

Louisiana

(Source: *Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards: State Standards for Curriculum Development*, May 22, 1997, Louisiana 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?
☆	☆	★	★	☆

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:

The single-sentence content standards and their accompanying benchmarks (main topics) are listed in four separate strands (geography, civics, economics, and history) under three grade spans (kindergarten to grade four, five to eight, and nine to twelve). Criteria #1 and #2 are not met. No common core of learning can be derived from the vastly general topics in the history strand. There are no specifics, and the content needed to explain the general headings would be mountainous. Criterion #3 is partly met; although no grade-by-grade scope and sequence of courses is suggested, it is clear from the topics that U.S. and world history are to be divided by eras between grade levels five to eight and nine to twelve. Criterion #4 is also partly met; statewide testing of social studies at least implies that some content is to be required of all students. The isolation of the four strands is complete, contrary to Criterion #5 on the integration of disciplines.

Particulars:

As often in strand-divided documents, no geography and economics topics relate to the history being studied in the given grade spans. But in this case, it is true even of the civics topics, where the only two specifics are the U.S. and Louisiana Constitutions. A few light brushes with history appear: “identifying and describing the historical experiences and the geographic, social, and economic factors that have helped to shape American political culture” (in grade span five-eight), “analyzing the central ideas and historical origins of American constitutional government and evaluating how this form of government has helped to shape American society,” and “analyzing the major foreign policy positions of the United States and evaluating their consequences” (in grade span nine-twelve). But one looks in vain for specifics in the history strand that would enable students to fill out these topics.

The kindergarten to grade four history benchmarks have no specifics, and some are highly problematic (e.g., “identifying the characteristics and historical development of selected societies throughout the world”). Benchmarks for grades five to eight feature general text-like survey questions (e.g., “analyzing the impact of European cultural, political, and economic ideas and institutions on life in the Americas” and, for world history, “tracing expansion of major religions and cultural traditions and examining the impact on civilizations in Europe,

Asia, and Africa)". The grades nine-twelve benchmarks are slightly more specific for U.S. history (e.g., "evaluating the significance of the Progressive movement" and "analyzing the origins, course, and results of World War II"). In world history, vast generalities emerge (e.g., "evaluating the economic, political, and social consequences of the agricultural and industrial revolutions on world societies" and "analyzing the causes and international consequences of World War I, the rise and actions of totalitarian systems, World War II, and other early 20th century conflicts"). One finds no individuals or events, no religious, economic or political ideas. Specifics are left to a massive 247-page *Teachers' Guide to Statewide Assessment*, which fails to identify priorities and offers teachers only a flood of detail.

In short, Louisiana has yet to write teachable, testable civics/history standards.