics and Government standards as National Standards. Finally, from May to July 1994 the NCSS will print and distribute the final document.

In summary, we intend the development procedures for national standards in civics and government to be open to all interested parties. Critical commentary from all sources will receive our careful attention, and we will attempt to ensure that the final product is worthy of the title, "national standards." Moreover, we will make every effort to make the language of the document accessible to all: it will be clearly written and devoid of jargon; its principal concepts will be spelled out; and the work as a whole will be well organized. We believe that such a work will be enthusiastically greeted by all Americans concerned about improving precollegiate education and, together with CIVITAS, can form the basis for a renewal of the nation's historic commitment to the civic mission of the schools.

#### DRAFT

##### Model Standard

#### I. What is government and what should it do?

What are alternative means of organizing governments?

##### Content Standard

In grades 9–12, students should acquire the knowledge and the skills to understand the ways governments are organized.

#### 1. Federal, confederate, or unitary systems. Students should be able to

- a. explain the differences among federal, confederate, and unitary systems
- b. identify historical and contemporary examples of federal, confederate, and unitary systems
- c. identify the relative advantages and disadvantages of federal, confederate, and unitary systems
- d. take, defend, and evaluate positions regarding the relative merits of federal, confederate, and unitary systems of government

#### 2. Presidential or parliamentary systems. Students should be able to

- a. explain the differences between presidential and parliamentary systems
- b. identify contemporary examples of presidential and parliamentary systems
- c. identify the advantages and disadvantages of presidential and parliamentary systems
- d. take, defend, and evaluate positions regarding relative merits of presidential and parliamentary systems

#### Rationale

To understand and function effectively in one's own government, it is important not only to know how one's government is organized and why it is organized in a particular manner, but also to be knowledgeable about alternative systems.

By comparing alternative systems, one becomes aware of their advantages and disadvantages and of how one's own system may be improved. Comparative study helps citizens evaluate criticisms of their own government, and it allows them to judge proposals for change. It also helps them grasp the meaning of events in the world, such as when parliamentary governments fall or federations threaten to break apart.

#### Elaboration of Standard

Each element of a specific standard will be elaborated as follows.

Part 1. Scope of inquiry will outline the historical and contemporary perspectives to be covered under each standard topic, as well as definitions of terms, advantages and/or disadvantages where appropriate

Part 2. Key concepts to be listed here and defined in glossary.

Part 3. Illustrative learning activities will be included under each standard or in an appendix.

Part 4. Primary and secondary sources with which students should be familiar will be identified here.

#### Performance Standard

The student performance standard will establish the quality of student performance in the subject matter set out in the content standard. Three levels of performance such as basic, proficient, and advanced will be specified.

Part I. Scope of Inquiry

	UNITARY SYSTEMS	FEDERAL SYSTEMS	CONFEDERATE SYSTEMS
<b>DEFINITION</b>	Central government is supreme. Regional and local governments derive their powers from the central government.	There is a constitutional division of power between a central government and regional (state) governments. By law, each government is supreme in certain designated areas of authority and acts directly upon the people.	A voluntary organization of independent states which agree to cooperate for certain purposes such as mutual defense and economic advantage. The central organization may not act directly upon the citizens of the independent states.
<b>HISTORICAL EXAMPLES</b>	Early cities of Mesopotamia; city-states of ancient Greece and Renaissance Italy; England, France, and Spain in early modern Europe	Achaean League in ancient Greece (280 B.C.); Switzerland after 1848; the Soviet Union (1922-1991) federal in form; ruled as unitary state)	Delian League of ancient Greece (478 B.C.); Switzerland (c. 1290-1848); the Iroquois Confederacy (c. 1570); seventeenth century Netherlands; the U.S. under the Articles of Confederation (1781-88); the Confederate States of America (1860-65); the League of Nations (1919-1946)
<b>CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES</b>	Botswana, Britain, Chile, Japan, and Poland	United States (1789), Mexico (1823), Canada (1867), Brazil (1889), Australia (1901), Nigeria (1946), India (1947), and Germany (1949)	Commonwealth of Nations ("British Commonwealth") (1931), the United Nations (1945), the French Community (1958), the Organization of African Unity (OAU) (1963), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (1992)
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of common public policies for all units of government.</li> <li>• Well-suited for geographically small and homogeneous countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regional (state and local) governments closer to the people</li> <li>• More offices for citizens to hold</li> <li>• Well-suited for geographically large and/or diverse countries</li> <li>• Responsiveness at local and state levels to popular needs and desires</li> <li>• Enables local governments to experiment with public policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member states retain more freedom of action</li> <li>• Members can withdraw more easily than in federal systems</li> </ul>
<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political instability due to regional lack of autonomy</li> <li>• May discourage local government initiative and experimentation</li> <li>• Fewer institutional checks on governmental power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• May provide less political cohesion than unitary systems</li> <li>• All for great disparities in the treatment of citizens in regional/local policy areas</li> <li>• May be too responsive at local levels to popular desires</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack a central executive authority with sufficient power to accomplish common aims</li> <li>• Liable to be weak and ineffective</li> </ul>

