

Oklahoma

(Source: *A Core Curriculum for Our Children's Future: Priority Academic Skills [PASS] Social Studies*, May 2000, Oklahoma State 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:

With the exception of middle school world history, the Oklahoma document largely meets Criterion #1 with specific, important content from which a common core of learning could be selected. But for most grades, Criterion #2 is not met; the numbers and demands of listed topics are beyond available instructional hours. Criterion #3, on an ordered sequence of civics/history courses is partly met. Grade five centers on U.S. history to 1850. The grade span from six to eight carries courses in world geography; world “cultural history,” ancient to contemporary; U.S. history, 1607 to 1877; and civics. High school courses include Oklahoma history; world geography; world history from hunter-gatherers to the present; U.S. history, 1850 to the present; government; and economics. On Criterion #4, it is not clear which courses are required of all students. State tests cover geography and U.S. history at grades five and eight, and there is an end-of-course test in high school U.S. history. World history and civics/government are not mentioned. On Criterion #5, unlike civics, the economics and geography topics are general, academic, and without historical context.

Particulars:

As usual in documents with specific topics, U.S. history includes most of the events, personalities, ideas, and turning-points central to students' understanding of political democracy. The middle school course to 1877 omits the Old World backgrounds of American political thought, only some of which appear in high school world history and government. High school U.S. history since 1850 is overloaded with some 145 substantial topics, missing only the forces behind Reconstruction's failure, the uniquely American context of post-Civil War industrialization, Populism, and the fateful consequences of World War I for American life in the twentieth century.

Middle school world “cultural history” is an incoherent scattering of vast topics. Under “Analyze selected cultures which have affected world history” is “Describe the major social, economic, and political contributions of major historical civilizations (e.g., Egypt, ancient Greece and Rome, China, and Japan).” Under “Identify cultural factors which influence the lives of people today within world regions” is “Describe the development of religion, the arts, science, and literature of major geographic and cultural regions.” Even with examples, the

only specifics are colonialism before, between, and after the World Wars, the Arab-Israeli conflict, the UN, Interpol, and the space race. High school world history, a textbook-like compilation of no fewer than 175 topics, is still short on important specifics, such as the forces for the fall of Athens and Rome; the feudal origins of limited government; stages, global effects, and comparisons of the American and French revolutions. As in other states, the failure to segment world history by era into two school years can be fatal to real learning, whether in depth or breadth.

In sum, the Oklahoma document has some strengths and improves upon earlier versions. But to offer effective citizen education it still needs to be thinned out at some points, filled in at others, and clarified through the careful selection of explicit priorities.