

# Social Studies Standards

## A National Landscape Scan

October 2021

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AMERICAN INSTITUTES FOR RESEARCH®

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## Introduction

In 2020, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) began the process of updating the social studies standards because the standards had not been revised or updated since 2009. To aid in the development of the standards, a working committee developed a set of guiding principles. These principles outline the ways new standards should be changed, including incorporating more themes of power and oppression; social justice; equity and diversity; empowering students to develop pride in their identity, culture, and history; and move the standards from a Eurocentric perspective towards an equitable inclusion of accurate historical stories that reflect Indigenous, Hispanic/Latino, Chicano, Mestizo, Genizaro, African American, and other cultural perspectives. Ultimately, the working committee hopes the redevelopment of the standards will help serve as the backbone for future curriculum that is culturally responsive and sustainable and provide teachers with the tools to teach students about power and oppression structures and deliver a curriculum centered on social justice, tribal sovereignty, and sustainable futures.

The first section—The National and International Landscape—provides context for updating the content covered in the current New Mexico standards in social studies. This section includes overviews of key national and international frameworks and standards in social studies. As further context, it also provides an overview of the current frameworks for national and international assessments.

The second section—A Comparison of State Social Studies Standards—provides further national context. It includes an overview of the status of state social studies standards, how these standards are structured and organized, and their social studies graduation requirements and state assessments. Specifically, this section profiles 14 states from across the country that outline the approach each took in developing its social studies standards.

The third section—New Mexico Context—describes current social studies initiatives, state policies impacting social studies standards, and the history of social studies standards in New Mexico. It concludes with an overview of the current social studies standards in New Mexico.

## What Are Standards?

Academic standards are learning goals for what students should know and be able to do at a specific grade level, by the end of a grade band, or for a specific course. High-quality standards provide guidance for districts, schools, teachers, parents, and students to ensure that what is taught will help students develop the skills and understanding necessary to be college and career ready and successful, engaged, and productive citizens. Although content standards

provide a foundation for learning, they do not specify how to teach the content. Curricula provide teachers an outline of what should be taught and how it should be taught in classrooms, including the instructional materials, resources, and practices needed to achieve a learning goal. High-quality curricula are student centered, with flexible opportunities for students to meet learning goals, and address students' individual skills or concept development. Standards-aligned assessments provide information about student achievement to students, parents, educators, and other stakeholders.

## Overview of Current Social Studies Education Research

As detailed in the following sections, there is a history of almost 3 decades of national and individual state efforts to develop and refine social studies content standards. Current standards in social studies education have been impacted by long-standing frameworks and subsequent curriculum movements. For instance, elementary social studies standards were predominantly based on the expanding horizons, formerly expanding environments, framework in the late 1930s, where learning is initially built on students' experiences and expands to include local, state and national contexts (Keirn, 2018).

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

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

The development of standards is an iterative process that continues to be guided by the successes and challenges of previous standards; social studies education research; shifts in cultural, political, and civic thinking; and ever-expanding diversity across the nation. While

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

The national and state emphasis on the interrelationships among social studies subjects and English language arts (ELA) subject areas is reflected in many current state social studies standards. The writing and reading abilities necessary for social studies competency are strongly linked to comprehension and communication skills that bolster literacy and ELA achievement. In a study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute on 18,000 kindergarteners, researchers found that increased instructional time (approximately 30 minutes) each day in social studies from first through fifth grades correlated with improved reading ability, with girls and children from lower income homes benefiting the most (Tyner & Kabourek, 2020). Similarly, second graders who received 60 literacy-rich social studies lessons performed better on reading assessments, scoring 23% higher compared to other students (Halvorsen et al., 2012). Further, social studies standards can address the needs of students to be financially literate, to have civic mindedness and be able to actively participate in democracy, and to develop skills to critically evaluate information across contexts.

As New Mexico looks to update and revise its social studies standards, it can look to the growing body of social studies learning research, national and international frameworks for social studies standards and curriculum, and current state-adopted standards.

