PIONEER
EDUCATION

Laboratories of Democracy: How States Get Excellent K–12 U.S. History Standards

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WHITE PAPER
No. 162 | January 2017

PIONEER INSTITUTE
PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

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Pioneer Institute is a tax-exempt 501(c)3 organization funded through the donations of individuals, foundations and businesses committed to the principles Pioneer espouses. To ensure its independence, Pioneer does not accept government grants.

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Preface

Horace Mann and the Origins of American Public Schools

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Public education in the United States has derived historically from two different objectives. Chronologically, the first of these objectives was religious, responding to the conviction of certain Christians that all believers should read the Bible for themselves. The doctrine clearly implied the need for mass literacy, which only a system of public education could create. It originated with the Protestant Reformation and was most enthusiastically supported by the Puritan settlers in New England.

The second objective for public education originated about a century and a half later, reflecting the coming of the Enlightenment. Its goal was secular: the nurture of well-informed citizens, who would become capable of providing a democratic basis for government.

In practice, the religious objective was long the dominant one. Today we remember the 17th-century Puritans mainly as intolerant prudes who persecuted supposed "witches." We are much less likely to remember them as originators of American public schools, but so they were. The Puritan colonies in New England mandated that each township provide elementary education to children at taxpayers' expense, thereby empowering the next generation of good Christians to ponder the Bible's message first hand. Literacy for girls was an innovation. Yet Puritan women not only expected to read the Bible but sometimes discussed the book's teachings among themselves.

When, in 1840, the U.S. Census for the first time compiled data on literacy, its statistics demonstrated the effects of 200 years of the educational system put in place by the Puritans. No New England state had less than 98 percent adult literacy, but in other states literacy varied considerably. States hardly ever provided public education to black children, even those who were free. The highest white illiteracy rate in 1840 was North Carolina's 28 percent. The public school system called for in the North Carolina state constitution of 1776 had never been implemented.

Thomas Jefferson, the most famous exponent of the American Enlightenment, hoped to found public education on a secular basis. He wanted an informed electorate, but was even more interested in training future political leaders for a republic. Accordingly, he aspired to provide free higher education for a few carefully selected boys. He succeeded in founding the state-supported University of Virginia (and counted it a more important achievement than being twice elected president of the United States).

But when, as governor of Virginia, he asked the state legislature to fund three years of public elementary education, even this minimal proposal failed. The legislators' reaction was all too typical of Jefferson's political followers. Despite their leader's earnest endorsements of universal literacy and public schooling to create it, Jeffersonian Republican politicians and voters generally made low taxes their top priority, trumping public education. In 1822, the lieutenant governor of the young state of Kentucky wrote Jefferson's disciple James Madison to ask for advice on creating a state school system. Madison had to admit that Virginia's educational system was no model for the younger commonwealth; instead he recommended that Kentuckians look to New England.

By 1840, Andrew Jackson had refashioned Jeffersonian Republicanism into the Jacksonian Democratic Party. By this time, state provision of public education had become a partisan political issue. The Democrats generally opposed state-funded education, in order to keep taxes low. They left local government to control education and fund just as much of it as the locals felt willing to pay for. If religious organizations were ready to raise money and operate educational institutions—whether primary, secondary, or higher—so much the better.

The opposing party, called the Whigs, favored stronger government. They wanted state and national governments to help fund infrastructure projects like canals, railroads, and the dredging of rivers and harbors. The Whigs included public education on their wish list. Some of them even supported a national university such as George Washington had tried to promote by leaving money toward it in his will.

Not coincidentally, the Whigs also voiced the preferences of the evangelical Protestants, who had inherited the culture of the Puritans and adapted it to the new system of religious

freedom. Where the Puritans had relied on coercion to promote true religion, the evangelicals relied on revivals. Revivals attracted people to travel at their own expense across considerable distances to attend "camp meetings," where they would literally camp out for several days to hear preachers demanding that they reform their lives and embrace Christ. Among their spiritual exhortations, 19th century evangelicals promoted a long list of social reforms. Often these reforms included efforts to instill self-discipline in people lacking it, such as alcoholics, the mentally ill, or criminals confined in prisons (which the evangelicals reconceived as "reformatories" or "penitentiaries" instead of merely as places for deterrence). The list of people not functioning as free moral agents included slaves, and virtually all antebellum white abolitionists invoked religious arguments against slavery.

Another obvious category of persons not yet functioning as full moral agents was children, and the evangelical reformers accordingly devoted a lot of attention to their education. Sunday schools provided one day a week for children's literacy in rural areas not yet served by day schools. The American Bible Society distributed free Bibles to the cabins of many settler families; the Bibles in turn could be used by parents who, at the end of a hard day's work, might still take time and effort to show otherwise unschooled children how to read.

Where the Whig party won power, state governments would make provision for public elementary schools. Bible-reading often found a place in their curricula, for the civic and religious rationales for public education both figured in the Whigs' policy motivation.

Meanwhile, in states the Jacksonian Democrats controlled, education — including higher education — tended to be left to religious denominations and organizations. But the common school system would be weaker. In the Jacksonian model, the religion taught in public schools would vary from one little community to the next, depending on the locally dominant denomination and its theology.

In 1839 the Whigs gained control of North Carolina's legislature. Soon they put through a long-delayed law authorizing common schools in counties that consented to them. As a result, the state's adult white illiteracy fell to 11 percent over the next 20 years.

Such educational provision for non-white children as existed in pre-Civil War America was hardly ever public. No state provided public education for the enslaved; certain states even forbade teaching slaves to read, to guard against their exposure to abolitionist writings. The literate rebel preacher Nat Turner shows what those states feared; he cited scripture not only in his sermons but also in explaining his insurrection. Nevertheless, somewhere between five and 10 percent of slaves must have possessed some literacy and numeracy in order to perform their skilled and supervisory occupations. State laws against providing slaves with literacy were seldom enforced when the master's self-interest dictated otherwise. Some enslaved parents even managed to find time to teach their children how to read.

Race and religion always mattered in 19th-century education programs. Enterprises to provide education for American Indians were typically bound up with religious efforts to convert them to Christianity and other aspects of western civilization, since Indians were not usually accounted members of the civil society. East Asian immigrants began to arrive in California during the 1850s; but they were hated and persecuted. When some public education was eventually provided their children, it was legally segregated by race.

Even in free black communities, religion long dominated civic motivation for education. Few states permitted black men to vote, so black children largely fell outside the body of citizenry. Hardly any public school systems made provision for black children's education; the few black schools owed their existence to white philanthropy and/or black self-help. When, in the 1840s, Boston — as usual an educational pioneer — started to provide taxpayer-supported schools for black children, some blacks preferred they be segregated, to shield black children from white bullying and preserve the jobs of black teachers. And so those schools were.

By 1840 the career of educational reformer Horace Mann was underway. Public education as modern Americans know it owes more to him than to either the Puritans' doctrines or Thomas Jefferson's hopes. Horace Mann's life (1796–1859) shaped his commitment to what was then called personal "improvement" and made him eager to share the opportunity for it with others. He had been born into a farming family whose local secondary school provided only a few weeks of education each year (in the winter, when farm families could best spare the labor of their teenagers). Resolved to go to college instead of embracing his parents' occupation, he taught himself Latin and found some instruction in math and Greek. He got himself admitted to Brown University when a few years older than was usual at the time. Mann graduated at the head of his class in 1819, found a series of legal apprenticeships, and in due course became a successful attorney. Deciding that public service mattered more to him than making money, he won election to the Massachusetts state legislature in 1827. There he successfully pushed for the creation of a state-supported insane asylum in Worcester. In 1834 Mann was elected to the state Senate, and within a year had become president of that body.

Over the centuries since the initial Puritan impulse to create public schools in Massachusetts, some of the energy had flagged. Local school committees were no longer meeting

their legal obligations to supervise their schools and make sure the teachers were qualified. In practice, textbooks were not prescribed but left to local convenience; nor were they being provided free to children who could not afford to pay for them.

