

Georgia

(Source: *Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum: Social Studies, 1999*, revised, Georgia Department of Education)

The five criteria: An overview

Are the essentials of a civic core specified clearly?	Are the topics teachable within the allotted timeframe?	Do the documents provide a scope and sequence?	Is the essential content required of all students?	Are the important facts and ideas presented coherently across subjects?
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Standards that largely meet the criteria are designated with a full star [★]; standards that partially meet the criteria are designated with a half star [☆]; and standards that that have not been developed or do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

Summary:

These standards partly satisfy Criterion #1, more so in civics and U.S. history than in world history, which has topics that could have been drawn from a general textbook. In middle and high school courses, topics are either too many or too broad to be effectively taught in schools' limited time; thus, Criterion #2 is not met. Criterion #3 is met mostly through a kindergarten to eighth-grade order of courses; but high school courses are not specified. On Criterion #4, Georgia social studies tests in grades three to eight and eleven are said to be partly based on these standards, implying that their content must be offered to all students, although high school world history remains optional. On Criterion #5, there is a fair amount of integration among civics, economics, geography, and history.

Particulars:

Standards are in five strands: civics, economics, geography, history, and core social studies skills. Grades four and five include a two-year study of U.S. history, pre-Columbian to the present, divided at Reconstruction. But a relatively good selection of topics still makes for a heavy load for those ages, with 28 standards embodying some 95 separate items in fourth grade, and 25 standards with 115 items in fifth grade. In addition are 34 skills "standards" in grade four and 46 in grade five, with thirteen on "information processing" alone (e.g., "Analyzes...from multiple types of sources") and nine on civic participation (e.g., "Organizes and participates in...community action"). Skill exercises alone could take a year if applied to content, as they should be.

U.S. history returns in grade eight's Georgia history and politics course, from pre-Columbian peoples to the present in the context of national life. Topic selection is full, with 51 general civics, geography, economics, and history standards covering 110 items, plus 33 skills standards. High school U.S. history is also a survey with 52 standards and 205 listed topics, plus essays and a "comprehensive paper." Again, too many unprioritized specifics in a survey course preclude thoughtful, memorable study, yet some vital standards are left to a single sentence (e.g., "Analyzes the social, political, and economic results of Reconstruction" and "Analyzes the causes and effects of the Great Depression"). Grades nine-twelve civics standards are more selective, highlighting the Old World ideas behind American political principles.

World history is, as usual, markedly weaker than American history. In a backward step, grades six and seven have been turned from integrated world history/geography courses to two years of “Geography and World Cultures.” Grade six has only one history standard out of 53: “Outlines the important historical developments of the Americas, Europe and Oceania, and demonstrates how geographic factors influenced events and conditions.” Grade seven asks the same for the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. The text is misleading in saying that these courses encourage “in-depth study.” High school world history suffers, in turn, from lack of middle school content. Covering material from the “Old Stone Age” to the present, it is hopelessly overloaded with vast standards (e.g., “identifies the characteristics” of classical China, India, Greece, and Rome). Veteran subject-matter teachers and scholars (in a revision process now going on) should strengthen world history and Western civilization offerings and change the U.S. history sequence to avoid the one-year high school survey.