## The National and International Landscape

### International Standards

#### [Singapore](#)

The Singapore Ministry of Education manages the development of the national curriculum and desired outcomes that include student excellence in life skills, knowledge skills, and specific discipline knowledge. While the primary school curriculum has a heavy focus on mastering



English, mother-tongue languages, and mathematics, civics and moral education are also included in the national curriculum. The character and citizenship education syllabi for the primary level is built on six core values: Respect, Responsibility, Resilience, Integrity, Care, and Harmony. Identity, relationships, and choice are three overarching categories of character and citizenship education, which are broken into self, family, school, community, nation, and world contexts. Citizenship competencies emphasized in the syllabi are related to civic literacy, global awareness, and cross-cultural skills (e.g., sociocultural awareness) of the 21st Century Competencies and Student Outcomes framework.

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

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

### [Ontario, Canada](#)

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

performance, with respect to a criterion on which the assessment or evaluation is focused. For example, *effectiveness* is a descriptor that is used for the thinking, communication, and application category. Moreover, the framework identifies four levels of achievement that help to further group the descriptors, criteria, and categories.

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

### **British Columbia**

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

### **International Assessment Frameworks**

The International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) is an international cooperative association of more than 60 countries and includes national and governmental research institutes and agencies. Since its inception in 1958, IEA has conducted more than 30 large-scale, comparative research studies of student achievement, with a focus on educational policies and practices. An initial study examining students' achievement in civics internationally was conducted in 1971 with 10 participating countries. Based on this work, in 1999, IEA led the Civic Education Study, which was conducted in 28 countries across the globe. The study found that, across these countries, foundational skills are important but insufficient for students to prosper in a globalized society. There is a growing need for students across the world to be exposed to civic education that has a culture-oriented approach, a focus on emphasizing human rights, and an inclusion of social justice principles.

To further expand this work, the International Civic and Citizenship Education Study (ICCS) was established in 2009 as a baseline study for future assessments. The ICCS seeks to better understand the ways students are prepared to act as citizens in a range of countries. Data were collected on more than 140,000 Grade 8 students and 62,000 teachers from more than 5,300 schools in 38 countries worldwide. This survey examined student achievement through a test of conceptual knowledge and study of students' understanding of aspects of civics and citizenship. In addition, this assessment collected information about students' value beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and behavioral intentions regarding aspects of civics and citizenship. The ICCS framework is organized around four content domains: (1) civic society and systems, (2) civic principles, (3) civic participation, and (4) civic identities. Each content domain is divided into a subdomain. These subdomains consist of one or more aspects (i.e., specific content within that subdomain) and have key concepts that are expressed across these subdomains (i.e., concepts and processes common to subdomains within a given content domains).

A second study cycle of ICCS was conducted in 2016, which included a set of the same items asked in 2009 in addition to new items to represent the recent developments in civic and citizenship education. These assessments complement each other and allow for a comparison in the changes in civic knowledge, attitudes, and engagement over time. The 2016 assessment follows the same framework but also addresses issues such as students' roles with respect to environment sustainability, social interactions at school, and the use of new social media for civic engagement.

## **National Standards/Frameworks**

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

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

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

school). The learning expectations also provide the rationale as to why each theme is important for students to study.

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

Developed by more than 20 states and 15 national social studies organizations, the C3 Framework provides states with an outline for revising their existing social studies standards. This framework is centered on inquiry as a guiding principle for social studies education; specifically, this framework introduces the concept of an Inquiry Arc. The Inquiry Arc focuses on a set of interconnected ideas that act as the underlying structure for the framework's four guiding dimensions and emphasizes concepts and practices that students need to analyze, explain, and argue about topics in our social world. The guiding dimensions include: (1) developing questions and planning inquiries, (2) applying disciplinary tools and concepts, (3) evaluating sources and using evidence, and (4) communicating conclusions and taking informed action. These dimensions and their associated subcategories guide the organization of foundational content and skills for a social studies program. Alongside each dimension and subsection, this framework outlines a set of College, Career, and Civic Readiness Indicators to be achieved by the end of Grade 12. Each of these indicators has an associated K–12 pathway for how students could reach proficiency in that particular skill or concept by the end of Grades 2, 5, 8, and 12.