The little villages of Puritan times had grown into substantial towns or diffused into thinly populated agricultural districts, creating new problems for public schools. Irish Catholic immigration during the 1840s would diversify the population. In 1837 the General Court (as the Massachusetts legislature is still called) created a Board of Education to look into the functioning of the state's schools and make recommendations. Horace Mann was named a member. To everyone's surprise, his colleagues then asked him to become the board's secretary, whose job would be to put its recommendations into annual published reports. After some soul-searching, Mann accepted. He resolved to make it a full-time job (even though the small salary implied it had been conceived as part-time) and resigned his Senate presidency and seat. In practice, Mann not only drafted the board's reports, he conducted most of the investigation and research that they embodied, and then defended them before the court of public opinion.

Among the many educational issues that Mann addressed, perhaps the most important was encouraging the founding and support of Normal Schools, as teacher-training colleges were then called. Mann nurtured three of them in Massachusetts, beginning with a tiny one in Lexington in 1839. (The name "normal school" referred to the inculcation of professional "norms" and was borrowed from the French.) Previously, no real attention had been devoted to training teachers, because school teaching was not conceived as a profession. Teaching was considered just a part-time job, because schools only functioned a few months of the year, when kids could be spared from helping on family farms, and the typical rural class had only a few students. Establishing Normal Schools implied a whole new recognition of the status of teaching, and went along with Mann's goal of consolidating little schools in the interest of more varied and well-taught subject matter.

Traditionally, the part-time school teachers had mostly been male. Mann encouraged women to enter the newly defined profession, and the Normal Schools recruited them. In 1840, 61 percent of Massachusetts teachers were male; by 1865, only 14 percent were. Civic authorities did not resist replacing men with women as teachers, since it was economical: the prevailing custom was to pay women less than men. The transformation of the teaching profession contributed to broadening women's job opportunities outside the home, but did not equalize the playing field for them.

As full-time, professionally trained women replaced part-time men over the years, teaching methods evolved. Mann recommended a new approach to instruction in reading by looking at whole words instead of sounding them out one letter at a time. He encouraged broadening the curriculum to include science; especially human physiology, music and art; and daily physical education. He also thought corporal punishment had been overused by amateur male teachers; he encouraged enlisting the students' interests on behalf of their learning, with corporal punishment only a rare and last resort. In 1844–45, a band of older male schoolmasters in Boston attacked Mann's innovations bitterly, claiming he did not understand the perversity of youths and their need for discipline. Mann publicly rebutted them. On the whole, however, Massachusetts public opinion proved receptive to Mann's recommendations. He had no actual power to implement his wishes, only to publicize them; the authorities responded as public opinion evolved.

Mann recorded the most critical moment in his 12-year tenure as secretary of the Board of Education in his diary on March 21, 1840. Massachusetts was ordinarily a Whig state, but in the 1839 gubernatorial election, Marcus Morton, a Democrat, had eked out a narrow victory. The Democratic Party believed public education a responsibility of local government, and disapproved of state intervention. It had already become clear that Mann and his board members presented a Whiggish perspective on the subject, and Democrats brought a motion before the lower house of the General Court to abolish the board. Though they did not command a majority, the Democrats hoped to swing some Whig members over to their side. The motion lost, 182–245, and Mann breathed a sigh of relief in his diary. More Democrats than Whigs had defected from their party's stance. Modern historical analysis has shown the educational reformers most popular in areas undergoing economic development and least popular in small towns and rural areas. Mann's educational reforms clearly manifested and facilitated modernization, both from our standpoint and that of his contemporaries.

Horace Mann belonged to the Unitarian religious denomination, and the Democrats had hoped to use this affiliation against him, but the roll call does not indicate this approach succeeded. Indeed, Mann's overall success as an education reformer reflected his ability to synthesize the two traditional goals of public education: the religious with the civic. He firmly supported religion as a foundational subject of instruction, to include Bible reading in class. In 1827, Massachusetts had passed a law forbidding teaching the doctrines of any particular Christian sect in public schools, but allowing the teachings of Christianity in general, including the Old and New Testaments. Mann wholeheartedly endorsed and defended this law. (All Unitarians of his time considered themselves Christians, unlike today.)

Mann enriched the significance of the religious purpose of education, which the Puritans had seen as a rationale for literacy, by emphasizing the extended development of character

and morality through education. He incorporated typical 19th-century goals like honesty, self-improvement, and hard work along with the Christian religion into formal education. Unlike some Protestants of his time and place, Mann included Roman Catholicism within the scope of acceptable Christianity, and defended hiring Catholics as public school teachers.

Horace Mann's approach to education was comprehensive. He believed that all aspects of the human being should benefit from education: physical, emotional, rational, and moral. His program applied the synthesis of social science that had been formulated by the moral philosophers of Scotland; one of Mann's closest friends and intellectual mentors was the Scottish moral philosopher George Combe. Mann strove not only to learn from theory, but also to observe the best available educational practice. In 1844 he spent six months overseas, visiting schools in Britain, France, and Germany. The Germans particularly impressed him, because the teachers empathized with their students and relied on encouragement more than harsh discipline.

Horace Mann's personal life places his achievements as an educational reformer into context. Mann's first wife died only two years after their marriage in 1830, leaving him deeply depressed. His second marriage, to Mary Tyler Peabody in 1844, proved an alliance of kindred spirits, for she shared his passion for social reform and edited his papers after his death. When a gifted young black woman named Cloe Lee, admitted to the Normal School in West Newton, could find no one willing to offer her room and board, the Manns took her into their own home. After the heroic ex-President John Quincy Adams, who had represented his Massachusetts constituency in Congress for 18 years, died suddenly in February 1848, Horace Mann was enthusiastically elected by the Eighth Congressional District to succeed him that April. Mann continued in Adams's footsteps, opposing the political strength of the Slave Power and defending the civil rights of abolitionists. In 1853 he was elected president of the new Antioch College in Ohio. Under his leadership, Antioch became the first college to admit women as well as men, and blacks as well as whites. Horace Mann died in 1859.

Mann succeeded as an educational reformer by synthesizing the religious and civic motivations for public education. As secretary of the Board of Education, he wielded no power beyond publicizing conditions and making recommendations to improve them. Fortunately, he worked in a commonwealth with a well-informed political leadership, proud of its tradition of public schools and willing to act on his advice. Massachusetts, which had pioneered public education in the 17th century, again pioneered the next wave of educational innovation in the 19th.

Today we need another great era of educational reform, especially in the recruitment and training of teachers. School systems can no longer rely on an army of intelligent, energetic women with few other professional opportunities. Schools must be able to recruit top talent, which means that salaries, working conditions, and especially the prestige of the school teaching profession need improvement. Teaching methods must embrace the Internet and develop computer skills in the rising generation.

Data show that youngsters still benefit from religion in their lives, even though we must respect the separation of church and state more than was the case in Mann's Massachusetts. Without teaching that any particular religion is the only true one, schools should still recognize the cultural importance and value of religion. The study of history provides an appropriate vehicle for learning about both religious and civic participation in American democracy. But religion and citizenship can no longer suffice as grounds for education; we need to add a third rationale. Education today must offer relevant vocational training, if we are to address the problems of economic globalization. Only thus can we remedy the anger and despair manifest by today's working (but all too often unemployed) classes, both white and minority. Given the growth of our country since his time, we need not just one new Horace Mann, but many!

Executive Summary

American students consistently perform poorly on national history and civics tests. They lack knowledge of major historical documents, achievements and events such as the U.S. Constitution, the Second Continental Congress and the Civil Rights Movement. Yet understanding our history is essential for our citizens to make wise political decisions, such as voting for a new president, and enable our democracy to function as the Founding Fathers envisioned.