## Part 1. Scope of Inquiry (continued)

	PARLIAMENTARY SYSTEMS	PRESIDENTIAL SYSTEMS
<b>DEFINITION</b>	Governmental authority is placed in a legislature. The legislature elects a prime minister who establishes and leads a cabinet which is responsible for administrative functions of government. The prime minister and cabinet are indirectly responsible to and dependent upon the legislature for continuance in office. A figure-head president or monarch acts as head of state and performs ceremonial functions.	Powers are separated between executive and legislative branches. The president is elected by the voters rather than by legislators.
<b>HISTORICAL EXAMPLES</b>	England (after 1688)	United States (after 1788) Brazil, (1891-1964)
<b>CONTEMPORARY EXAMPLES</b>	More than forty parliamentary systems include: Australia, Britain, Canada, Israel, Jamaica, Japan, and Zimbabwe	More than fifty presidential systems include: Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Namibia, South Korea, and the United States
<b>ADVANTAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More immediately accountable</li> <li>• Government easier to remove</li> <li>• Availability of ministers for questioning by legislature</li> <li>• Power less concentrated in one person (collective cabinet responsibility)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Governments generally more stable because of regular elections and specified terms of office</li> <li>• Decisive executive action sometimes easier to undertake</li> </ul>
<b>DISADVANTAGES</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possibility of weak and unstable government</li> <li>• Excessive power of small parties when coalitions govern</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Removing incompetents prior to expiration of terms is virtually impossible</li> <li>• Accountability less immediate</li> <li>• Possibility of legislative deadlock</li> </ul>

# National Standards in History Project: Progress Report

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## Purpose and Rationale

**T**he National History Standards Project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the U. S. Department of Education, has undertaken a major charge: to work toward national consensus of what constitutes excellence in the teaching and learning of history in the nation's schools. Administered by the National Center for History in the Schools, a Cooperative UCLA/NEH Research Program, this Project is working to develop and disseminate national achievement standards for United States and world history for the nation's schools. Developing through a broad-based national consensus-building process, this task involves working toward agreement both on the larger purposes of history in the school curriculum and on the more specific historical understandings and reasoning processes all students should have equal opportunity to acquire over twelve years of pre-collegiate education.

In supporting this Project, the National Endowment for the Humanities and the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the U. S. Department of Education have affirmed the central importance of history to the three great missions of education for all American youth: to prepare students for active citizenship, for a satisfying career of work, and for the individual pursuit of personal fulfillment. Among these, the study of history has, from the time of the early republic, been recognized as essential to the education of informed, sophisticated citizens, knowledgeable about their nation's history, institutions, and shared civic values, and able to bring impor-

tant historical perspectives to the tasks of comprehending and judging intelligently the great policy issues confronting their communities, nation, and the world. Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, of what its core values are, or of what decisions of the past account for present circumstances. Without history, one cannot undertake any sensible inquiry into the political, social, or moral issues in society. And without historical knowledge and the inquiry it supports, one cannot

*“Without history, a society shares no common memory of where it has been, of what its core values are, or of what decisions of the past account for present circumstances.”*

move to the active, discriminating citizenship essential to the survival of democratic processes and the fulfillment of the democratic ideals expressed in the central texts of the nation's founding: the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution.

Every major curriculum and policy committee concerned with defining national priorities for the schools has, since 1892, shared this vision of the importance of history in the curriculum. Among the most recent have been the National Education Goals adopted by the President and the nation's fifty governors in their historic 1989 meeting in

Charlottesville, Virginia. The National Education Goals adopted at that time identified history as one of the five school subjects for which challenging new achievement standards should be established. Presidential support for this program has come from both President Bill Clinton, who in 1989, as one of a small bipartisan delegation of governors, worked late into the night in the White House to hammer out the six education goals and from President Bush, who in April, 1991 announced America 2000, a program under the leadership of Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander to implement these goals. In October 1992 President Clinton reaffirmed his commitment to achieving these goals, including "establishment of world class standards" (specifically to include history) and the development "of a meaningful national examination system . . . to determine whether our students are meeting the standards . . . to increase expectations, and to give schools incentives and structures to improve student performance." (Bill Clinton, "The Clinton Plan for Excellence in Education," Phi Delta Kappan, October 1992, pp. 131; 134-138). The importance of national standards in history was affirmed in the 1992 report (Raising Standards for American Education) of the National Council on Education Standards and Testing, appointed by the Congress to advise on these matters under the co-chairmanship of Governors Roy Romer (D-Colorado) and Carroll A. Campbell (R-South Carolina). Most recently, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley, in his February 24, 1993 testimony before the Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources, affirmed that rigorous, internationally competitive, national content standards will be the starting point for the Clinton administration's program for comprehensive, systemic education reform.

The purposes of the national standards called for in these reports are threefold. As goals, they are intended to establish high expectations, on a par with those of the leading industrialized nations of the world, for what all students should know and be able to do. As public statements, they clarify for teachers, parents, students, eval-

uators, and policy makers what is successful achievement and therefore allow all parties to judge how well schools are performing and students are achieving on well-defined standards for success. Most importantly, national standards emphasize the importance of equity in the learning opportunities and resources to be provided all students in the nation's schools. Standards render wholly unacceptable present practices of discriminatory "lower tracks" and "dumbed-down"

***"Most importantly, national standards emphasize the importance of equity in the learning opportunities and resources to be provided all students in the nation's schools."***

curricula for any students — practices that continue to deny large sectors of the nation's children equal educational opportunities and adequate preparation for success in the increasingly demanding economic, political, and social world they enter as young adults.

#### Who Is Involved?

In developing the national standards in history, this Project is conducting a broad participatory process that is national in scope and inclusive of the many groups that hold a significant stake in its outcomes. The following groups are participating throughout the process.