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

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

The Center for Civic Education developed a set of Voluntary National Standards for Civics and Government for students in kindergarten through 12th grade. These content standards are “exit” standards, specifying what students’ knowledge and proficiencies should be as students complete Grades 4, 8, and 12. The Civic Education Standards comprise both content and performance standards. The content standards focus on students’ civic knowledge, proficiencies, and skills, and the performance standards outline criteria for students’ levels of achievement. The Civic

Education Standards also outline standards for teachers, schools, and state and local education agencies, describing criteria for determining the capacity of these groups.

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

First published in 1996, the National Standards for History were developed with the input from history teachers, supervisors, state social studies specialists, chief state school officers, academic historians, and civic and public interest groups. These standards focus on students' historical thinking skills (e.g., students' abilities to evaluate evidence and construct sound historical arguments or perspectives) and historical understandings (i.e., what students should know about the history of their nation and the world). Further, the National Standards for History contain standards for U.S. history, with 10 periodized eras, and world history, with 9 periodized eras. Although these standards provide an outline of appropriate grade levels for study of each of the standards, when the eras should be studied should be under local or state control.

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

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

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

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

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

The National Geography Standards were developed by the Geography Education National Implementation Project. They are designed to encourage students to become geographically informed through knowledge and mastery of factual knowledge, mental maps and tools, and ways of thinking. There are 18 standards grouped by six themes: (1) the world in spatial terms,

(2) places and regions, (3) physical systems, (4) human systems, (5) environment and society, and (6) the uses of geography.

## **National Assessment Frameworks**

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

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

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

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

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

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

For NAEP, there are also demarcations for how students may attain NAEP Basic, NAEP Proficient, and NAEP Advanced levels of achievement. However, it is important to note that NAEP achievement levels do not represent grade-level proficiency for all states or districts because they may have their own assessment standards for proficiency.

### **Incorporating Ethnic Studies into State Standards**

With an increasing focus on the national conversation around societal and racial justice, states have begun efforts to incorporate ethnic studies content into state content standards. Specifically, ethnic studies standards would set benchmarks for students' demonstration of knowledge around topics such as racial equity, and implicit bias, emphasizing instruction on the complex history and impact of racism in the United States. Previous research has found that thoughtful and meaningful instruction on ethnic studies topics can have positive impacts on students' academic and social outcomes (Sleeter, 2011). States, including, Nevada, California, Washington, Indiana, Nebraska, and Virginia have already imbedded content around racial justice or ethnic studies into their state social studies standards, with pending legislation to make similar changes in Massachusetts and Illinois (as of September 2020). More specifically, in 2018, Indiana approved ethnic studies standards, offering an ethnic studies elective course to



high school students annually with schools determining which ethnic or racial groups to represent in the curriculum.

## A Comparison of State Social Studies Standards

The following profiles for 14 states across the country outline the approach each state took in the development of its social studies standards, as well as assessment and graduation requirements in social studies. The information in each state profile came from each state's department of education website (see Table 1 for an outline of the content covered in each of the state profiles). The heading above each state profile is hyperlinked to the corresponding state website.

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

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

### [Alaska](#)

Alaska has adopted a set of geography, government and citizenship, and history content standards, which were last revised in 2016. For history, there is also a set of specific performance standards or grade-level expectations. Alaska also adopted a specific set of cultural standards. Each set of content standards is organized by themes, such as "A student should understand the character of government of the state." The history performance standards are organized into four central themes and divided into five chronological periods. The themes include people, places, environment; consumption, production, distribution; individual, citizenship, governance, and power; and continuity and change. Each history performance standard is coded to align with the content standards for social studies. Each standard also includes one of four depth of knowledge levels, which describes the cognitive demand associated with each performance expectation (e.g., 1 = recall of information, 2 = basic reasoning). The cultural standards were developed by the Alaska Native Knowledge Network in 1998 and are designed to enrich the content standards and provide broad statements of what students should know and be able to do based on their schooling, with an awareness and sensitivity to their cultural environment. Similar to the other content standards, the cultural standards are organized by broad thematic statements, such as: "Culturally-knowledgeable



students are able to engage effectively in learning activities that are based on traditional ways of knowing and learning.”

