

Hawaii

(Source: *Social Studies Content Standards*, Hawaii Department of Education, 1999)

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 do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

Summary:

This 23-page document does not fully meet any of the criteria for the political education of young people. Under Criterion #1, it prescribes no specific content at any level. Its standards and benchmarks are wholly general, so Criterion #2 on teachability cannot be applied.

Criterion #3, is partially met through benchmarks set out by grade clusters of kindergarten to three, four to five, six to eight, and nine to twelve. Unfortunately, it does not say what courses, at what grades, are to deliver the knowledge implied in the general benchmarks. On Criterion #4, it is not clear that content or courses are offered to all students. On Criterion #5, there is no integration among the five strands of history, political science/civics, cultural anthropology, geography, and economics.

Particulars:

Some limited content appears on two pages headed “Suggested Historical Framework for Implementing the Standards,” with a warning that “This framework is not [bold and underlined in the original] a checklist of subjects that must be taught” but only “possible topics.” The lists read like tables of content for U.S. and world history textbooks. They imply, without course titles or grades, that U.S. history through Reconstruction may be taught in the sixth- to eighth-grade span and history from Reconstruction to the present in the ninth to twelfth grades. All of world history, hunter-gatherer bands through “Contemporary issues,” is listed for high school.

History’s first standard is “Change, Continuity, and Causality” with a grade four to five benchmark: “Identify change and continuity in historical eras.” A grade six to eight benchmark is “Identify possible causal relationships in historical chronology” and in grades nine to twelve, “Identify cause-and-effect relationships and multiple causation of change.” History’s next standard is “Historical Empathy” with a grades nine-twelve benchmark “Apply knowledge of historical periods to assess present-day issues and decision making.” Third is “Historical Inquiry,” with “Use appropriate evidence gathered from historical research in written, oral, visual, or dramatic presentations.” Last is “Historical Perspectives” with “Analyze and accept multiple perspectives and interpretations to avoid historical linearity and inevitability.”

The political science/civics standards are equally amorphous. Their benchmarks, often more specific even in weak standards documents, are meager. In parentheses for grades four

and five are suggested “key documents (Declaration of Independence, Constitution, Bill of Rights)” —a total of three specifics for all the strands. The “Cultural Anthropology” strand amounts to an outline for a college-level introductory course, and would make no sense without prior study of cultural history, in tandem with geography and economic, social, political, and intellectual history, not to mention the arts and literature.

The introduction for teachers says these standards “integrate and encompass character education, democratic values, and civil attitudes and require active participation.” Unfortunately for Hawaii’s young citizens and the teachers who must educate them, these standards do not fulfill this promise.