The National Council for History Standards, the policy-setting body responsible for providing policy direction and oversight of the Project, consists of 28 members, including the present or immediate past presidents of such large-membership organizations directly responsible for the content and teaching of history. Members include the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Council of State Social Studies Specialists, the National Council for the Social

Studies, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, the National Council for History Education, and the Organization of History Teachers. In addition, members include the Director and Associate Director of the Social Studies Development Center, supervisory and curriculum development staff of county and city school districts, experienced classroom teachers, and distinguished historians in fields of United States and world history. To foster a correspondence in the development of these standards with the work currently under development for the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in United States History, several participants in the NAEP Planning and Steering Committees are included in the National Council for History Standards. For similar reasons two members of the congressionally-mandated National Council for Education Standards and Testing serve also on this Council.

The National Forum for History Standards is composed of representatives from each of the 29 major educational, public interest, parent, business, and other organizations with interests in history in the schools. Advisory in its functions, the Forum provides important counsel and feedback for this Project as well as access to the larger public through the membership of the organizations represented in the Forum.

Eight Organizational Focus Groups of approximately 15 members each, chosen by the leadership of their respective organizations, have been contracted with to provide important advisory, review, and consulting services to the Project. Organizations providing this special service include the Council of Chief State School Officers, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the American Historical Association, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Organization of American Historians, the National Council for History Education, the Council of State Social Studies Specialists and the Organization of History Teachers.

Finally, two Curriculum Task Forces have

been formed, composed of 15 members each with responsibility for converting the Content Standards to grade-appropriate Performance Standards and for developing illustrative teaching activities in United States and world history at levels appropriate for elementary, middle, and high schools. Composed largely of experienced classroom teachers from throughout the United States who have been recommended by the various organizations participating in this Project, these groups work together with historians in grade-alike working teams and in meetings of the whole to insure continuity of standards across all levels of schooling, elementary through high school.

#### What Has Been Accomplished?

By spring of 1992, the membership of the many groups participating in this Project was established and major work was underway. Since February, 1992:

- The National Council for History Standards has held five meetings setting direction and overseeing the activities of the Project.
- The National Forum for History Standards has met jointly with the National Council and submitted recommendations from its 29 member organizations for the priorities and direction of this Project.
- The eight Organizational Focus Groups have met and submitted their reviews and recommendations to the Council.
- The Curriculum Task Forces have made significant progress in developing Standards.
- Four public hearings have been held to present the Standards drafted to date.

#### Outcomes from all this activity include:

- 15 Criteria for National Standards in History have been developed as policy statements guiding the development of Standards.
- Decisions have been reached concerning the Major Themes and Major Historical Eras for selecting content and organizing the Standards in U.S. and world history.
- Definitions of Content Standards and

Performance Standards have been agreed upon and questions of "levels of achievement" resolved.

- An effective format for presenting Content and Performance Standards has been developed.

- Standards have been drafted for five eras in U.S. history and are in various stages of editing and public review.

- A basic framework for world history standards has been developed with the assistance of the World History Committee, formed by the Council to draw a wider circle of teachers and historians into this task, and is now under review.

- In February 1993 the National Council, (1) reviewed the proposed World History Framework and the Standards in U.S. history completed in the December-January working sessions of the Curriculum Task Force, and (2) scheduled the next round of reviews by the eight Organizational Focus Groups and the 29 organizations of the National Forum for History Standards.

#### **What Next Steps Are Being Planned?**

- The Council plans, over the next 15 months, to continue this iterative cycle of (1) Standards development, (2) reviews by the 8 Organizational Focus Groups and the National Forum, (3) public hearings, and (4) revisions of the Standards under the direction of the Council to respond to recommendations and work toward broad national consensus.

- Working retreats of the Curriculum Task Forces and Council meetings will be scheduled as needed to keep this process moving forward.

Meetings of the Organizational Focus Groups and the National Forum will be scheduled and reviews will be conducted by mail, as fully as our budget allows.

- Public hearings began in October 1992, before scheduled meetings of the Long Island, New York Council for the Social Studies, the National Council for the Social Studies, the National Council of State Social Studies Specialists, and the California Council for the Social Studies. Future meetings will be scheduled at selected conferences of organizations participating in this Project, and opportunities are being explored for public hearings before various professional meetings in at least four regions of the United States.

#### **Conclusion**

As we now begin to send our draft Standards for open public review we invite you to evaluate the Standards and welcome your comments. If you would like to participate in this national consensus project for History Standards please write to the following administrative officers of the project:

**Charlotte Crabtree, Co-Director**  
**Gary B. Nash, Co-Director**  
**Linda Symcox, Assistant Director**  
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# The Geography Standards Project: "Geography for Life"

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## Introduction

The outcomes-based content and performance standards developed in geography are designed to show teachers, parents, and policy leaders what American students should know and be able to do in geography in kindergarten through 12th grade (K-12).

**Content standards** identify essential information, skills, and perspectives that students should know, be able to use, and be aware of as they enter American society in the twenty-first century.

**Performance standards** describe what students should be able to do in order to demonstrate cumulative content mastery upon exiting grades 4, 8, and 12. These performance standards can be used by teachers to measure students' accomplishments. If students master the content of geography grade by grade and are able to demonstrate mastery of the subject matter, skills, and perspectives by doing well on the performance standard at the grade levels prescribed above, they will have acquired knowledge and skills equal to or better than those required of top students in other nations.