Concerns were raised in the 1980s about the decline of SAT scores and the disappearance of history courses into "social studies" classes, but there was little leadership nationally for change. Responsibility to implement K-12 history curriculum standards fell to the states and there the results were uneven. In 1998 the Fordham Institute produced a review of state history standards and found that 13 states had no standards at all. In the states that did have standards they were of poor quality. For the most part history continued to be under the umbrella of "social studies."

In 2011 the Fordham Institute took another look and found improvement. All but one state had adopted K-12 history standards and six in particular were graded highly.

The purpose of this paper is to take a closer look at the states that have designed strong history standards and note what has made them exceptional so other states might do the same. They include Alabama, California, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina.

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This report draws on interviews with individuals from each state who sat on advisory boards and panels, who shared details on their review process, and identified individuals consulted to design their standards, timetables and outcomes. Members of the state design committees included chairmen of high school history or social studies departments, elementary and middle school teachers, college history professors, members of historical societies and parents.

This report includes footnoted references to studies or reports used by advisory committees as well as articles about the process in each state and the outcome.

Finally there are seven core recommendations related to process; non-partisanship; the importance of detail and clarity in standards; the need to focus on academic content; the value of civics-based content; encouraging the reading of history in each grade; and finally to promote historical writing in each grade.

In all the paper shows that states can create robust K-12 standards that are clear enough for teachers to employ effectively and that enrich students' understanding of our history.

Laboratories of Democracy: How States Get Excellent K-12 U.S. History Standards

By Anders Lewis & William Donovan

Introduction: The Development of State Standards

The purpose of this paper is to call attention to the many states that have successfully written strong history standards and to suggest how other states can do the same. The first section provides a brief history of the development of state history standards. The second section suggests why this is important — why, in particular, the teaching and learning of history is important and why we as a nation are falling short. The third section outlines what six states across the nation (Massachusetts, New York, California, Indiana, South Carolina, and Alabama) have done to create state K–12 history standards. In the fourth and final section we offer recommendations for other states interested in revising their existing standards or creating whole new ones.

Part I: The History of State Standards

The idea that states should develop standards to guide the teaching of history can be traced back to the standards-based reform movement in the 1980s. In 1983, in response to declining SAT scores and increased international competition, the National Committee for Excellence in Education (a committee appointed by then-Secretary of Education Terrell Bell that consisted of a mix of educators and business leaders) issued a stinging indictment of the American educational system. The committee found fault across the board, ranging from a lack of rigor in schools, declining test scores, poor teacher training programs, and a lack of high expectations, to incoherent smorgasbord-type curriculums. Their report, entitled A *Nation at Risk*, stated in no uncertain terms that America's schools were failing: "If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war."[1]

The authors of *A Nation at Risk* called attention to the lack of time students spent learning core subjects, including history. In the following years, numerous historians attempted to rally public opinion on behalf of the teaching and learning of history. In 1987, the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, a panel comprised of several of the nation's leading scholars, found that state history requirements were minimal and conflicting and that, in many schools, history had been trumped by content-light "social studies" classes. At the time of the Bradley Commission report's release, Samuel Gammon, executive director of the American Historical Association, stated that when it comes to history "our citizens are in danger of becoming amnesiacs…"[2]

In the 1990s, the clear problems raised by *A Nation at Risk* and the Bradley Commission, as well as the support of numerous education scholars and teachers, led to an effort to create national history standards. The goal of the national history standards was to outline a common set of content-based expectations that all students should know by the time they leave high school. Noble in purpose, the project failed in design due to the standards being overly politicized and negative in their portrayal of American history. Richard Riley, President Clinton's Secretary of Education, declared that "the President does not believe, and I do not believe, that the… standards should form the basis for a history curriculum in our schools."[3] In 1995, the United States Senate rejected the standards by a vote of 99 to 1.

The failure of the national standards seriously eroded attempts to reform history education in the states. So too did national education policies. The 2001 No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB), passed with the support of President George W. Bush, mandated schools that received public funding to test students in reading and math, but not in history. The NCLB's authors, education scholar Chester Finn has argued, believed that history was too politically divisive a subject for which to create national standards, that schools had to focus on math and reading before anything else, and that — for subjects such as history — it was best to leave reform at the state level.[4]

With failure at the national level, and with educational reforms focusing more and more on English and math, it was then left to the states to devise their own reforms to improve the teaching and learning of history. In the 1990s, progress was slow. In a 1998 review of state history standards, the Fordham Institute noted that 13 states had no standards at all and the standards were of poor quality in the states that had them. The

author of the report, David Warren Saxe, argued that that "in most states, history is part of the loosely defined field known as "social studies." Many states," Saxe continued, "do not identify history as a school subject in its own right and only a few have adopted history-centered social studies."[5]

A little over a decade later some progress had been made. In a 2011 review of state standards, the Fordham Institute, though discouraged by a lack of rigor in most of them, was pleased to report that all states except Rhode Island had history standards. The Fordham report also offered particular praise for the standards produced by Alabama, California, Indiana, Massachusetts, New York, and South Carolina (the states that are the focus of this paper).[6]

Part II: Citizenship and Virtue: Why History is Important and the Dire State of History Education Today

Few Americans did more than John Adams to help secure American independence from Great Britain. As a delegate from Massachusetts to the Second Continental Congress, Adams was the most consistent and forceful voice for independence. Though Thomas Jefferson was the main architect of the Declaration of Independence, the Virginia planter was not a good public speaker and shied away from public debate. In contrast, Adams relished debate and was a gifted orator. It was Adams, not Jefferson, who convinced moderates within the Congress to support independence. "Above all," historian David McCullough writes, it was "his sense of urgency and unrelenting drive" that "made the Declaration of Independence happen when it did."[7]

Adams and his wife, Abigail, were residents of Braintree, Massachusetts. When the Second Continental Congress approved the Declaration, they became citizens of a new nation. Both knew, however, that America would only last if its citizens were well educated — if they had the necessary knowledge and the moral character to preserve and defend a democratic nation. "The preservation of liberty," Adams argued, "depends upon the intellectual and moral character of the people. As long as knowledge and virtue are diffused generally among the body of a nation, it is impossible they should be enslaved…" A core part of the diffusion of knowledge and virtue that Adams refers to was support for the learning of literature and history, two subjects to which Abigail and John devoted their entire lives. "Laws for the liberal education of youth," John Adams insisted, "are so extremely wise and useful that to a humane and generous mind, no expense would be thought extravagant."[8]

Adams knew that the study of history helped citizens make informed political decisions. Just as important, Adams knew that studying history enabled our nation's youth to learn the essential virtues — the necessary traits of a person's moral character — that he believed are the cornerstone of a well-functioning democratic society. Freedom, Adams knew, requires responsibility and responsibility requires good character.

American history, from the 1770s to today, is full of examples of individuals and groups who exercised such virtues to build a better and more democratic nation. One particularly important example is the Civil Rights Movement. From the history of the movement, students can learn the necessary virtues that sustained what became the most influential reform movement in American history.

In 1955 Rosa Parks and the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, decided to protest the injustices of segregation in Montgomery, Alabama by organizing a bus boycott. They did so knowing full well that their efforts would meet with fierce resistance. For decades after the Civil War, African Americans in search of equality faced a wall of inequality and hostility, ranging from Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, an exploitative sharecropping system, and violence from groups such as the Ku Klux Klan. To fight for civil rights was to stand against the prevailing tide of opinion. It was also a decision that could cost people their lives. Against hatred, King, Parks, and countless others exercised traits of character — virtues — that ultimately triumphed: sacrifice, optimism, and commitment.

