

Dear Colorado State Board of Education,

Along with thousands of other Coloradans, I want to thank the revisions committee for listening to, and often factoring in, the public's feedback on the proposed state social studies standards. The adjustments made improved the standards in key ways. We encourage you to preserve these adjustments and to address areas that seem inconsistent with the committee's modifications. Doing so would further improve the standards for the benefit of all students.

Thank you for removing many instances that singled out specific identity groups. We were concerned that singling out these groups would risk stereotyping and division, rather than self-determination and unity. We can still recognize and celebrate different perspectives and cultures while doing so within our common framework as Americans, and the ideals that we share.

Thank you as well for adjustments that reduce the "activist" elements in the civics sections. As modified, the proposed standards now call for students to be knowledgeable and engaged citizens without compelling them to become activists for specific causes. This reflects the appropriate function of civics education and helps school districts maintain local control.

Social Studies standards should foster a full and balanced teaching of America's history, and we appreciate the additions the committee made in recognition of that.

For the above reasons, please preserve the committee's adjustments to these proposed standards.

Recommendations for further improvement

Please build on the committee's work by bringing the following proposed standards into alignment with these recent adjustments. My comments are in italics. Ensuring clarity and consistency throughout the document will advance the goal of strong, balanced standards for all students.

- 2nd grade, pg 32: "Identify and compare examples of civic responsibilities such as volunteering in the community, that are important to privileged and marginalized individuals, families, and communities." *Recommend removing "privileged and marginalized." Doing so doesn't detract from the standard's intention. Retaining this language risks training 2nd graders to start seeing America and each other through the lens of pre-determined power dynamics.*
- 4th grade: There are four separate occasions where the six specific identity groups are still singled out. *Singling out these identity groups was often removed elsewhere in the standards, so it seems inconsistent and confusing to still do so in 4th grade.*
- 5th grade, pg 62: "Describe the reasons for the settlement of the American colonies and how it affected Indigenous Peoples and Africans who were enslaved". *Please improve balance on this important point. Students should understand the various effects of*

colonial settlement, but also learn that our founding principles that inspired it were revolutionary and led over time to unprecedented freedom and prosperity across demographics, motivating millions of immigrants to come to America.

- 6th grade, pg 83: "Identify how different systems of government relate to their citizens in the Western Hemisphere and how systems of government create advantages for some of their citizens and disadvantages for others." *This states as fact that governments advantage some vs others. I'd recommend posing this as a question or adding "can" in between "government" and "create".*
- 8th grade, pg 105: "Historical thinkers understand that slavery was instituted into what now is the United States of America under the laws of the English Monarch and the United States was the only nation to fight a war to eliminate slavery." *This is an important addition for historical context. But it's more accurate to say that slavery was practiced across the world for centuries—it didn't simply originate with the English Monarch as this wording suggests. The global history of slavery is important for students to understand.*
- 8th grade, pg 114: "Who is included and who is excluded in the clause, "All men are created equal," which is written in the Declaration of Independence?" How true was this clause at the time it was written?" *This seems to state as fact that there are Americans currently excluded from this clause. I'd recommend rewording it to create balance by adding "How revolutionary was this belief at the time and how have we worked to more fully live up to this principle throughout our history?"*
- High School, pg 118: "Examine and evaluate issues of unity and diversity from Reconstruction to present. For example: the systemic impact of racism and nativism (e.g., Jim Crow, affirmative action, and mass incarceration), the definition and role of patriotism, expansion and limitations of rights, and the role of religion." *Is this stating as fact that systemic racism exists in the present? If so, there is broad diversity of thought on that point so I'd recommend clarifying or removing the specific examples.*
- High School, pg 131: "When economic crises occur, does the economic system provide support for all members of the system or is there scapegoating, including the incremental dehumanization of minority groups, and mitigating conflict over resources?" *This comes across as a leading and confusing question, especially the claim about incremental dehumanization of minority groups. I'd recommend removing it entirely.*

Thanks again to the standards committee for the adjustments made after hearing the public's feedback. Please preserve those adjustments and consider further improvements to foster consistent, unifying standards that set the framework for all Colorado students to receive an excellent social studies education.

Sincerely,
Will Johnson
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