## Why Are Geography Standards Being Developed?

Geography is identified in Goal 3 of the National Education Goals as one of the five core subjects in which all U.S. students are expected to demonstrate mastery in challenging subject matter by the year 2000.

## How Are Geography Standards Being Developed?

Geography standards are being developed through a broad-based consensus project funded by the U.S. Department of Education, the National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Geographic Society.

The project is broad in that it involves all of the major geography organizations in the U.S. The project is being administered through the National

Council for Geographic Education in coordination with the Association of American Geographers, the National Geographic Society, and the American Geographical Society. The consensus model is based on the process followed between 1991 and 1992 in the development of the *National Assessment of Educational Progress 1994 Geography Assessment* (NAEP).

The project's committee structure consists of an administrative core group: an oversight committee made up of public-policy, education, and business leaders; a content advisory committee of geographers eminent in their disciplinary subfields; an international committee of geography educators from around the

*"Standards will guide the educational system by offering students something to strive for; they will inspire students to push themselves; and they will give personal satisfaction when they are attained."*

world; and an environmental education committee providing input and advice on the links between geography and environmental education.

The primary writing task falls to two inter-linked groups of experienced K-12 teachers and geography educators. There is a Core Writing Group of seven writers who organize work flow and prepare drafts of basic material. The larger 21-person Grade-Level Writing Committee contains three sub-groups experienced in the K-4, 5-8, and 9-12 domains.

The extensive committee structure reflects the project's effort to embrace both the public and private sector as well as a broad range of education constituencies in order to achieve widespread consensus.

As drafts of material are developed, they are disseminated in a continuous iterative process to hundreds of teachers, curriculum developers, and state social studies and science coordinators for critique and comment. Further input is being received through a series of public hearings held in different cities throughout the nation. Coordination with the other standards writing projects is achieved by meetings of project directors in Washington and by the continuous sharing of drafts among all the writing groups. Thus, for example, the geography standards writing process is in close contact with two groups, History and Science, that have the strongest curricular ties to geography.

***“The objective is to develop world class standards in the context of the workplace, the voter’s booth, and people’s lives.”***

#### What Do We Mean By World Class?

In developing drafts, standards writers have used curriculum materials collected from many countries and have benefited from the advice of the international committee of geography educators. In responding to the idea of world class, we have recognized the different purposes of geographic education in other countries (e.g., rote memorization versus analytical capability), different curricula emphases (e.g., taught in all grades versus at selected grades), and different curricula models (e.g., separate versus infused instruction). Different national standards reflect the educational priorities of different countries.

While we have drawn on the standards of other countries, we must work from what America needs and therefore wants in terms of geography education. The objective is to develop world class standards in the context of the workplace, the voter’s booth, and people’s lives. Therefore, in addition to using geography standards materials from other countries, we have made extensive use of the *Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (1984)*, *What Work Requires of Schools: A SCANS Report for AMERICA 2000 (1991)*, and the *VAEP (1992)* document.

Therefore, world class means being equivalent to and perhaps leading the world in a system of out-

comes-based education. Standards from other countries have been taken into account in setting our reference standards, but we have maintained the essential idea that geography standards must address what America needs and wants.

#### What Do Standards Mean?

We are developing a single level of performance in setting these world class standards. We believe that a single level offers a simple target, one that is clearly visible to students, teachers, and parents. We see a standard as a line separating qualitatively different types of performance.

Standards will guide the educational system by offering students something to strive for; they will inspire students to push themselves; and they will give personal satisfaction when they are attained. Therefore, a single level of challenging standards will give both responsibility and accountability to students, teachers, and parents. This level presents a goal towards which students may strive, and offers teachers a benchmark against which performance may be measured.

Standards do not entail a national curriculum because the particular content emphasized and the sequence of presentation must be tailored to the specific state and local context. Thus the set of Content Areas of geography is neither a syllabus nor a curriculum, although it will serve as the basis for developing both. In presenting content standards, we will include exemplars of the range of content that might be taught, not the particular content that must be taught. In discussing the fundamental geographic concept of migration, for example, a school district in the state of Washington might focus on migration from Southeast Asia whereas a school district in Florida might focus on migration from Latin America. In considering the impact of physical processes on human settlement, a school district in California might focus on earthquakes whereas a school district in New Jersey might focus on coastal flooding.

Standards are designed to be dynamic and flexible. The study of geography and its focus on the world must change as the world itself changes. Developing a mental map of Bosnia and Somalia seems essential today but three years ago, could have been regarded as superfluous. Learning more about the republics of the former Soviet Union is essential today, even more so than it would have been in 1987. Similarly, geography standards must be fluid in order to take into

account new scientific discoveries regarding the environment as well as advances in technology. Ten years ago, the use of geographic information systems (GIS) was in its infancy. By the year 2000, they will be an essential tool in public and personal life.

### The Nature of Geography Standards

Geography standards are based on two requirements: (a) life-long learning: there should be a connection and continuity between school and adult life; and (b) empowerment: there should be a balance between practical application and the pursuit of understanding. Geographic understanding must be useful, enriching, and an enduring part of the way in which people look at the world. Therefore, we have called our report "Geography for Life."