Time and again, in the face of countless obstacles and dire threats, civil rights supporters refused to give into despair. During his historic 1963 "I Have a Dream Speech," King told Americans that "We refuse to believe that there are insufficient funds in the great vaults of opportunity of this nation."[9] Similarly, during his 1965 speech at the Alabama state capital in Birmingham, given at the conclusion of the historic Selma to Montgomery march, King declared that justice was coming and that it would not be much longer. "I come to say to you this afternoon," King stated, that "however difficult the moment, however frustrating the hour, it will not be long, because truth pressed to earth will rise again."[10]

To fight to make real the promise of democracy, civil rights supporters marched, held sit-ins, kneel-ins, and wade-ins; engaged in freedom rides; organized meetings; wrote music, letters, articles, essays, pamphlets, and books; petitioned elected leaders; gave speeches; and appealed to the conscience of Americans. Above all, civil rights advocates demonstrated a willingness to sacrifice their individual needs to the larger good of the nation. They refused, as well, to abandon the belief that America could and would do better. Further, their hard work displayed a level of commitment sustained by no reform groups before or since. In the face of so much hatred

and resistance, civil rights supporters never gave up and their perseverance led directly to the passage of two of the most important laws in our nation's history: the 1964 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited segregation in public facilities, and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, which outlawed discriminatory voting requirements.

King's story, and the larger story of the Civil Rights Movement demonstrate how essential virtues — what Adams referred to as the "moral character of the people" — are necessary to sustain and improve our democratic nation. Today, few Americans would dispute the importance of the Civil Rights Movement. Dr. King is rightfully accorded the status of an icon, as reflected in the building of the Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial in Washington, D.C. During its dedication, our nation's first African-American president, Barack Obama, declared that King's story was "quintessentially American" because his story, and America's, is a "story of optimism and achievement and constant striving that is unique upon this Earth."[11] President Obama has also stated, on numerous occasions, that Americans must learn about and reflect on King's legacy and the larger significance of the Civil Rights Movement. During a speech commemorating the 50th anniversary of the 1963 March on Washington, hedeclared that the "lesson of our past" and the lesson of the Civil Rights Movement, was "that in the face of impossible odds, people who love their country can change it."[12]

Surely, the president is correct. All Americans should learn about King, the larger Civil Rights Movement, and the virtues that sustained the movement and made America a better nation. Unfortunately, this is not happening. Students are graduating from our nation's schools with minimal, if any, knowledge of King and the Civil Rights era. On a consistent basis, American students perform poorly on national history and civics tests. Ninety-eight percent of graduating seniors, to cite just one of many examples, are unable to explain the Supreme Court's 1954 *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* decision, which set the stage for the Civil Rights Movement and is recognized by scholars as among the most important Supreme Court cases in history.[13] "We are raising" David McCullough has argued, "a generation of young Americans who are by-and-large historically illiterate."[14]

This need not be the case. Americans can choose a different path, one that returns us to the vision of an informed and educated citizenry that John and Abigail Adams thought so essential to the functioning of a democratic nation. It will not happen overnight and it will require the commitment of local schools, parents, state departments of education, legislators, and the federal government. Further, there is no single cure for the problem. Many reforms are needed. Teachers will need strong, content-based professional development programs. School administrators will need to shift their focus to hiring teachers with demonstrated academic knowledge. State legislators and educational officials will need to commit resources to the development of mandated assessments. Most importantly, state legislators and education officials will need to commit to the writing or, in many cases, the revision of statewide K–12 history curriculum standards. State standards are essential; they are at the heart of statewide assessment programs, the focus of professional development programs, and the creation of district-wide standards.

Americans need not accept the existing state of affairs – the year-by-year graduation of students ignorant of history and ignorant of the responsibilities of citizenship. This paper will seek to demonstrate that there is cause for optimism. Numerous states — such as the Adams's own state of Massachusetts — have written well-received standards that can serve as a starting point for the revival of history teaching and learning throughout the nation.

Part III: Success at the State Level: How Several States are Charting a Path Towards Progress

Massachusetts

This year the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) began the process of updating its history and social science curriculum. It does so with an existing framework that is considered among the country's best. In 2011 the Fordham Institute reviewed the standards in each state and gave Massachusetts an A- grade, one of only six states to receive that score, and called it "a model of how history standards should be organized."[15] The standards were also applauded by Diane Ravitch, a New York University professor and nationally recognized education historian, as one of the two best sets of history and social science standards in the U.S.[16]

The 2003 standards are strong, reviewers declared, because they offer clear and exact guidelines for teachers, with a "substantive curriculum based on historical knowledge."[17] The standards were produced through an open process that reached out to history teachers across Massachusetts. They also included a strong emphasis on U.S. history despite pressure from various groups to reduce the focus on our nation's history.

In 2000, staff at the Massachusetts Department of Education, led by Senior Associate Commissioner Sandra Stotsky and Anders Lewis, her lead writer,[18] started to gather input from teachers about the existing standards. A history framework had been developed in 1997 in response to the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993.[19] Teachers were queried about the standards and their feedback was used as a starting point

to create goals. A curriculum review panel of 12 educators was formed.

The 1997 framework document had limitations. It lacked specific grade-by-grade content standards, offering instead four separate sets of statements for the study of history, geography, economics, and civics/government for four-year grade spans. The statements mostly described processes and goals and weren't written in the form of standards. They weren't arranged developmentally. Nor was there a requirement for a list of important documents about which all students should learn.

But a bigger problem was that it called for world history to be taught in Grade 10. Many educators felt that U.S. history should be taught in Grade 10 so that it could be tested as part of the competency examination for the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS). Logically it made sense to teach U.S. history during the year it would be tested.

From September 2000 to March 2001 the panel conducted 23 regional meetings, brainstorming the standards, listening to comments and debating ways to improve the 1997 framework. In addition, in March 2001 the Massachusetts Department of Education surveyed all history teachers on their concerns with the 1997 framework. More than 1,000 teachers from 161 schools responded.[20]

"It was a large process," says Lewis. "We reached out to local universities, professors, scholars, the Massachusetts Historical Society, to review the drafts. It took a tremendous amount of work. But we were happy to have so much feedback from so many people. In the end that's really the only way you can do it."[21]

While they welcomed the input, the process did not always go smoothly. Creating history standards is difficult to do while shielding against the politics of the day and partisan views of special interest groups. Facts are facts, but interpretations can be a matter of opinion.

"It's an inherently politically charged process," says Lewis. "When writing the standards themselves you have to try to be objective. You aren't taking sides, you just hope to write a clear standard."[22]

A hypothetical example he describes could be a standard written about the Vietnam War. A person on the political left might wish for a standard that would say that students should be able to identify the reasons why the Vietnam War should *never* have happened. "That's a statement of opinion," says Lewis. "A better way is to say 'Identify and describe the causes, course and consequences of the Vietnam War.' That is completely non-ideological. Someone on the left, right or in between could say that that's fine."

One issue the committee faced concerned what history teachers wanted to teach in grades 3, 4 and 5 – U.S. history or a course of study that included more about India, China and the African continent. After surveying teachers the overwhelming response was U.S. history, according to Stotsky, largely because the readings that were available for their students were about U.S. history.

"In many cases progressive supervisors had been pushing down a multicultural philosophy on the teachers," says Stotsky. "But teachers said there wasn't anything for the kids to read. The kids weren't learning anything and the teachers didn't have the experience."[23]

Stotsky says she proposed a standard that had students in Grade 4 study America's national parks and forests. Most teachers were "thrilled," says Stotsky.

"They said they had no problem with anything in this country," she says. "They could find material for that and their kids could read it and study it. The people who were trying to impose multiculturalism were fit to be tied. They didn't want to study our national parks and forests."

The committee eventually stuck with the fourth grade proposal and devised standards that included more Chinese or Indian history as optional units, she says.

While there were other skirmishes with various groups related to course subjects, the committee members felt the open process was worth the effort. One reason was that by allowing ample time for teachers to review and comment on the drafts, then reviewing each submission, the committee ensured that teachers would feel as though they had contributed to the final version and therefore wouldn't resent it.

