

Superintendent Richard Woods
Members of the State Board of Education
Georgia Department of Education
205 Jesse Hill, Jr. Drive, SE
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Superintendent Woods and Members of the State Board of Education:

I would like to take an opportunity to briefly comment on the standards revision process for Social Studies. Though the demands of the legislative session prevent me from being able to fully comment on all aspects of the standards, I do want to point out improvements that have been made as well as some omissions that still need to be addressed.

Within the K-12 standards, the reorganization of the sequencing is now in better chronological order in Grades 3-5 than the previous standards. However, the historical roots of Western Civilization are nowhere to be seen. The previous standards gave some, although not enough, attention to this topic and even did so in the lower grades.

In addition, the shift away from these historical roots in Western Civilization is replaced with a focus on early American Indian cultures. Though important, we should recognize that the dominate features of our culture are no longer anchored in native American cultures, but in the Anglo-American traditions of Western Civilization, and therefore, the historical focus should major on the majors, not major in the minor themes of displaced cultures. This shift in focus reminds me far too much of the recent problems we addressed in the AP U.S. History Framework. We should not repeat the mistakes of the College Board in our own Social Studies standards.

Furthermore, there is a shift in language choices in how our nation is described. The previous standards clearly recognized that students needed to study our "foundations of a republican form of government." The new description is that our nation is a "representative democracy." This language shift starts in Grade 3. Though still a correct term, it does not reflect how our Founders most referred to this nation, which was as a "confederate Republic." In fact, I never see the term "confederate Republic" anywhere, and only once do I see the term "Republic" mentioned in the high school standards.

Starting with Grade 1, I find no logical reason why President George Washington continues to be omitted from the standards. This should be corrected. He is not mentioned until Grade 4, and this is far too late to introduce our most preeminent Founding Father. Grade 1 also needs to build on the American symbols learned in Kindergarten. For example, why not add the Liberty Bell and what it represents? Why not have the teaching of the Pledge of Allegiance or the introduction of the poem, *The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*? Why not introduce the first 13 colonies and have the students identify the original 13 colonies on a map?

In Grade 2, why are only two rivers mentioned in the standards and not even the largest river, which is the Altamaha? If the standards cannot mention all the major rivers, the standards should at least mention all the major watersheds in our state. The standards should also include our aquifers. Students

need to understand the importance of our aquifers for our drinking water, farming needs, and industrial needs. Also, in Grade 2, students should be introduced to another Economic Standard, SS2E5 - "Explain why private property rights are necessary for a free society."

In Grade 3, as already pointed out above, the emphasis has been poorly chosen. The emphasis should not be on Native American cultures but on the colonies and the forms of government the colonists established - beginning with the Mayflower Compact. The standards need more emphasis on specific people, places, and events that shaped our history during the Colonial Era.

In Grade 4, Alexander Hamilton should be included in SS4H1(b), and the major Southern battle of Cowpens should be included in SS4H1(c) and SS4G2. In SS4H3, are we willing to simply leave our 4th Grade students with the impression that there were no positive benefits to westward expansion? Does the focus totally need to be on the forced relocation of American Indians to reservations? Is there no balance showing some of the benefits of westward expansion? Again, this seems to mirror the mistakes made by the College Board in its AP U.S. History Framework. SS4CG1 should not use the term, "representative democracy," but instead should use the term, "confederate republic." SS4CG3(a) should include a few more principles of our republican form of government, such as the foundational principles of "the consent of the governed" and "the rule of law."

In Grade 5, unfortunately, the standards embrace politically-correct language. Previously, the standards referred to the "War on Terrorism" in response to 9/11. The current standard, SS5H7(b) fails to even use the word, "terrorism." Regarding geography, SS5G1 is woefully inadequate. By now, students should have learned every state that has been added to the union up to this point in the standards, along with all their current capitol cities, however, I see no focus on this in the standards. In addition, students should also know, up to this point in the chronology, all the presidents. Again, I do not see that this has been addressed in the standards anywhere.

In Grade 6, the previous standards were far better with regard to Latin America because they provided a broader foundation and provided more context, especially when comparing the sections on Historical Understandings side-by-side.

In Grade 7, SS7H2(b) needs a comma after the word, "land." Either in Geographic Understandings or Economic Understanding, students need to understand that the allocation of resources, such as oil, has much to do with modern economies and conflicts. With regard to Government/Civic Understandings, SS7CG3, students need to understand the different forms of autocracy - whether those take the shape of a dictatorship or a monarchy or a theocratic form that imposes Sharia law.

In Grade 8, under SS8H1, the early settlements of the French have been ignored. Under SS8H2(c), the Moravians and the Salzburgers should be included. Somewhere within SS8H2, the final defeat of the Spanish at Bloody Marsh should be included. In addition, the unique provision that Gen. Oglethorpe obtained from the King of England should be included. Georgia was the only colony which was granted permission to forbid slavery, which it did for many years. Also within SS8H2, the effects of the First Great Awakening in Georgia should be mentioned with particular attention to those who preached here such as the evangelist, Rev. George Whitefield. Rev. John Wesley and Rev. Charles Wesley also need to be

included. In SS8H3, key people have been omitted and need to be added back into the standards, such as Nancy Hart, Austin Dabney, and Elijah Clarke. The first and second Georgia State Constitutions and some of the key features of those original documents need to be included in SS8CG1 (a). Georgia's role in the Constitutional Convention and its role in ratification should also be covered in the standards. Standard SS8CG3(b) needs the insertion of the word "all," before the words "elected members," so that students know all the statewide elected positions. With regard to SS8CG4 on the judicial system, I believe the previous standards were somewhat better. Finally, in the SS8H12(d), why is the film industry included yet Georgia's most important economic sector, agriculture, is not included? In Geographic Understandings, again, our largest river, the Altamaha has been omitted, and there is no mention of our aquifers.

In the high school courses, the Economics standards have been greatly improved. I want to compliment the team who worked together on that effort. One extra improvement could be the introduction of key free-market economists in order to better prepare students for college courses.

In American Government/Civics, it would be good to see the use of the term, "confederate republic," in SSCG1(d). I am concerned about the way standard SSCG5(f) is worded. With regard to how the U.S. Constitution is amended, this standard implies that it is constitutional for a U.S. Supreme Court decision to amend the Constitution. The standard reads as follows: "Compare this formal process to the informal process of changing the Constitution through Supreme Court decisions." There is no provision in the U.S. Constitution which allows any U.S. Supreme Court decision to effectively amend the Constitution. In practice, we have tolerated this abuse by the U.S. Supreme Court, however, it is not constitutionally sound. In SSCG17(c), it would be good to also analyze the powers of state and local governments and examine how those powers differ from federal powers.

In U.S. History, the current redrafted standards in SSUSH1 and SSUSH2 are too weak and too generalized. The previous standards had much more detail, with emphasis on key people and events. In addition to the need to retain the details of the previous standards, these sections also need attention to the original charters of the 13 colonies. One glaring omission from SSUSH1 is religious liberty, as that was a key reason for many colonists to migrate to the New World. SSUSH3(a) should include the Navigation Acts. SSUSH6 is a good section on the first five presidents. SSUSH18 has left out the Court packing scheme of President Roosevelt. SSUSH23 should include the names of President Ronald Reagan and President George W. Bush since those sections mention their policies.

I will look forward to seeing the final drafts and hope that many of these additions and changes will appear in the final standards.

Sincerely,

William Ligon