High school graduates in Alaska must complete four units of credit in social studies, with at least three units of credit being world history, American history, geography, American government/civics, economics, Alaska history, western or eastern civilization, psychology, or sociology. There are no required statewide assessments for social studies in Alaska.

### Arizona

Arizona last adopted social studies standards in 2018 for history, political science, geography, and economics, with the goal of full implementation during the 2020–21 school year (i.e., 2-year implementation timeline). Arizona provides standards by grade bands (i.e., Grades K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12). Each elementary and middle school grade level (but not high school) has a storyline and content focus for the year. The standards are organized under four disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history. Within each of these disciplines there are four to five core concepts, or anchor standards. In addition, there are four anchor standards that apply to the disciplinary skills and practices that students should be able to apply to any historical era, context, or content area.

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

### Georgia

Georgia last adopted social studies standards in 2016 and began implementation during the 2017–18 school year. The *Georgia Standards of Excellence* are grouped by grade bands (i.e., kindergarten to Grade 5, Grades 6–8, and Grades 9–12) and are organized by guiding themes or topics for each individual grade level for the elementary and middle school grades (e.g., U.S. history; Georgia, My State). Across these grade levels, the standards are grouped by strands (i.e., history, geography, civics/government, and economics). Standards at the high school level are organized by course (e.g., economics, American government/civics). For each grade (or high school course), there is also a set of map and globe skills and information-processing skills that students should possess. Beginning in 6th grade and continuing through 12th grade, there is also a set of reading and writing standards for literacy in history and social studies.

To receive a high school diploma in Georgia, students must complete at least three units of credit in social studies, as follows: one unit of U.S. history; one unit of world history or world geography; one-third or one-half unit of citizenship education (government); and one-third or one-half unit of economics, business, or free enterprise. Georgia employs the Georgia Milestones Assessment System, a comprehensive summative assessment program, to determine student preparedness for future grades, student achievement in a content area, and mastery of content standards. Students are given an end-of-grade assessment in social studies at the end of Grade 8 and an end-of-course assessment for U.S. history.

### Hawai'i

Hawai'i last adopted social studies standards in 2018, with a 3-year implementation plan beginning in the 2019–20 school year. Informed by the C3 Framework, the standards include three types: anchor standards, inquiry standards, and content standards. The anchor standards remain constant throughout each grade and course and align closely to the four dimensions of the C3 Framework. The inquiry standards define key social studies skills and are distributed by grade band (i.e., K–2, 3–5, 6–8, and 9–12). The content standards are grade specific for Grades K–5 and are course specific for Grades 6–12, including world history (Grade 6), U.S. history (Grade 8), history of Hawaiian Kingdom, modern history of Hawai'i, Pacific Island studies, participation in democracy, U.S. history and government, and world history and culture.

High school graduation requirements include the completion of four social studies credits, including U.S. history and government (one credit); world history and culture (one credit); modern history of Hawai'i (one-half credit); participation in a democracy (one-half credit); and a social studies basic elective (one credit). There is an optional end-of-course exam in U.S. history.

### Illinois

Adopted in 2016, the Illinois Social Sciences Standards were required to be fully implemented by the 2017–18 school year. The standards focus on civic mindedness, historical thinking, economic decision making, geographic reasoning, and psychological and sociological intellect across the disciplines and grade levels. The standards fall into inquiry skills and disciplinary concepts. Illinois has three overarching inquiry standards and associated skills across the K–12 grades, including development questions and planning inquiries, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action. The K–12 disciplinary concepts are divided into four core disciplines, including civics, geography, economics and financial literacy, and history. The Illinois standards are a departure from the C3 Framework. They are designed with grade-specific standards for kindergarten through fifth grade and are written by grade bands for Grades 6–8 and 9–12. For Grades 6–8, the standards are banded by complexity, from less complex to more complex. In high school, the standards are organized

around typical courses—history, civics, geography, and economics—with additional supplemental course standards for psychology, sociology, and anthropology.

Beginning in 2020, public school students in sixth, seventh, or eighth grade are required to receive a semester in civics education, and, beginning in the 2016–17 school year, high school students are required to receive an additional semester in civics. There are no required state assessments in social studies or history. High school graduation requirements include 2 years of social studies, of which at least 1 year must be history of United States or a combination of history of the United States and American government. Additional state mandates require that every public elementary school student and high school student must have a unit of instruction studying the events of Black history, history of the United States, Holocaust and genocide study, Irish famine study, and the study of the history of women.