"Teachers' concerns were less to do with the politics of the standards than the fact we were changing the framework just a few years after the 1997 framework," says Lewis. "Here was another adjustment made just after we had adjusted to the new framework. That was a fair concern. It was just a couple of years after and schools and districts make adjustments and it takes time."[24]

Another reason why teacher input was so desired is because Massachusetts students could eventually be required to pass a history MCAS test as part of the graduation requirement. That test would be based upon standards.

"If the teachers are confused as to what a specific standard is, they will not feel the assessment system will work," says Lewis. "They won't know what they should be teaching. Standards need to be really specific. There should be no confusion as to what a curriculum is asking for."

The final draft was unanimously approved by the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education in October 2002. The approved version provided concise

grade-by-grade standards from Pre-K through grade 12. It also allowed schools the choice of placing a two-year U.S. history sequence into the high school curriculum in grades 9 and 10, or in grades 10 and 11, addressing the concerns about MCAS preparedness.

New York

When New York State turned to rewriting its social studies framework in 2012 there was widespread agreement that it was long overdue. The existing document was written in 1996, so it did not include many significant historical events, such as the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 and the election of Barack Obama as the first African-American president.

Little wonder that Steve Goldberg, the district social studies chairman in New Rochelle and chairman of the content advisory panel formed to rewrite the framework, called it "stale." Walter Robertson, a high school social studies teacher from Dunkirk and another member of the content advisory panel agreed. "Things have just changed," he said.[25]

The K–12 document produced by the Social Studies Content Advisory Panel is an updated framework that serves as "a consistent set of expectations for what students should learn and be able to do."[26] It is "anchored" in the New York State Common Core Standards for Literacy and Writing and the New York State Learning Standards for Social Sciences.[27]

In its study of history standards among the states, the Fordham Institute gave the New York standards an A- and held that "New York's U.S. history standards are among the most substantively comprehensive and sophisticated in the country."[28]

New York chose to update its social studies curriculum soon after it adopted the Common Core math and English standards in 2010. But as the content advisory panel went to work there was criticism about the state rolling out Common Core before new teaching materials were in place in schools.[29] Its task was to rewrite the outdated social studies framework using an inclusive process that made people aware of the coming changes.

The roughly 20-person content advisory panel was an eclectic group made up of K–12 teachers from around New York, three college history professors, an Asian specialist from Queens, an economics professor from Syracuse and people who were involved in state or national social studies councils. They were told they could not change the elements that make up the social studies framework — economics, U.S. and New York history, world history, geography and civics, citizenship and government — nor the sequence in which they were taught. After gathering input from other teachers, the content advisory panel published a first draft in September of 2012 and posted it for public comment.

"When we had a draft ready to go, we posted it on our web site and sent a lot of eblasts out to professional organizations saying it was online for public commentary," said Goldberg, the committee chairman. "It was presented twice for public commentary for about four to six weeks each time. There was a survey monkey questionnaire related to it. You could fill it out and it got registered."

"We took that document and began to play around with it," he added. "We looked at some of the criticism and said let's make modifications in the framework."[30]

While they had been working on the draft, the panel members were sensitive to a situation that every history standards committee encounters: appearing biased towards one group or against another. In New York, for example, American history is taught in the seventh and eighth grades and then again in the 11th grade. There are many groups in New York who represent different elements of the state's Native American population. The committee was aware that those groups would be scrutinizing how Native Americans in New York and elsewhere in the U.S. would be represented in the document.

When panel members read the public comments on the draft, Goldberg said they noticed a similar potential controversy in world history. Various groups questioned the fact that the new framework seemed selective on the topic of genocide. Teachers were required to teach the Holocaust, but could choose between the Ukrainian famine and the Armenian genocide.

"Not surprising we got comments from the Armenians and the Ukrainians saying why are you optionalizing (those events) and requiring the Holocaust," said Goldberg. "Then you always get comments when you deal with the Irish Famine because the British groups say 'What famine?' Or the Turkish groups who say there was no genocide, they were siding with the Russians and it was war."[31]

The committee filtered through about 800 responses to the first draft (and closer to 2,000 after the second draft, according to Goldberg) and responded with changes when it could. In the framework for Grade 10 it revised the genocide guidelines to require teaching on the Armenian genocide and whether there are those who criticize it. They would teach about the Ukrainian famine of the 1930s under Russian ruler Joseph Stalin. And they would teach about the Holocaust.

In other instances the panel had less flexibility. State law mandates certain topics must be taught. Slavery, though an obvious part of American history, is one. The Irish Famine is another. The panel had to be sure that all the legally mandated events were in the document.

The panel also pruned what its members thought was a

"content-dense framework that needed more latitude," according to Goldberg. One criticism of the draft was that there was no reference to Egypt in the study of the ancient world in the ninth-grade curriculum. Rather it focused only on Mesopotamia, China and India. That was a deliberate decision by the panel because of the heavy emphasis on Egypt in the sixth-grade curriculum. With only a limited amount of time to present ancient civilization, why replicate in the ninth grade what had been covered in the sixth? Similar decisions were made for other courses.[32]

When the revised framework was eventually released it included changes to address concerns and was well received, according to Greg Ahlquist, a Webster, N.Y. social studies teacher, member of the content advisory panel and New York State Teacher of the Year in 2013.[33]

"(The social studies framework) largely was very positively received by teachers and the educational community," said Ahlquist. He said because of the rollout, the presentation of the framework and the numerous phases of public comment that the committee reacted to, "there was a large feeling that we were being responsive to the field."

The panel did alter the design of the framework. The old document imparted information students were required to learn in bullet point-style. The new framework put that content into major themes, which were supported by smaller concepts and case studies cast as student actions. A global history unit on the ancient world in the old format, for example, was titled "Expansion of Christianity, Islam, Confucianism, and Buddhism" and was followed by several related questions. The new framework instead offered a paragraph-length theme about the rise of belief systems and a concept about their purpose. It then asked students to "identify the place of origin, compare and contrast the core beliefs and practices, and explore the sacred texts and ethical codes" of seven such systems.[34]

Though the general directive to the content panel by the Board of Regents had been to reexamine social studies, Ahlquist said one of the specific instructions was to look at the Global History and Geography Regent's exam, which had been a two-year assessment. The desire was to determine if it was measuring what it needed to and whether there should be any changes. The revised framework ended the two-year exam in grades 9 and 10 and created a 10th grade Global History and Geography exam covering 10th grade content and skills.

The new framework also draws from the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework, which was produced by the Council of Chief State School Officers in 2013 to enhance the rigor of K–12 social studies.[35] C3 includes the Inquiry Arc, an approach that makes the subject more challenging by developing questions and planning inquiries, evaluating sources and using evidence to communicate conclusions.[36]

The panel produced a final document called the New York State Common Core Social Studies Framework, which was approved by the Board of Regents in April of 2014.

California

In 2008 California's Instructional Quality Commission, an advisory board to the State Board of Education within the California Department of Education, began a review of the state's History-Social Science Framework, a document that still closely resembled the original version approved in 1988, with added content standards in 1998. But the expected two-year process was halted in 2009 when the state budget crisis forced Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California Assembly to cut the $700,000 budgeted to rewrite all academic frameworks.

The K–12 history review was picked up again in 2014 and last July the State Board of Education approved a new History–Social Science Framework. The new framework includes a lot of history the earlier version lacked and is about three times the size of its predecessor.

California's curriculum framework seeks to provide a blueprint for teachers and administrators on how to implement content standards in the classroom. The standards are a set of expectations of what students should learn and be able to do at each grade level. It is not mandatory that cities and towns adopt the framework. But the state assembly passed several bills specifying items to be included in the K–12 curriculum in the years since the framework was created in 1988. According to Kenneth McDonald, education programs consultant in the Curriculum Frameworks Unit of the California Department of Education, some of the bills were mandates, while others required that certain topics be included in the framework but did not constitute an instructional mandate for schools or districts. Finally there were "encourage" laws that are essentially just suggestions.[37]

"The first thing was that there were a number of statutory changes," McDonald says about the revision process. "In 2011 the state passed a law mandating the contributions of LGBT individuals and the disabled to the history of California and the U.S. be included in the curriculum. So that is a mandate."