The goal of geography standards is captured in a **Vision Statement**: *the geographically informed person applies a comprehensive spatial view of the world to life situations.* Such persons are knowledgeable about the world around them and comfortable using that knowledge. They can use geographic understanding to organize thought, inform decision making, and aid in problem solving. A spatial view of the world focuses on the spatial dimension of human experience by asking questions: Where is something? Why is it there? How did it get there? These questions are equally applicable to life situations at scales ranging from the local to global, in situations which are the result of direct, personal experience or indirect, media-based experience.

**Realization of the Vision** is made possible by means of three elements: Goals, Performance Standards, and the Content of Geography. **Goals** are the essence of geography (see Table 1). They are a distillation of the indispensable set of things that a geographically informed person should be able to do. We have identified a set of 19 Goals that are applicable to all students, grades K-12.

**Performance Standards** specify the levels of performance necessary for world-class performance in geography in grades 4, 8, and 12. World class means being equivalent to and perhaps leading the world in a system of performance- or outcomes-based education. For each Performance Standard, there will be a single level of performance. Each goal will contain a series of performance statements and in turn, each performance statement will contain examples.

The **Content of Geography** comprises three elements: the subject matter knowledge of geography

(Content Areas, see Table 2); the necessary skills of information access, manipulation, and presentation; and the essential perspectives from which to view the world. These three elements are the essential foundation upon which geographic understanding is based. Standards will be presented for grades 4, 8, and 12, specifying the most important things that must be known by American students.

***"Standards do not entail a national curriculum because the particular content emphasized and the sequence of presentation must be tailored to the specific state and local context."***

### Timetable for Completion

The Final Report of the Geography Education Standards Project will be presented to the National Education Goals Panel by the end of November, 1993. In meeting this deadline, we will progress through a series of drafts. Tables 1 and 2, for example represent our current thinking and will change in response to critical feedback. The next major draft will be available in early June and we expect to complete a final draft by early September. Each draft will be available for critique and comment from as wide an audience as possible.

We welcome this opportunity to share our working process with you. If you have any questions or would like additional information and copies of material, please contact the Executive Director:

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**Table 1**  
**Outcomes of Geography for Life**  
**Understanding The Art and**  
**Science of Geography**  
**The Stem**

The well-educated American views the world spatially. The outcome of Geography for Life is a geographically informed person who sees meaning in the arrangement of phenomena in space and who therefore applies the spatial perspective in life situations.

**Seeing the World in Spatial Terms**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

1. appropriate language, methods, and technologies
2. how to make and use maps
3. and uses mental maps of Earth to put places, phenomena, and events in their spatial perspective
4. how to analyze the spatial organization of Earth's surface.

**Elements: Places and Regions**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

5. the physical and human characteristics of place
6. that people define regions and use them to interpret Earth's changing complexity
7. that culture and experience influence people's perception of places and regions.

**Fundamental Physical Systems**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

8. the physical processes that shape patterns on Earth's surface
9. the nature and distribution of ecosystems on Earth's surface.

**Fundamental Human Systems**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

10. the nature, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface
11. the nature and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics

12. patterns and networks of economic interdependence on Earth's surface
13. the processes and patterns of human settlement
14. the forces of conflict and cooperation that shape the divisions of Earth's surface

**Environment and Society**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

15. that Earth's physical and human systems are connected and interact
16. the consequences of the interactions between physical and human systems
17. the changing meaning and importance of resources.

**The Power of Geography**

Specifically, the geographically informed person understands . . .

18. how to apply geography to interpret the past
19. how to apply geography to interpret the present and plan for the future.

**Table 2**

**Geography's Content Areas**

**I. Fundamentals of Geography**

- A. Transcending Geographic Concepts
- B. Place Location
- C. The Display of Geographic Information

**II. Fundamental Physical Geography**

- A. The Atmosphere
- B. The Biosphere
- C. The Hydrosphere
- D. The Lithosphere

**III. Fundamental Human Geography**

- A. Cultural Geography
- B. Economic Geography
- C. Historical Geography
- D. Political Geography
- E. Population Geography
- F. Urban Geography

**IV. Spatial Dynamics**

- A. Human-Environmental Interaction
- B. Movement and Connections
- C. The Nature of Regions

# The National Standards Project in Economics (NSPE): A Progress Report

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Curriculum standards have become the rage in social studies education this year. Although performance assessment dominated the 1991 meetings of the NCSS, standards took the lead in 1992, creating the possible impression that performance assessment had been nothing more than a fad. To be certain, the rapid jump from the performance assessment underdog to standards may provide critics of social studies with one more weapon to support their belief that its practitioners cannot get their acts together. However, in providing a coherent framework within which to assess student performance, curriculum standards hold great promise for social studies in general, and economics in particular.

A prospectus and progress report of the National Standards Project underway in Economics (NSPE) follows. The rationale for the project, an overview, the procedures, and the estimated timetable for completing it are discussed.

## Rationale

Standards projects in all subject areas, including economics, are being energized by the desire to set minimum quality standards for students, schools, and school districts, in order to ensure that all students are challenged to perform tasks at levels consistent with desired results.

In the absence of curriculum standards, it is difficult to know what produces desired results, it is impossible to compare performances against a known standard, and no criteria are available with which to hold anyone accountable for those performances. Absent standards, there is no criterion for encouraging schools to aspire to higher standards. Lacking standards, school curricula lack coherence — the pieces do not fit together into an orderly whole.

Standards, properly defined and conceived, fill these voids. In developing them, everyone involved acquires an opportunity to participate in a full and open discussion about what students ought to know and what teachers should teach. For these reasons, the National Council on Economic Education launched the NSPE to identify curriculum standards that will guide student learning toward excellence and assist everyone involved to assess their effectiveness in producing economically literate students.