### Iowa

The latest set of social studies standards in Iowa were adopted in 2017. The Iowa social studies standards are organized by different themes or topics for kindergarten through Grade 8 (e.g., spaces and places, rights and responsibilities, contemporary global studies) and are organized by course in Grades 9–12, including behavioral sciences, civics and government, economics, financial literacy, geography, U.S. history, and world history. Each grade level includes a set of inquiry and content standards, and, for each set of inquiry and content standards, there is a set of anchor standards. Throughout the civics and government and financial literacy standards, there are indicators of how these standards align with the 21st century skills standards.

In Iowa, high school graduates must complete 3 years of social studies and include one-half unit of U.S. government and one unit of American history. Iowa has no required state assessments for social studies.

### Kentucky

Kentucky adopted its current set of social studies standards in 2018 and began implementation of the standards in the 2019–20 school year. These standards were written by grade level for kindergarten through eighth grade and are discipline specific in high school (i.e., civics, economics, geography, and history). Across grade levels, the standards are organized around four inquiry practices—questioning, investigating, using evidence, and communicating conclusions—that are included throughout the grade-level standards. These inquiry practices are skills that are necessary to acquire knowledge and competencies in each of the four disciplines: civics, economics, geography, and history. The standards are further grouped by these disciplinary strands across the grades. Within each disciplinary strand, there is a set of disciplinary concepts, or broad ideas that enable students to understand the language of that specific discipline, and disciplinary practices, or the skills students should learn and apply across

disciplines. For example, Roles and Responsibilities of a Citizen is a disciplinary concept and practice for civics.

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

### **Massachusetts**

Adopted in 2018, the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* was developed for prekindergarten through Grade 12. Each elementary grade has a theme, such as "Leadership, cooperation, unity, and diversity"; Grades 6 and 7 cover world geography and ancient civilizations; Grade 8 focuses on U.S. and Massachusetts government and civic life; and the high school grades cover U.S. History I and II, World History I and II, and electives include U.S. government and politics, economics, personal financial literacy, and news/media literacy. For all grades, there are seven practice standards that encompass civic knowledge, dispositions and skills, and a range of disciplinary skills, such as "Develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries." In addition, from prekindergarten through Grade 8, each grade has its own set of content standards, and, at the high school level, the standards are outlined for six full-year courses. The History and Social Science Practice Standards and Content Standards were intentionally designed to be integrated with the Massachusetts ELA and Literacy Standards and therefore include reading, writing, and speaking and listening standards for each grade level.

High school graduates in Massachusetts must have completed three units of history and social sciences courses, including U.S. history and world history. There are no required state assessments in history or social science.

### **Nebraska**

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

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

### Nevada

Adopted in 2018, the *Nevada Academic Content Standards for Social Studies* include six content areas: history, multicultural, civics, geography, economics, and financial literacy (Grades 6–12 only). For Grades K–5, the standards are grade specific, but the standards are grade banded by content area for Grades 6–8 and 9–12. Each grade level includes a set of disciplinary skills, which focus on skill development and inquiry skills to analyze primary and secondary texts, documents, and media sources. Disciplinary skills include constructing compelling questions, creating supporting questions, gathering and evaluating sources, developing claim and using evidence, communicating and critiquing conclusions, and taking informed action. Within each content area, there is also a set of grade-level content themes that encompass major ideas in the content area. For example, the content area of history includes five content themes: power and politics, identity, people and ideas, Nevada history, and international relations.

High school graduates in Nevada must complete three units of social studies, including American government, American history, and world history and geography. After 2022, students must also complete one-half unit of economics. Nevada does not require any statewide assessments for social studies.

### New Jersey

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

For high school graduation, New Jersey requires 15 credits of social studies, including 5 credits of world history; the completion of a 2-year course sequence in history of the United States (including New Jersey history); and the integration of civics, economics, geography, and global content in all course offerings. New Jersey has participated in the NAEP assessment, or the “Nation’s Report Card” in 2010, 2012, and 2014 in economics, U.S. history, civics, and geography.

