

Nevada

(Sources: *Nevada Social Studies Standards, Economics Standards, Civics Standards, Geography Standards, and History Standards*, Nevada Department of Education, March, 2000)

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:

The state's standards documents total 288 pages. Each has two sections, "Content Standards" and "Performance Level Descriptors," the latter in four levels (exceeds standards, meets standards, approaches standards, and below standards). Descriptors for the first two performance levels mostly repeat the details of the standards, which are ranged in five columns for grades two, three, five, eight, and twelve. Columns are headed by "Students know and are able to do everything required in earlier grades." These numerous pages do not fully meet any of the criteria for strong standards in citizenship education. They are vastly overloaded and uneven, with far too much detail in many instances, but no mention of vital content in others. The content listed in the grade twelve columns and descriptors is breathtakingly sweeping, more than could reasonably be expected of college majors in economics, geography, or history. Civics, while weak on historical context and ideas, is less unrealistic.

Criterion #1 might possibly be met by expert teachers, pulling out a partial core of essential learning, but only if they use other sources. Meeting Criterion #2, that content be teachable in the time teachers have, is out of the question. So is Criterion #3; the grades eight and twelve columns demand that U.S. and world history be wholly surveyed at both levels. Meeting Criterion #4, that content be required of all students, is also not feasible. This content is too much for any student. Yet, although Nevada leaves actual curriculum selection to localities, there are plans for later statewide testing. Criterion #5, on integration, is also not met.

Particulars:

World history topics are far too many, yet leave huge gaps in the education of American citizens. Topics for grades eight and twelve assume a full world history survey in both middle and high school. The eighth-grade column has 90 topics, yet lacks the ideas and teachings of Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Buddhism, Islam, and Confucianism; the Athenian democracy, its ideas and its collapse; the Roman Republic, its institutions and its overthrow; the decline and fall of the Roman Empire; feudalism and the concept of limited government, as illustrated by the Magna Carta; Renaissance political forces and ideas; the Reformation; the English and Scientific Revolutions; the ideas of the Enlightenment; the French Revolution; nineteenth century ideologies and political and economic reforms; nationalism and imperial-

ism; the Russian and Nazi revolutions; and the Great Depression. Grade twelve has 160 world history topics, but also leaves out all of the above, except for the Reformation, nationalism, imperialism, and the Russian Revolution.

Topics for U.S. history also assume survey courses from origins to the present in both middle and high school. These standards have even more topics than world history and fewer omissions. But unless Nevada schools give two full era-divided years to both world and American history, these documents are of little help to teachers. If revisions are planned, those responsible should seek to choose priorities, pare down topics, and optimize instructional time, using the practical advice of seasoned teachers and scholars with some knowledge of how schools work.