

# North Dakota

(Sources: *Social Studies Standards, 2000*, and *Performance Levels for Social Studies Standards and Benchmarks, 2001*, North Dakota Department of Public Instruction)

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## The five criteria: An overview

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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:

These documents meet none of the five criteria for judging their use in citizenship education. No standards, benchmarks, or “performance levels” carry specific events, individuals, ideas, or institutions. Specifics appear only as non-required examples and “activities.” Seven strands are called “standards:” nature of history, political institutions, economic systems, social studies resources, role of the citizen, geography, culture, sociology and psychology, and sovereignty. Their listed benchmarks are general and overarching; the substance needed to satisfy them would far overflow instructional time. There is no kindergarten to twelve grade-by-grade scope and sequence of courses. What, if anything, is to be offered to all students is not clear, yet the state administers commercial tests at grades four, six, eight, and ten. On Criterion #5, there is no integration of content from the seven strands.

### Particulars:

The second document merely repeats standards and benchmarks, with four levels of performance in the same words. Under a benchmark “Understand how key events, people, and ideas affected U.S. history,” the top level is “Student evaluates how key events, people, and ideas affected U.S. history;” the second level is “Student describes;” the third is “Student partially describes;” etc.

Some suggested examples and activities in the 2000 standards hint at coverage in grade levels. U.S. history examples in grades five to eight stress the pre-Reconstruction era, though some activities reach to the present. High school U.S. history examples imply a survey from exploration to now. The one benchmark on U.S. history is that cited above, “key events, people, and ideas.” Grade eleven examples read like textbook chapter headings (revolutionary era, development of Constitution, Progressivism, America’s wars, without specifics). And there are specifics under only one of the activities: “Students participate in a simulation to demonstrate understanding of cause and effect relationships, for example [of] World War I or World War II.”

World history examples for grades five to eight call for coverage from ancient civilizations to the present, again in general terms (e.g., feudalism, Renaissance, Reformation, world conflicts, globalism). The grades nine to twelve examples also indicate a survey from “Earliest

Human” to today, under two benchmarks: “Understand the development and influence of world civilizations” and “Understand how key events, people, and ideas affected world history.” Were history and civics the only strands, such generalities might be taught. But sweeping benchmarks for the seven other strands would require an unteachable mass of information. As in other states, it is only under the strand “Political Institutions” that examples offer a few specifics for civic education: natural rights, the rights of Englishmen, the Declaration of Independence, the Northwest Ordinance, the Constitutional Convention, the Bill of Rights.

North Dakota’s standards will hopefully be redesigned with added input from experienced teachers and scholars of the core subjects.