## **Oregon**

Oregon adopted the *Oregon K–12 Social Sciences Academic Content Standards* in 2018. The standards for kindergarten through eighth grade are organized by seven broad themes: civics and government, economics, multicultural studies, financial literacy, geography, history (local, state, national, and world), and social science analysis. The history theme includes a set of standards for historical knowledge, as well as historical thinking, and each grade has a specific focus or topic for its associated history standards. For example, in first grade, the focus is “My School and Family.” In high school, the standards remain organized under these broad themes and are not differentiated by grade level. The high school economics standards include a set of standards for microeconomics and decision making, national economy, and global economy. The focus for high school history is U.S History Post Reconstruction—present and world history. In addition, Oregon has adopted the Common Core State Standards for literacy standards for history/social studies that emphasize the literacy standards for students to learn and write in ELA. There are sets of standards for Grades 6–8, 9–10, and 11–12. In 2019, Oregon passed a set of laws to create standards for ethnic studies and inclusive education, which was adopted by the State Board in September 2021. Additional laws were passed to require instructional content in tribal history/shared history and the inclusion of learning concepts in the Holocaust and other genocides in social science in Grades K–12.

In Oregon, high school graduates must have completed three credits in social studies, which must include one credit of U.S. history and one credit of world civilizations. Oregon administers an optional statewide social sciences assessment in elementary school, middle school, and high school.

## **South Carolina**

In 2019, South Carolina adopted the *South Carolina Social Studies College- and Career-Ready Standards*. These standards are organized by the following grade bands: Grades K–3, 4–5, 6–8, and high school. In K–8, the standards are further organized by topics, including history, economics, geography, and civics and government. Within each broader topic, one standard is listed to indicate the most important expectation for student learning. Each standard includes an enduring understanding statement, which is a specific statement integrating the content skill and is based on big ideas as well as an indicator. Standards also include themes which are the concepts central to social studies thinking and allow students to draw connections across

content in a variety of ways. In high school, the standards are organized by required courses and selected electives. A set of social studies literacy skills for the twenty-first century accompany the social studies standards, and outline, by grade level, the tools, strategies, and perspectives necessary for social studies understanding.

To graduate, high school students in South Carolina must complete one unit of U.S. history and constitution, one-half unit in economics, one-half unit in U.S. government, and one additional unit of a social studies course. South Carolina also requires students to take the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards in Social Studies.

## **Washington**

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

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

## **New Mexico Context**

The mission of the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) is to ensure that “all students are healthy, secure in their identity, and holistically prepared for college, career, and life.” New Mexico’s K–12 education system serves more than 330,000 students across 89 public school districts and 95 public charter schools. The education system consists of a network of 96 state-supported libraries, 77 of which are public libraries and 19 are tribal public libraries.

Public schools and school districts in New Mexico must maintain minimum academic and performance standards requirements for accreditation. The K–12 content and performance standards are adopted by the New Mexico Public Education Department, including social studies in Grades 1–3 and subjects, such as social studies, New Mexico history, U.S. history, and



geography, in Grades 4–8. Relatedly, a media literacy course is offered as an elective in Grades 6–8. Additionally, high school graduates in New Mexico (as of students graduating in 2024) must complete 3.5 credits, including U.S. history and geography, world history and geography, government and economics, and New Mexico history.

As of 2015, there are no statewide assessments required to test student achievement in social studies. Although there are no required statewide assessments for social studies, students can demonstrate competency through social studies end-of-course exams, alternative assessments, and competency-based alternatives (e.g., standards-based portfolios). Portfolios contain three student artifacts and written reflections aligned to New Mexico U.S. government and/or economics benchmark standards.

## **Instructional Materials Adoption Cycle**

Under the Instructional Materials Law, the NMPED must adopt a multiple list of approved instructional materials accessible to students, including 10% of language arts and social studies instructional material relating to cultures, languages, history, and multi-ethnic students' experiences. Instructional materials include textbooks and other educational media, such as electronic media, learning kits, and supplementary materials. Publishers can submit materials, including supplementary materials and/or titles on the supplementary list, for adoption by NMPED.

