

Idaho

(Source: *Idaho Social Studies Achievement Standards, 2000*, Idaho 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 do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

Summary:

This document fails to meet Criteria #1 and #2. There are few specifics for U.S. history, but many broad standards which would require great numbers of topics and details to meet. “Interdisciplinary World History” [humanities] carries 111 broadly stated items under “Objectives” and “Content Knowledge and Skills,” of which few even touch on an aspect of democracy/civics/politics, with no specifics. On Criterion #3, Idaho does suggest a specific sequence of courses: Idaho studies in grade four; U.S. history, grade five; “Western and Eastern Hemisphere Geography and Cultures,” grades six and seven; “Social Sciences Exploratory,” grade eight; world history [humanities], grade nine; U.S. history, grades ten and eleven; economics and government, grade twelve. On Criterion #4, requirements are apparently on the way, excepting world history. The grades ten to twelve U.S. courses are needed for graduation and will have end-of-course tests. On Criterion #5, very little subject integration is explicit; it is left to teachers to achieve.

Particulars:

The content of most Idaho social studies courses is presented in two columns, “Standard” and “Content Knowledge and Skills.” Most grades scatter subject matter into fourteen “themes” such as “Evolution of Democracy”; “Exploration and Expansion”; “Migration and Immigration”; “Response to Industrialization and Technological Innovation”; “International Relations and Conflicts”; “Cultural and Social Development”; “Organization and Formation of the American System of Government”; “Economic Fundamentals”; “Economic Influence”; “Geography”; and “History of Human Civilizations”. Column three lists suggested “Samples of Applications,” which “represent possible areas of applications.”

The artificial themes cut apart topics belonging together and create a jumble of mixed chronology and extraneous items in middle and high school courses that are only nominally about history. In grade five U.S. history, the only specifics in the standards and knowledge/skills columns are Manifest Destiny, the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the U.S. Constitution. No narratives or leaders appear. Typical under “knowledge” are “Explore major effects of the Industrial Revolution” and “Describe some changes that have occurred due to wars and conflicts.” The grades ten and eleven courses move only a bit closer to specifics (e.g., “Identify the causes and consequences of the Civil

War and Reconstruction” and “Analyze the rise of the American labor movement”).

The grades six and seven geography and culture courses are wholly empty of specifics. Of 26 standards and 94 topics (geography has 54), none mentions any specific events, ideas, even countries or regions. All are abstract (e.g., “Identify the criteria used to define types of regions” and “Recognize that as a society becomes more complex, so does its government” and “Explain how culture influences people’s perceptions of places and regions”). Given the amorphous grade nine humanities course, Idaho standards leave out what Americans need to know of world history and Western civilization, past and present. A new writing team of expert teachers and scholars is required to fill in the empty spaces.