## Overview

As one of the allied organizations of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics in its efforts to improve the teaching and learning of mathematics, described in its Curriculum and Evaluation Standards for School Mathematics, the National Council on Economic Education is following the successful NCTM model in creating its curriculum standards. NSPE has adapted both of the NCTM tasks as its goals:

- create a coherent vision of what it means to be economically literate in a global economy;
- create a set of standards to guide revision of school curricula in economics and to guide assessment of progress in fulfilling the vision.

A national task force is creating the coherent vision of what it means to be economically literate in a global economy. The task force is composed of a cross section of key groups: economists (academic, business, and labor); economic educators; educators; teachers of economics, social studies, history, business, mathematics, and science; employers (corporate and small business); organized labor; professional associations (National Association of Economic Educators, National Council for the Social Studies, National Center for Civics Education, NCTM); textbook pub-

lishers, and others. In addition to deciding the ultimate outcomes that economic education should provide to students, the task force is responsible for identifying minimal standards of performance that all students need to achieve before they leave secondary school in order to be economically literate in a global economy.

Each standard ultimately produced by NSPE will contain three elements. First, each will include a statement of the economic content the curriculum should include at each instructional level to enhance students' economic literacy in a global economy. In the past, economic education focused upon concepts and generalizations sequenced by the logic of the discipline. This approach will be replaced in the curriculum standards by statements of economic content causally linked to the goal of producing globally literate economic citizens. The statements, called "content standards," will be accompanied, second, by examples of activities based on real world problem situations whose solution requires students to become actively engaged in learning economics. The activities, called "performance standards," embody criteria by which students, teachers, and others interested in assessing effectiveness, can be judged on how well students understand and can perform tasks related to the content standards they are studying. Third, examples will be provided for each performance standard of how to assess students' performances to ensure that they all can perform up to the desired minimum standard.

#### Procedures

The NSPE is engaging the widest possible range of players in the development of curriculum standards in economics. A national conference of leading organizations engaged in economic education (the National Council on Economic Education, the Foundation for Teaching Economics, the National Association of Independent Businesses, the American Economic Association, the AFL CIO, Junior Achievement, district banks in the Federal Reserve System, the National Association of Business Economists, the National Association of Independent Businesses and others) was held in Colorado Springs in November, 1992 to launch the NSPE. Following the meeting, proposals were prepared to funders in the public and private sector to organize and operationalize a broadly representative Task Force to develop the proposed content and performance standards. While awaiting funding, a complete review of the literature on standards, performance assessment, and related topics

has been commissioned by the National Council to assemble all available knowledge bearing on the task.

Broad consensus has existed for more than two decades among economists, educators, and leaders in business, labor, agriculture, and government around economic content required for economic literacy. More than 20 years ago, under the leadership of nationally respected scholars in economics, the National Council developed and published its Framework for Teaching the Basic Concepts of economics. The consensus, built around the content outlined in that document and formally reaffirmed twice since, serves to this day as the source of economic knowledge for which students are held accountable in economic education programs throughout the country. The Framework needs to be revisited anew, however, to refocus it upon economic content that leads in a direct way to the achievement of curriculum standards and results in economically literate students in a global economy. And, it needs to be revisited and transformed into a document for guiding the assessment of student performances relevant to global economic literacy. Building on the consensus already in place in economics, the Task Force will devote itself to the tasks of specifying content standards relevant to global economic literacy and to the specification of real world performances which demonstrate global economic literacy.

Once the work of the Task Force is complete, an elaborate consensus building process will be undertaken to reestablish the consensus which has been the hallmark of economic education. This time, however, the consensus will be built around explicit content and performance standards at different levels of instruction. All the players will have numerous opportunities for input.

Individuals representing all possible constituencies of the standards will be invited formally to review the drafts. Public hearings at relevant professional meetings will be held. Endorsements will be secured from a broad cross section of relevant organizations. Articles will be written for professional journals of relevant groups.

Following the success of these efforts at the end of NSPE's first year, the National Council will appoint a five year commission to transform the full promise of the standards into reality. The commission will be responsible for designing plans and monitoring progress toward achieving the dream envisioned by Warren Simmons and Lauren Resnick in "Assessment

as the Catalyst of School Reform," Educational Leadership, February, 1993:

We need a performance-based examination system that embodies the standards, together with rubrics and procedures for scoring students' work reliably and fairly. Such tools are virtually useless, however, without teachers, content specialists, and other educators who have a firm understanding of how to construct and apply our examinations to improve curriculum, instruction, and, most important, student performance. To build this understanding, we must create a professional development system that will transform the way educators view teaching, learning, and assessment.

The commission will provide leadership in redesigning economics instructional materials at each grade level to ensure that they contribute in a carefully sequenced way to the achievement of standards for global economic literacy. Training materials in electronic formats will be developed by the National Council to reorient its affiliated state councils and university centers for economic education toward teacher training activities that support achievement of the standards. Extensive in-service retraining of teachers will be undertaken at the local level to ensure that they are adequately trained to prepare students to be economically literate in a global economy. Assessment instruments will be rethought and validated on the new standards, and expanded to assess the greater array of performance tasks required by them. Researchers will be retrained to investigate the effectiveness of instruction on the broader array of performances embodied in the standards. And, finally, current agreements with 2800 school districts in support of the economic understanding of their students will be renegotiated to reflect the differing conditions, requirements, and incentives necessary to achieve the curriculum standards in economics.