School districts, state institutions, and private schools have the agency to select instructional materials for use based on those approved in the multiple list. Parent and community member involvement in the adoption process occurs at the state and district levels. At the district level, local school boards inform parents and community members through written communication and general newspaper publication. The adoption process includes 1) a summer review institute where content and performance experts facilitate a review of materials for adoption in a content area, 2) level 2 and 3 teachers as main reviewers paired with recruited level 1 educators, college students, community members and parents, 3) scoring and ranking of reviewed materials as they align with state academic and performance standards (i.e., standards, content, benchmarks, performance, subject-specific Standards for Excellence, and other standards), and 4) adoption of non-reviewed supplementary materials. Reviewed materials will be recommended for adoption based on their alignment to state standards. Materials that align 90% or more to the standards will be recommended for inclusion on the multiple list. Materials with an alignment below 90% or non-reviewed materials (i.e., supplementary), will be recommended as supplementary materials. For adopted materials, NMPED maintains a six-year contract with the publishers. Outside of adopted materials on the multiple list, districts and schools can purchase materials not included on the multiple list so long as the materials do not exceed 50% of district and school allocations for instruction



materials. 25% of the 50% allocation for non-adopted materials can go toward other classroom materials not including textbooks that directly support instruction for students.

The social studies materials were last reviewed in the summer of 2016, with the next review to take place in the summer of 2022.

### **New Mexico Instructional Scope**

The New Mexico Instructional Scope is an educator influenced tool designed to provide additional support to districts in ensuring that all students have access to necessary content and impactful instructional strategies for their grade level. The instructional scope was developed to meet districts where they are with tools to support curricular alignment, horizontally and vertically, district wide. This tool also provides guidance on the sequencing of standards at the local level. The instructional scope tool was designed with the goal of assisting students to reach on-grade-level standards and focuses on helping educators create specific lesson plans that help students accelerate based on their specific needs, rather than focusing on remediation. The Public Education Department is committed to working with districts to ensure that all educators are given necessary supports and opportunities for professional development to create student outcome-oriented lesson plans and formative assessments to help guide all students (i.e., inclusive of all cultural and linguistic background, learning ability, socioeconomic backgrounds, and indigenous learners) toward proficiency or above on-grade-level standards. Currently, the instructional scope has been developed for mathematics, language arts, and science content areas but is planned to expand to include social studies content in the future.

### **Overview of Current Social Studies Standards in New Mexico**

The New Mexico social studies standards have not been updated or revised in nearly 12 years. In a recent study conducted by the Thomas B. Fordham Institute, all 50 states' K–12 civics and U.S. history standards were evaluated based on content, rigor, clarity, and organization. New Mexico's standards fared a C in civics and C- in U.S. history, rating the standards as mediocre in civics and inadequate in U.S. history. Strengths of the civics standards include a consistent emphasis on civic participation and references to core content from middle to high school. Similarly, U.S. history incorporates important historical content, and individual standards are relatively clear and concise. Weaknesses of both subjects center on organization and level of detail, including a lack of some content coverage, such as federalism and the electoral process in civics and spaced content coverage in U.S. history, with the Colonial period in fifth grade and twentieth century in high school. Overall, the current iteration of the social studies standards denotes a "scattershot and shallow content in both subjects" that is "compounded by needlessly confusing organization," meaning "significant revisions are strongly recommended" for these standards (Stern et al., 2021, p. 232).

Currently, New Mexico content standards and the associated benchmarks and performance standards are required for students in grades K–12. The four strand content areas include history, geography, civics and government, and economics. The current standards are organized by grade band: Grades K–4, 5–8, and 9–12 by each of the four strand content areas. Within each strand there are a series of benchmarks and the associated performance standards, which are organized by grade level. For grades 9–12 there are expanded grade band expectations that are grouped by the following difficulty levels: engagement, pre-symbolic, symbolic, and extended symbolic.

During grades 6–12, the New Mexico social studies content standards are further supplemented by the Common Core standards for literacy in science, social studies, and the technical subjects. These standards are organized by the following grade bands: 6–8, 9–10, and 11–12.

## Summary

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



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