

Maine

(Sources: *Maine's Common Core of Learning, August 1990*, and *Learning Results: Social Studies, July 1997*, Maine 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:

Like other states' early common cores, Maine's first effort was a brief gloss envisioning an integrated 21st century education detached from academic subjects into four areas: "Personal and Global Stewardship"; "Communication"; "Reasoning and Problem Solving"; and "The Human Record". An appendix, "The Common Core of Learning Organized by Subject Area," had one page on social studies, listing general knowledge, thinking skills, values, and attitudes. *Learning Results* is a bit more useful, with seventeen pages of four separate strands: civics/government history, geography, and economics. It has clear language and a number of specifics, meeting Criterion #1 in small part. But the specifics are mostly examples and too few for a common core of learning. Criterion #2, is not met; although what is here could perhaps be taught in the school time available, it would not make for well-rounded citizenship education. Criteria #3 is partly met through a sequence of learning in grade spans pre-kindergarten to grade two, three to four, five to eight, and nine to twelve. Criterion #4 is not met since it is unclear that topics are to be offered to all students. Contrary to the promises of its introduction and the idea of a common core, the document also fails to meet Criterion #5. It does not integrate the separate subjects to convey or dramatize the complexity of human experience.

Particulars:

Learning Results presents fairly comprehensive topics lists that read like textbook chapter and section headings. Under a very few are well-chosen examples. In grades nine-twelve civics, "Explain the historical foundations of constitutional government in the United States (e.g., Magna Carta, Roman Republic, colonial experience, Declaration of Independence, Articles of Confederation, Constitution of the United States)" and "Explain the reasons for alliances with some nations against others (e.g., with France during the American Revolution, with the Allied Powers in World War II, NATO)." But most general headings lack even examples to give teachers starting points. In grades nine-twelve history, "Identify and analyze major events and people that characterize each of the significant eras in United States and world history" is followed by a skeletal list of thirteen U.S. history periods and six in world history. In grades five-eight, students are asked for causes and effects of main events in U.S. history "including,

but not limited to, Declaration of Independence, Westward Expansion, Civil War, the Constitution, Industrialization.” In grades nine-twelve, students are asked to “Demonstrate an understanding of selected major events in ancient and modern world history and their connection to United States history.” Most are even more general (e.g., “Explain how different ways of knowing and believing have influenced human history and culture.”

No individuals, turning-points, or ideas are selected and named as more important than any others. The vague and comprehensive sweep of Maine’s topics offers no guide to the use of limited school time. Yet Maine, like other states with no priorities, issues a thick *Guide to the Maine Educational Assessment*, accompanied by sample items and questions, many of which are highly specific, while others can be answered without particular knowledge by students who are good readers. The work of selecting the most essential content, and writing fair and well-aligned tests, has yet to be done.