

# Pennsylvania

(Source: *Academic Standards for Civics and Government, Standards for Economics, Standards for Geography, and Standards for History*, 2001, Pennsylvania Department of Education)

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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:

Pennsylvania's standards documents do not meet Criteria #1 and #2. Specific history topics are scattered and the implied content of general headings would overflow teaching time. On Criterion #3, Pennsylvania has no grade-by-grade course sequence, but U.S. history to 1824 is in grade span four-six, from 1787 to 1914 in grades seven to nine, and 1890 to now in grades ten to twelve. World history is skimmed in the grade span from four to six, from origins to 1500 in grades seven to nine, and 1450 to now in grades ten to twelve. On Criterion #4, Pennsylvania does not test in science or social studies, and the content here is too general to turn into a common core of learning required of all. Except for the usual links teachers can make between civics and U.S. history, the four strands are not integrated.

### Particulars:

The history document suffers from an overly complex approach to content. In the columns under grade spans kindergarten to three, four to six, seven to nine, and ten to twelve, content is unordered (and appears only as examples) under 20 categories: inhabitants; political leaders; military leaders; cultural and commercial leaders; innovators, reformers; documents, writings, oral traditions; artifacts, architecture, historic places; belief systems and religions; commerce and industry; innovations; politics; transportation, settlement patterns and expansion; social organization; women's movement; domestic instability; ethnic and race relations; immigration and migration; labor relations; and military conflicts.

Under each are three or four disparate examples, many either not fitting the category or narrowed by it (e.g., Washington is a military leader, not a political one; Jane Addams is a cultural/commercial leader, not a reformer, etc.). No example is mentioned twice, so the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights are in grade span kindergarten to three and nowhere thereafter, except in the Civics pages, which do include basic documents back to the Magna Carta as required topics, not examples. This odd approach eliminates narrative, multiple causes, and the dramatic interplay of forces, ideas, and people. Moreover, many history examples are chosen less for importance than to demonstrate inclusiveness.

World history examples are even scarcer than those for U.S. history. At all levels, the belief

systems and religions category disappears into a single topic: “Analyze [or Identify or Evaluate] how continuity and change throughout history has impacted belief systems and religion, commerce, industry, innovations, settlement patterns, social organizations, transportation and roles of women before 1500 C.E. [or since 1450]” in Africa, Asia, the Americas, and Europe. No examples cite Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the English and Scientific Revolutions, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, nineteenth-century ideologies, nationalism, imperialism, fascism, Nazism, or the cold war.

To fulfill the introduction’s promise to “give students throughout Pennsylvania a common cultural literacy,” not to speak of civic/political literacy, the history standards would have to be completely revised in both form and content and the four strands linked whenever appropriate.