There were others. Lawmakers had passed bills on financial literacy instruction, civics education, voter education, the contributions of Filipino Americans in World War II, the farm labor movement, the Obama presidency, and the coverage of several genocides. They all needed to be written into the new framework.

"Our 1998 standards were in some part based upon the course breakdown in the previous framework, which dates back to the 1980s," says McDonald. "So these course descriptions were entirely rewritten to incorporate new scholarship, and a lot of suggestions for teachers."

The new framework includes classroom examples at each grade level, which McDonald said are like "a full-blown lesson on how you can implement a standards-based lesson." Links to the Common Core literacy standards are included, as are links to California's English language development standards, reflecting California's diverse population.

"This is a much deeper and richer framework," said McDonald. "It's still based on the 1998 standards. The topics are pretty much the same. But we included a lot of changes."

The framework and standards present content in a deliberate sequence "to develop thematic and conceptual understandings that span from the local to the global."[38] In the early elementary years, for example, students learn about family and community structures, regional and geographic characteristics, and then people and institutions on a broader scale. In the upper-elementary grades, history and related social sciences center on chronology and geography.[39]

The new framework seeks to address the challenges that English learners encounter in school when it comes to history and social sciences. It calls for coordination between history-social science teachers and English language development specialists to develop student literacy.

It also includes a greater emphasis on civics than the earlier framework, with several appendices about service learning and civic education.

"If you pick one of our American history grade levels at random and start reading, you'll see stuff about voter drives and meeting with a congressman or going to a city council meeting, or students mobilizing to complete a beautification project in their community," says McDonald. "That's a very powerful force in California."

California's earlier framework was highly regarded. The Fordham Institute, reviewing the framework in 2011, gave it an A- and applauded it for focusing "squarely on history (not on social studies theory or methodology), emphasizing context, comprehension, and chronological coherence."[40]

Many of the early reviews of the 2016 framework have been less glowing. In particular conservatives contend it leans too far left. Williamson Evers, of Stanford University's Hoover Institution and former assistant secretary of education under President George W. Bush, questioned why "whole sections of the framework read as if they are pamphlets written by anti-globalization street protesters?"[41] and added that he hoped the commission would fix "some of the more egregious errors," fill in "gaps" and remove "ideological propaganda."

Evers's critique was adopted by a resolution of the California Republican Party County Chairmen's Association. It called for the Instructional Quality Commission and the State Board of Education to fix inaccuracies and biases. Among its claims was that the framework inaccurately describes capitalism as "inherently imperialist and colonialist"; there is no mention of the Progressives' promotion of a centralized government; and that the framework leaves out "the historical reasons for and the present day dimensions of the Sunni-Shiite split in Islam."

The conservative magazine *National Review* also weighed in on the new framework. Stanley Kurtz, senior fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., wrote that "California's proposed new K–12 history and social science curriculum is a carnival of leftist bias and distortion."[42]

In one instance, Kurtz critiqued the framework's 11th grade American history curriculum. He wrote that it promises to focus on movements toward equal rights for racial, ethnic, religious, and sexual minorities and women. "In practice, however, religious minorities receive limited attention. The focus is on racial, ethnic, and sexual minorities—sexual minorities above all. To a considerable degree, conventional political history (and even the new holy trinity of 'race, gender, and class') has been shoved aside or reduced to a supporting role by "race, ethnicity, and sexuality."[43]

Without question many controversies erupted during the framework revision. In a state the size of California, with a diverse population of more than six million students, there can be more partisanship and politics than in smaller states. But framework rewrites in California also draw additional attention because the final document could affect schoolchildren outside of California. Though the new framework and standards will be written into California's textbooks, because of the massive population, textbooks that are made on its framework are often used elsewhere.[44] McDonald said that California controls "11 percent or 12 percent of the national textbook market."[45]

The curriculum framework process began with the Department of Education conducting four focus groups of educators to get input on improvements to an existing framework. The Instructional Quality Commission recruited 20 people, at least half of whom were classroom teachers, to sit on a Curriculum Framework and Evaluation Criteria Committee. That group developed a draft framework.[46]

The draft framework was posted on the Department of Education's website for two 60-day public reviews. During the second posting last January through February, the department received more than 11,000 emails, according to McDonald.

The framework review received media coverage in countries such as Japan, Korean, India and the Philippines.

Many topics in the framework sparked debates, including the Bataan Death March and the Battle of Manila, the roles of LGBT individuals in U.S. and California history, the Armenian Genocide, and discrimination faced by Sikh Americans. McDonald said two sentences in the Grade 10 course description on comfort women in World War II, drew about 7,000 comments. They essentially stated that comfort women existed and that "comfort women were one of the greatest examples of sexual trafficking and slavery in the 20th Century."[37]

"It was inserted on behalf of the Korean-American community," McDonald said. "We got a lot of comments from them and from the country of Japan. Not the government but people living in Japan, and members of the Japanese-American community who were critical of those sentences. We made a few small edits, but they were kept."

Another controversy centered on whether the region that includes modern-day India, Pakistan and Nepal should be referred to as India or South Asia, to represent the variety of cultures there and that India was not a nation-state until 1947. The Hindu American Foundation, which works to manage the image of Hinduism in the U.S., led the argument to refer to the region as India. Opposed were scholars who felt it was historically accurate to refer to the area as South Asia.[48]

McDonald says the Instructional Quality Commission, which developed the framework, held meetings on the issue in March and May of this year. When the State Board of Education met in July, more than 300 speakers signed up to testify.

"In most cases the commission recommended the use of the term "ancient India" but in some cases where the topic under discussion was broader "South Asia" was recommended," he says.

Coverage of genocide was also controversial. A member of the California Assembly who is an Armenian-American led the passage of a law to encourage coverage of the Armenian Genocide in the state's curriculum, and to reference other genocides like the ones in Cambodia, Rwanda and Darfur. The language of the Armenian Genocide was reworked and more detail added, though the amount of coverage was debated. The other atrocities are mentioned, but to a lesser degree.

It is expected that the new California History-Social Studies Framework will be included in textbooks distributed in 2018.

Indiana

In 2013 Indiana undertook a review of its state social studies standards, as it is required by law to do every six years. But this time the appraisal took place while the state was in the midst of a major controversy over whether to adopt the Common Core standards.

In 2010 Indiana set aside proposed standards created the prior year and became one of the earliest states to adopt Common Core. The state instructed schools to begin by adopting Common Core standards in the lowest grades with a goal of statewide adoption in 2014 and new Common Core-linked state tests in 2015.[49]

Instead the state became the battleground for a political fight about local control and federal intrusion in education. Opposition to Common Core was led by two Indianapolis parents, Erin Tuttle and Heather Crossin, who persuaded lawmakers that the national standards were less rigorous than the state's previous academic guidelines and should be repealed.[50]

In 2013 newly elected Gov. Mike Pence and state Superintendent Glenda Ritz both supported a plan to have Indiana create its own standards. They were joined by Common Core opponents and state conservative leaders to back a bill to void the 2010 adoption and require new standards to be set by July 1, 2014.[51] Review panels made up of teachers and subject experts advising the Department of Education began crafting new standards by drawing from Common Core, the 2009 Indiana drafts, and standards proposed in other states and by outside organizations.[52]

In March of 2014 Pence signed legislation making Indiana the first state to withdraw from Common Core. The new law directed the Indiana State Board of Education to create its own learning goals before July 1 of that year. "Indiana has taken an important step forward in developing academic standards that are written by Hoosiers, for Hoosiers, and are uncommonly high," Pence said in a statement.[53]

Indiana's decision to not use Common Core had very little impact on the social studies standards review, according to Bruce Blomberg, social studies specialist with the Indiana Department of Education, who coordinated the 2013 revision. The only Common Core standards that were social studies-related were the content area literacy standards.

