

National Council for the Social Studies, the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the Bradley Commission, the National Governors Association, and others involved in the ongoing task of designing social studies curriculum and instructional practices. This work in Maryland predated the Standards movement. The outcomes focus on the knowledge base required for understanding history and the social sciences, the process skills needed to analyze and apply that knowledge base, and the attitudes needed to use the knowledge and skills within a context of justice and democratic decision-making. The difference in grade level assessment would be in the context and complexity of the tasks and questions.

The Core Learning Goals for the Social Studies include core learnings from the Maryland School Performance Outcomes for Social Studies: Political Systems, Peoples of the Nation and the World, Geography, and Economics. The expectations reflect a blend of the Maryland Social Studies Outcomes and the National Standards in History, Civics and Government, Geography, Economics, and Social Studies. Embedded in the social studies expectations and indicators are requirements that students demonstrate an ability—individually and as part of a group—to gather information, think critically, solve problems, negotiate, and reach consensus with others as needed to facilitate responsible decision-making, to understand complex ideas, and to generate new ideas. Real-world applications constitute an essential component of these skills and processes. The expectations and indicators are written in such a manner to allow curriculum to be implemented using either a chronological or thematic approach.

I believe that American education is at yet another crisis stage, one that parallels the xenophobia of the early twentieth century. Statistics relate that America is changing demographically again. So its rich heritage and fascinating stories will now be told from a multiperspective view that has been set to standards in order to give educators guidelines, informational support for their teaching endeavors, and, one hopes, thought-provoking ideas that will challenge today's youth to become better thinkers, decision-makers, and problem-solvers.

I am hopeful that educational leaders will have the intellectual courage to stand up for what they believe to be good historical practices and guidelines and that classroom teachers will adopt the history standards for their classroom. If not, American education may have to wait another generation of students in order to improve the quality of history instruction in today's classroom.

The Standards - An Evolving Presence

Brian Boland

The recently published National Standards for United States History will not be read with much enthusiasm by classroom teachers. The forces of suspicion, economics, time,

and tradition count for much. Because of these impediments, the Standards can best hope to influence teachers gradually.

Lynne Cheney, former chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, and her allies have the new standards on the run. Striking the first blow in the *New York Times*, she accused the Standards of being politically correct, of ignoring traditional U.S. history, and of featuring negative aspects of this nation's development. By this attack, which was followed by more criticisms in the national media, she has won the advantage in the battle for public opinion. A long shadow of suspicion has fallen over the Standards.

The National Center for History in the Schools, which administered and published the Standards, has to take some blame for leaving its publication open to criticism, especially some of the teaching strategies that have been called "moralistic and present-minded" by Diane Ravitch. Joe McCarthy is remembered, but Thomas Edison is not. Moreover, it has made its work somewhat inaccessible. Teachers who want to see the Standards must order and pay \$23.95 for it. Though not exorbitant, this is a self-defeating fee that can only keep many from seeing the Standards. Ironically, Lynne Cheney and the others have created a controversial interest in this document that might actually help its sales.

Timing has made matters worse for the Standards. The good old American style of paranoia is loose upon the land. It has arrived with the new conservative Congress that views the Standards as bad. This Congress will not fund any implementation of the Standards recommended by a committee of politically-correct minded academics. This is unfortunate considering that the Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich, who moonlights as an historian, might have benefited from a good look at the Standards. The Standards have also aroused the old fear of federal interference into the state's domain.

If the political timing has been bad, so is the educational timing. These Standards have come amidst a decade of reforms that have affected teachers and have been largely unwelcome by many of them. These reforms first arrived with the disciples of Madeline Hunter, preaching her form of behaviorism for the classroom. This set in motion a train of true-believers who have turned schools into burned-over districts of new educational creeds. Cooperative learning, mentoring, formative evaluations, staff development teams, and cadres are some of the new names for many old ideas. None of this has helped us teach history.

State governments added to the burden of reforms. In my own state, Illinois, teachers had to first write objectives and then test for those objectives at their own school. They were then told not to teach for the test, a noble but impractical wish. The state then wanted to test across districts, and it instituted a state-wide assessment program.

Before the state allowed enough time to evaluate its own plan, it changed the rules to align itself with the federal Goals 2000 Program. Now Illinois wants objectives changed to outcomes. The new test must include a performance-based element. The classroom teacher bears the burden of implementation and must sacrifice many hours of writing outcomes and creating assessments that must be redone year after year in a never-ending cycle. Again none of this helps us to teach history. Compared to these questionable and

pressing mandated reforms, the Standards are small potatoes and deserve less attention than the more threatening state reforms.

Despite this negativity, each history teacher should judge the Standards for herself or himself. Theodore Rabb of the National Council for History Education admitted that the Standards are not perfect, but they might be helpful. They *do* set standards for thinking historically; they *do* organize U.S. history chronologically. They *do* offer some good suggestions for lessons, and the book *does* include a helpful list of resources. Each teacher and department should take the good and forget the bad.

Above all the Standards must remain voluntary. They should exist as an evolving presence, something like the British Constitution. To codify the Standards will lead to a national test, another assessment that will cause teachers to teach for the test. The end result would be worse history. It would help impose a uniformity at the expense of regional diversity. These Standards or any future Goals 2000 reform will not improve the teaching of history. Regardless of the quality of the Standards, what matters are those students who are in the classroom day after day. To make history come alive for them, each teacher must draw upon what he or she knows. Pedagogy has some worth, but compared to knowing history, it is worth less. What the teacher needs is more history. The Standards just offer some focus.

The "New" National Standards

Philip Reed Rulon

If we open a quarrel between the past and the present, we shall find that we have lost the future.

Winston Churchill, Speech,
House of Commons, June 18, 1940

The opportunity to comment on the new National Standards for high school history classes has provided me with the impetus to reflect on my professional past. Rightly or wrongly, I have concluded that my three-plus decades in higher education have been filled with academic schizophrenia. On one hand, my mentors in boarding school, college, and university taught me the traditions of my discipline and instilled in me a reverence for the earliest historians and their poetic, literary, and well-researched narratives. The latter, incidentally, were articles and books that wove the threads of our American heritage from the top of the loom down. Moreover, perhaps by simple association—because we rarely talked about it—the idea evolved that teachers and professors should be dispassionate observers, men and women who viewed society from the windows of Ivory Towers, people who did not directly engage in the din and passions of their day. Now, with the benefit of