

Oregon

(Source: *Oregon Social Sciences Standards, 2001*, Oregon 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 document does not meet Criterion #1. Its headings and “eligible content” are stated in general terms. The endless broad matters students are to “understand” have no specifics from which teachers could begin instruction or test writers could craft any but general questions. On Criterion #2, the volume of content needed to understand the vague topics “eligible” for testing would overflow available school time. On Criterion #3, there is no set state sequence of courses, but the content marked “eligible” indicates that U.S. history divides between middle and high school at Reconstruction, and world history at the Renaissance. On Criterion #4, required studies, the standards “define the knowledge and skills that all students in the state must demonstrate” in statewide tests that are, or will be, given at the end of grades five and eight, and in high school for the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM). The five “strands” are history, geography, civics, economics and social science analysis. On Criterion #5, none of the last four refers to historical context. All are weakened by their isolation.

Particulars:

Civics benchmarks and topics deal with the content of the U.S. Constitution and the formal structure and functions of federal, state, and local governments, and with the United Nations and its agencies. In U.S. history, grade five goes only through the American Revolution. At middle school, the only item on the Constitution is “Identify and understand the issues and events that were addressed at the Constitutional Convention.” There is nothing on the trials and initiatives of a new nation, the presidency, the courts, or political parties. The next items jump to Lewis and Clark, westward migration, and Jacksonian democracy. The items end with westward expansion after Reconstruction. Having skipped the post-Civil War plight of African-Americans, industrial expansion, the Gilded Age, Populism, and imperialism, high school U.S. history starts with Progressivism, without an event, idea, or personality. It then omits World War I entirely, mentions the Great Depression and New Deal, then omits World War II and everything after 1950.

World history fares worse. At the grade eight level, no ideas of world religions and ethical systems appear; only Islam is cited, but without its ideas. There is nothing on Athenian democracy, its ideas or fate; nothing on the decline of Rome; and nothing on the feudal bases for limited government. The items end with “Understand the characteristics and impact of

Renaissance thinking, art, and learning.” High school items begin with the Industrial Revolution. There is no Reformation, Absolutism, English Revolution, Scientific Revolution; no Enlightenment; and no American, French, or Latin American revolutions. No social effects of the Industrial Revolution are cited; no liberal, conservative, social democratic, or Marxist ideas; and no nineteenth-century political, economic, or social reforms. After World War II, there is no mention of the United Nations, new nations, the Chinese Revolution, the struggles for democracy over half the world, or technological change and globalization. World history ends with the “impact of the Korean and Vietnam Wars.”

Serious revision, with the active participation of experienced teachers and knowledgeable subject-area scholars, could do much to improve this flawed document.