#### **Estimated Timetable**

We envision a five year timetable for the standards project in economics, following receipt of funding. During year one, we will complete within the first six months the first draft of the curriculum standards, and within the second six months, the revision and consensus building processes. By the end of year two,

detailed planning for the ensuing five years will be completed, and the first of the instructional materials among those in the core of the National Council's K-12 curriculum, will be rewritten, field tested, and published. By the end of year three, electronic retraining materials for participants in the National Council's network will be completed and distributed, and the first local workshops to in-service teachers according to the standards will be conducted. Revision of the remaining titles among the National Council's core instructional materials will be completed too. By year four, assessment instruments validated on the curriculum standards will be completed, and researchers will be trained to investigate scientifically the effectiveness of instruction on student performances related to the standards. Finally, in year five, all school districts formally affiliated at that time with the National Council will complete a review and renewal of their affiliations to ensure that they are contributing to the achievement of the standards and the overall goals of the project.

#### **Conclusion**

Simmons and Resnick invite us to imagine American schools in which students do not have to spend time filling in workbook pages and practicing for bubble tests, but instead work on extended projects, discuss complex problems, and generally think their way through a demanding curriculum aimed at the kinds of knowledge and skills they will need as citizens and workers of the future. They invite us to imagine American schools in which the same high expectations are applied to poor, minority, and immigrant children as to the children in upscale suburban schools. Imagine American schools, they intone, in which teachers are committed to seeing that their students meet the high expectations set for them and are able to deliver on this commitment because of their access to high-quality continuing professional development.

Simmons' and Resnick's dream embodies the aspirations of the National Standards Project in Economics. It aspires to nothing less than global economic literacy for all students! If you are interested in becoming a part of this dream, we invite you to express your interest and to join us in mobilizing the resources required to transform the dream into reality.

# Standards for Social Studies as an Integrative Field

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Among the currents for educational reform is the effort to establish national standards related to various school subjects. Critics of public school in the United States have faulted their curricula, especially the lack of depth and challenge, and the failure of schools to establish rigorous expectations for student acquisition of knowledge and skills. Those who advocate the establishment of national standards have agreed that instruction too often fails to excite and challenge students and that the curriculum lacks coherence and thematic structure focusing on the essential knowledge and skills our young people will need to function effectively. (1)

Although mathematics, science and basic literacy skills drew early attention of educational reformers, the field of social studies has also come under scrutiny. The field has been viewed by critics as lacking in substantive foci and conceptual framework of an academic discipline. Some contend that social studies as a field attempts to do too much and as a result accomplishes too little. What is needed, they argue, is to abandon the whole idea of social studies as an integrative field and replace it with separate treatment of history, geography, and perhaps civic education. Major funding by United States Department of Education and private foundations has supported the efforts of these reformers in their efforts to establish separate national standards for their fields. These efforts are described elsewhere in this issue. The purpose here is to describe the effort currently underway to develop more broadly conceived integrative standards for the field of social studies. (2)

## Why Do We Need Social Studies Standards?

For some years now, the National Council for Social Studies has been attempting to provide leadership for high quality integrative curriculum and

instruction that draws from several academic disciplines for the purpose of citizenship education. The Council developed curriculum guidelines that have been available in their original or revised form for fifteen years. Although its efforts at developing curriculum K - 12 scope and sequence models dates back over half a century, the contemporary efforts began in 1983 when the Council published a model designed by a task force headed by past president John Jarolimek. Subsequently, five additional models were offered and eventually three were approved by the Board of Directors. NCSS also took the leadership in establishing a National Commission for Social Studies in the Schools. A number of academic organizations in history and the social sciences joined in support of the Commission. Although never fully funded, the Commission did produce a report, "Charting a Course: Social Studies for the 21st Century" that offered elementary and secondary school curriculum recommendations. (3)

These efforts, despite their sometimes powerful and intriguing conceptions, failed to fully meet the needs of curriculum supervisors and teachers. The NCSS Board of Directors, for its part, resisted endorsing a single model for organizing social studies curriculum and instruction believing that the field was better served by having a limited number of alternative models from which to choose. It did move, however, to issue a series of position statements and guidelines that along with efforts of the past decade helped to establish some fundamental guidelines on which to build curriculum standards. (4)

As these developments were taking place within NCSS, the national standards effort was getting underway, first in the field of mathematics and then in other fields, including history, geography, and civics. Although NCSS has had opportunities to participate in, and influence the initial efforts to promote the sep-

arate reform efforts in history, geography and civics as these developed, the NCSS Board of Directors came to the conclusion at its January, 1992 meeting that there was an increasing risk of fragmentation in the social studies curriculum precisely at a time when greater integration was needed and being advocated by some thoughtful school reformers. Accordingly, the Board of Directors decided to establish and financially support a curriculum standards task force, charging it to review and build upon NCSS policies, position statements and guidelines in the development of national standards that would be consistent with a broad definition of the social studies.

The work of the task force began with the conception of social studies as recently defined by the Council:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. Within the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and natural sciences. The primary purpose of social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions, for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (1992)

Thus, the social studies is perceived as an integrated and unique field of teaching and learning. Independent efforts to define standards in history, geography, civics or other disciplines as well as the emerging assessment programs of the National Assessment of Educational Progress in history and geography are important, but insufficient to provide the unifying focus required of broad-based citizenship education. A goal of the NCSS effort is to establish the parameters and priorities for social studies programs within which discipline-based standards efforts can contribute to the education of citizens for a complex interdependent world of the 21st century.