"The state adopted the social studies standards in March of 2014," Blomberg said. "The (social studies review) committees had finished their work by the fall of 2013. We convinced the state board that the social studies standards were good as is, so the board did not do any edits."[54]

In fact the revisions that the social studies review committees undertook in 2013 were made to history standards that were already held in high regard. The Fordham Institute had given Indiana's 2007 standards an A-, saying "Indiana's U.S. history standards present solid and substantive content, albeit with

scattered errors and thematic departures from chronology."

Social studies review committees were created for every grade level, including a combined K–3, as well as a committee for high school courses that already had Indiana academic standards, such as those required for graduation. Though an effort was made to have at least 10 members per committee, it was difficult to achieve that goal for courses such as sociology that were not frequently taught but still had standards. Conversely, Blomberg said committees for grades 7 and 8 each had more than 20 members.

Elementary and high school teachers participated, as did educators from Indiana State and Purdue Universities. Private organizations such as the Indiana Historical Society, the Indiana Council for Education, the Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Bureau of Jewish Education, the Indiana Council for Social Studies, the Indiana Council for Economic Education and the Geography Educators Network of Indiana all participated.

"Our task was to look at what we already had, especially with the teachers that had been using the standards, and ask if they saw any difficulties with the standards or ways they could be improved," says Blomberg.

"We did a lot of wordsmithing and combining," he adds. "We didn't do a lot of eliminating or adding. We did do some adding of things pertaining to Indiana history that were glaring omissions. And we wanted to make our K–3 community approach more global than it was."[55]

The new Indiana history content includes adding a reference to Benjamin Harrison, Indiana's only president, in Grade 3 lessons on immigration. Harrison was president when Ellis Island was opened. A standard was also added about the election of Harrison in high school Government; and some Indiana references were also added to the framework's resource guides.

Blomberg said one of the issues the committee wrestled with was that the 2007 standards were frequently accompanied by examples. While that might sound useful, an example suggested by the state can carry enough weight to be the only thing that is taught. So the question for the committee was whether to include examples.

"We solved that problem by keeping examples in the lower grades because many of those teachers don't have a strong social studies background and the examples seem to be very helpful for them," said Blomberg. "But for Grade 8 and above we took out the examples and created a resource document for the standards, which is kind of a teachers' edition for the standards."[56]

In the new version that document would include the standard from 2007, but it would have a number of different links covering several areas that a teacher could use to create a curriculum from that standard.

"That was the biggest thing," said Blomberg. "Too many people think the standards are the curriculum. The standards are not the curriculum. The standards are the document from which the curriculum is created."[57]

South Carolina

When South Carolina revised its Social Studies Academic Standards in 2011, one goal was to create a design that simplified the standard for teachers, and another was to enhance the study of African-American history. It succeeded in both.

When the Fordham Institute issued its "State of State History Standards 2011," South Carolina was the only state to receive a 10 out of 10 score and an "A" grade.[58] Then in 2014 the Southern Poverty Law Center published "Teaching the Movement 2014: The State of Civil Rights Education in the United States." In it South Carolina was one of only three states to receive an "A" grade, along with Georgia and Louisiana.[59]

The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) updates the social studies standards every six years. When last revised the SCDE began by gathering input from constituencies around the state looking at current standards and asked what needed to be changed, deleted or updated. Those constituencies included representatives of the state's 85 school districts, as well as the South Carolina Organization of Social Studies Supervisors, a group representing supervisors from each district, according to Lewis Huffman, retired education associate and the education department's coordinator for the standards reform effort.[60]

The department also met with historical societies and other content organizations, including the South Carolina Geographic Alliance and the South Carolina Bar Association, which runs many civic events in the state.

While gathering comments from various sources, the department solicited districts and South Carolina colleges and universities for nominations to serve on either a review committee or a writing committee. Ultimately a 17-person review committee and a 13-person writing panel were created. The review committee's charge was to sift through the comments received and then pass its recommendations along to the writing committee.

Along with individual comments and suggestions, the review committee also used several written sources including[61]:

- South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards, published by the SCDE in 2005.
- The national standards documents for social studies,

geography, civics and government, history, economics, and English language arts, including:

- The "*National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment. 2010*," published by the National Council for the Social Studies.
- Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts 2010

- The published social studies standards of other states, including California, Colorado, Minnesota, New York, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin.
- Published resources on the content and design of grade-level and high school academic standards.

According to Huffman, the committees created were balanced geographically across the state, including rural and urban districts, large and small districts. Members included social studies coordinators and teachers, representing various grade levels. Veteran and newer teachers were added to ensure a mix of professionals who had been working with the standards for years and those who were new to teaching and were learning how to teach within them.[62]

At the same time the education department was beginning a review, the South Carolina Education Oversight Committee also conducted a review of the standards. The Education Oversight Committee, which oversees the actions of the education department, created three committees: one consisted of people representing businesses and the community; another represented special student populations, such as special education teachers; and a third was made up of a panel of experts from around the country. That group included someone from the National Geographic Society, for example, so the committee would have someone well versed in geography.[63] The Education Oversight Committee produced a report on the standards including recommendations, and sent that to the review committee to become part of what it would recommend to the writing committee.

To achieve its goal of guiding teachers as they were teaching and simplifying the standards, the writing committee spent several days with a facilitator from Authentic Education, the New Jersey consulting firm founded by education reform advisor Grant Wiggins. The meetings focused on the concept of "backward design," a process in which developers work backwards from a finished product. When developing standards, the facilitator asked the writing committee to determine what it wanted the standards document to do, then plan backwards how to make the standards achieve that goal.

"We tried to get him to look at the standards from a K–12 perspective, meaning how are they going to build on each other?" says Huffman. "Social studies is not like math or science where you build process skills from year to year. Social studies is based on factual information. Yet we were trying to get to the idea of not just remembering facts for facts sake, but knowing them in order to build conceptual understanding."[64]

Early in the 2011 *South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards* there is a page that explains the format of the standards for each grade level. It is as follows:

The descriptive theme. For all of the academic standards for each grade. In the document's example the descriptive theme for Grade 1 is "Foundations of Social Studies: Families."

The academic standard. The academic standard is the "central expectation for student learning in this particular context." The standard in the document example is "The student will demonstrate an understanding of how families interact with their environment both locally and globally."[65]

Enduring understanding. Beneath the academic standard the writing committee placed "enduring understanding." The enduring understanding statement "identifies and briefly explains the main idea or central concept inherent in the standard that students should understand.[66]

The idea of "enduring understanding" was an addition to the revised standards. The goal was to make the standards more manageable for the teachers, says Huffman. "Some teachers would look at the standards and think that they were so broad and big and they couldn't wrap their arms around it," he says. "They didn't know what they were supposed to teach out of them. So we designed the enduring understanding to say 'This is the big takeaway. This is the big conceptual idea we want you to know.'"[67]

The first standard under "U.S. History and the Constitution" states that the student will demonstrate "an understanding of the conflicts between regional and national interest in the development of democracy in the United States." The enduring understanding to complement that reads "Contemporary democratic ideals originated in England, were transplanted to North America by English settlers, and have evolved in the United States as a result of regional experiences."

Indicators. Enduring understandings are typically followed by indicators, to provide teachers with additional guidance for ongoing assessment. These state the knowledge, skills and cognitive processes "that students must demonstrate to meet the particular grade-level or high school core-area academic standard."[68]

One indicator following the enduring understanding in the first U.S. History and the Constitution standard guides teachers to "Summarize the distinct characteristics of each colonial region in the settlement and development of British North America, including religious, social, political, and economic

differences." Another indicator states "Analyze the impact of the Declaration of Independence and the American Revolution on establishing the ideals of a democratic republic."

