

Kentucky

(Source: *Core Content for Social Studies Assessment, Version 3.0, September 1999*, Kentucky 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:

On Criterion #1, the document has no common core of specific learning, only textbook-like headings with a few scattered specifics in government, civics, and history. Content eligible for statewide assessment is in three columns under elementary, middle, and high school, with testing at grades five, eight, and eleven. Content splits among five separate strands: government and civics; culture and society; economics; geography; and historical perspective. The sweeping topics of the five strands could not be taught in the school time available, so Criterion #2 is not satisfied. Nor is it clear how state tests could be written from so general a base. Criteria #3 is partly met through curriculum organized over grade spans. Criterion #4 is also partly met, as this content is presumably required of all students in preparation for state assessment. On Criterion #5, the content is not integrated, but cut into the five strands.

Particulars:

The least helpful strand, as in other states using it, is culture and society. Unlinked to civics, economics, geography, or history, its topics are abstract, teachable only if reintegrated by well-prepared teachers. As examples, two topics are repeated at every level: “All cultures develop institutions, customs, beliefs, and holidays reflecting their unique histories, situations, and perspectives” and “As cultures emerge and develop, conflict and competition may occur.” Here, as in most current standards, national or state, “culture” means everything and therefore nothing.

The only specifics cited in the civics strand (and then not in historical context) are the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the Bill of Rights, the UN Charter, and the UN Declaration of Human Rights—no ideas, leaders, or events. In economics and geography, no topics link to the history taught in the same grade spans. Geography brushes history in two high school topics: “Places and regions serve as meaningful symbols for individuals and societies (e.g., Jerusalem, Vietnam Memorial, Ellis Island, Appalachian region)” and “People from different cultures or with different perspectives view regions (e.g., Middle East, Balkans) in different ways, sometimes resulting in conflict.”

U.S. history to Reconstruction and world history to 1500 are in the fifth- to eighth-grade

span, and history since then in grades nine to eleven. The only names cited are Columbus and McCarthy. A typical high school topic is “In the 20th century, the United States has assumed a role in the global community to maintain and restore world peace (e.g., League of Nations, United Nations, Cold War politics, Persian Gulf War)”. In world history, “An Age of Revolution [no date] brought about changes in science, thought, government, and industry that shaped the modern world.” The specific content that is only implied here, but needed for honest teaching of such sweeping topics, could not be covered, much less thought about, in the time teachers have. In short, Kentucky has yet to produce a set of carefully selected, teachable, and testable standards for educating citizens.