#### The Standards

In the current state of development there are ten curriculum standards, accompanied by sample student assessment tasks for providing evidence of learn-

ing and classroom vignettes to illustrate the kind of instruction envisioned at three school levels—by the end of grades 4, 8, and 12. The standards suggest the knowledge, skills, values, and persistent issues organized around important themes that are to be spiraled through the K-12 curriculum in increasing depth and sophistication using developmentally appropriate learner activities which encourage the use and examination of multiple perspectives.

The curriculum standards are organized around the following ten themes:

- Culture
- Time, Continuity, and Change
- Space and Place
- Individual Development and Identity
- Individuals, Groups, and Institutions
- Production, Distribution, and Consumption
- Power, Authority, and Governance
- Science, Technology, and Society
- Global Connections
- Citizenship

Each of these thematic standards includes a set of student performances that can be expected as a result of a rich set of curriculum experiences provided by schools. Here is an example:

#### Time, Continuity and Change

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of human beings view themselves in and over time so that the learner can:

by the 4th grade . . .

- demonstrate an understanding that people may describe the same event in different ways:

by the 8th grade . . .

- demonstrate an understanding that different historians may describe the same event in different ways:

by the 12th grade . . .

- demonstrate that historical knowledge and the concept of time are socially influenced constructions.

Thus the same idea—history is a construction of the human mind—should be developed systematically through appropriate learning experiences spiraled through the K-12 curriculum.

There are six additional expectations of student competencies and knowledge as part of this standard. In some cases the expected student knowledge or competency is the same for more than one school level

because task force members believe the expected performance seems appropriate to multiple school levels although the specific ways in which students may demonstrate mastery will likely vary.

The standards will demonstrate the connections of their components and encourage integration across school subjects. An example of these connections can be seen in the following statements of expected student performance taken from three of the standards for 12th grade other than Time, Continuity, and Change, but which clearly have a relationship to that theme:

From the standard on Individuals, Groups, and Institutions:

. . . describe the various forms institutions take, and how they change over time.

From Space and Place:

. . . explain how historical events in both Western and other cultures have been influenced by physical and human geographic factors.

From Production, Distribution, and Consumption:

. . . Apply economic concepts and economic reasoning to historical and contemporary social developments and issues.

The integration with other subjects will also be stressed throughout the standards. The standard on Science, Technology, and Society is perhaps the most obvious example. Specific components of other standards call for integration as well, as illustrated by the following part of the standard on Global Connections:

. . . Show how cultural elements such as art, music, belief systems can both connect people or cause misunderstandings.

**Development and Timeline**

The NCSS Board of Directors is responsible for the overall administration of the standards project. It directs the work of an eleven-member national task force that includes elementary, middle school, and secondary teachers, district and state social studies supervisors, and social studies educator specialists. The work of the task force is being reviewed by five groups: NCSS leaders and members as part of the NCSS review panel; a social studies teachers review panel; a national review panel consisting of representatives from a variety of professional and other organizations; student focus groups; and, members of advisor-responder schools.

The first draft of the social standards was released in November, 1992. A second draft is being developed

on the basis of initial reviews and scheduled for distribution to reviewers in April, 1993. After another round of reviews, a third draft will be developed during the summer, 1993. It is anticipated that a final draft will be submitted to the Board of Directors for approval in January, 1994 after presentation and review at the NCSS Annual Meeting in November, 1993.

A major challenge will remain after the development of these standards for social studies and the standards for separate disciplines. Initial reactions from hearings on our standards, or written comments received in response to the first draft, indicate that teachers and supervisors are especially concerned about the multiplicity of standards being developed. Responders feel overwhelmed by the number of standards that may eventually have to be addressed. Teachers in elementary and middle schools feel even more pressure than those in secondary schools as they attempt to deal with coordinating standards in a number of subjects. Coordination and integration within the field of social studies and across subject areas will need to be given high priority in our next phase of the standards movement.

**Notes**

1. See, for example, Diane Ravitch and Chester E. Finn, Jr., What do our 17 Year Olds Know? A Report on the First National Assessment of History and Literature (New York: Harper and Row, 1987) and E.D. Hirsch, Jr., Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1987).
2. Advocacy discussions for the separate disciplines can be found in such works as: Committee on Geographic Education, The National Council for Guidelines for Geographic Education: Elementary and Secondary Schools (Washington, D.C. and Macomb, Ill.: Association of American Geographic and National Council for Geographic Education, 1984). Bradley Commission on History in Schools, Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools (Washington, D.C.: The Educational Excellence Network, 1988); Paul Gagnon, Ed., Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education (New York: Macmillan, 1989); and, Charles F. Bahmueller, Ed., Civitas: A Framework for Civic Education (Calabasas, Ca.: Center for Civic Education, 1991).
3. The 1989 report, Charting a Course is available from the National Council for Social Studies, Washington, D.C. Three of the scope and sequence models, the curriculum guidelines and other relevant curriculum materials are included in the NCSS publication, Social Studies Curriculum Planning Resources (Dubuque, Iowa: Kendall/Hunt, 1990).
4. Some of these statements are included in Social Studies Curriculum Planning Resources. See also, Social Studies in the Middle School (1991), and A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies: Building Social Understanding and Civic Efficiency, (1993).



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