The process of revising the standards and gaining final approval from the State Board of Education and the Education Oversight Committee took about a year, according to Huffman. He says that normally the process takes about 18 months but was accelerated in the most recent revision.

Finally, South Carolina created a support document after the standards were approved, to explain the new standards and provide teachers with greater guidance on how to follow them. This document provided teachers with ample background information for each standard and indicator and was labeled "essential knowledge."

"Because of the standards some teachers were telling us they weren't able to get through all of the content within the time period allotted each year," says Huffman. "Then when the students were tested at the end of the year, they weren't doing well because they hadn't covered all of the content."

Huffman says that in the years following the new standards, teachers who followed the support document and incorporated certain strategies in the classroom, saw their end-of-year test scores finish higher than "most others."

The benefits of South Carolina's support document were noted in the Fordham Institute report ("The support texts not only outline what should be covered, but also explain the actual history in depth, maintaining a nuanced, sophisticated, and balanced approach throughout."[69]) and in the Southern Poverty Law Institute report ("The Support Document is a unique resource that offers official advice about how best to teach the content standards."[70]).

Huffman believes that South Carolina's most recent set of social studies standards was more of an "enhancement" of earlier versions than a complete rewrite. While disagreements and controversies can often erupt when creating history standards, the open effort to create diversified committees at the outset helped keep those to a minimum.

Alabama

The theme of the 2010 Alabama Social Studies Course of Study is "responsible citizenship." The standards, updated from a 2004 version, express the view that through history education students become aware of the parts they play as responsible citizens.

The introduction to the document makes clear what "historically informed" students should be able to do when taught under the standards guidelines including:

- Construct a personal connection to historical events at home and abroad;
- Think critically and chronologically regarding major events occurring in the United States and throughout the world;
- Critique a variety of historical documents;
- Engage in historical analysis and interpretation;
- Conduct historical research;
- Evaluate intricate connections among the past, present, and future; and
- Engage in decision making using historical knowledge and analysis."[71]

As a method of achieving those skills, Alabama's standards have been applauded for their thorough overview of American history, as well as their clear guidance for teachers and students.[72] In creating the new standards, the 30-person Social Studies State Course of Study Committee followed a straightforward plan that identified four strands: history, economics, geography, and civics and government. All strands are included in every grade, though different strands are emphasized at different grade levels. History concepts and skills, for example, are included in each grade. But students in Grades 5, 6, 10 and 11 concentrate on U.S. history, while they focus on world history in Grades 8 and 9.

The directions for teachers on how to interpret the minimum required content are presented in a five-step format. Content standards are followed by bullets, then examples, a grid indicating the dominant strand and, where relevant, map icons related to Alabama history or geography.

The content standard states what students should know and be able to do at the conclusion of a course or grade level. Each standard completes the phrase "students will." The first standard in Kindergarten, for example, states that students will "Sequence events using schedules, calendars, and timelines." Examples suggested include daily classroom activities and significant events in students' lives. One bullet included in the standard states "Differentiating among broad categories of historical time." And examples given to support that are "long ago, yesterday, today, tomorrow." Finally, an accompanying grid has a check mark in the "H" box for "History."[73]

While updating the standards, the study committee also tried to make them more detailed for teachers. Suggestions for more current teaching methods were included, such as the use of technology in geography.

"Things have changed with the way kids learn geography with the introduction of technology," says Chasidy White, a middle school social studies teacher who was a member of the study committee. "The kids now have access to digital maps and geographical information systems. So students were still

expected to learn the same things but there were some added elements to keep up with the digital age and to make sure students are learning what they should know in a rapidly changing environment that includes student-centered technology learning."[74]

One of the standards from seventh-grade Geography stated that "Students will describe the world in spatial terms using maps and other geographic representations, tools, and technologies."[75] Examples of what could be used include Google Earth, global positioning system, geographic information system, satellite-remote sensing and aerial photography.

Members of the study committee were appointed by the Alabama State Board of Education and the governor. They included early childhood, intermediate school, middle school, high school, and college educators, along with business and professional people. The committee included the president of the Alabama Historical Society, a mortgage broker and a parent.

The committee began its work in March of 2009 and, like development panels in other top states, produced a first draft that was posted for public comment on the Department of Education's website for six weeks. Additionally, the state superintendent of schools forwarded it to the local superintendents around the state with a request that it be shared with teachers to gain their feedback.

"We met and went through every single comment," says White. "We had one teacher who taught a fourth-grade class and she used it as an exercise in learning. She had every one of her students write us a letter, commenting on that particular grade level standard for social studies, what they liked and didn't like."

After making changes the committee sent out a second draft and considered those comments as well. For some grade levels the committee proposed few changes, but in others it made deliberate changes. Yet when the feedback pointed out problems with a new standard, the members reconsidered. At first the committee wanted to move Government and Economics to 11th grade and have 12th grade be a Modern World Events and Issues class. Teachers across Alabama sent in comments that they did not like that move.

"That's when (students) were registering to vote or joining the military after graduation," says White. "They felt like government and economics needed to stay in the 12th grade. So the draft changed and we went with what the teachers wanted and it stayed as it was."[76]

White says that while drafting the standards partisan issues that often crop up in social studies, were never a problem. The members gathered with a nonpartisan point of view and worked cohesively as a committee.

"We had a great deal of discussion over every standard and everyone offered their opinion," says White. "I don't recall any partisan bias. We did not have specific text books with us in the room. We weren't allowed to bring in outside material. It was just coming from our own knowledge background."

Committee members were able to review previous courses of study. They also looked at standards developed for various grade levels in other states.

Part IV: Recommendations

As this paper has demonstrated, numerous states – from Massachusetts and New York on the East Coast to South Carolina and Alabama in the South, Indiana in the Midwest and California on the West Coast — have written well-received standards. How can other states move forward and create new standards or, as is now being done in Massachusetts, revise existing standards in a way that promotes the teaching and learning of history? We have seven core recommendations and one word of caution. The last two recommendations do not require state support and can be implemented with the support of local administrators, teachers, and parents.

Our first recommendation is that in the process of creating state history curricula, education leaders design an open, inclusive process. As this study has demonstrated, the states that have had the most success with their curriculum frameworks are those that created and instituted a process that enabled the entire educational community to have a say. Most importantly, teachers — the people who will be working with the curriculum every day — need to have multiple opportunities at the start, during, and at the end of the standards design process to express their views. This process could include surveys of teachers, regional meetings, and document review panels. Absent such a broad effort to reach out to the teaching community, state efforts will, at best, be viewed skeptically — as yet another edict from bureaucrats with little knowledge of the day-to-day reality of life in the classroom.

A second recommendation is for state educational leaders to adopt an objective, non-partisan stance towards topics of contemporary historical debate. It is not the place of states or even of history teachers themselves to push their views about contested historical topics on students. Instead, curriculum writers must diligently work to craft standards that are fair and unbiased. Failure to do so, as the debate over the national history standards in the 1990s and the recent AP U.S. history standards demonstrate, will result in failure.

The pressures that history standards writers face vary from state to state, but they are present everywhere. Far from settled fact, history is full of topics and ideas that are endlessly debated. Often, one's position in some of these debates is reflective of one's politics. Conservatives, for example, will seek standards that are critical of liberalism. Liberals, in turn, will seek

standards that celebrate icons such as President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and are critical of major conservatives such as Ronald Reagan. Almost every historical topic is the subject of heated debate. Standards writers and education officials writers and education officials should acknowledge the debates but rise above them by permitting teachers the freedom to present numerous points of view on contested historical topics. Students themselves, using the best evidence, would then be free to decide for themselves.

A third recommendation is that standards should be detailed and specific. State history tests, which we support, must be based directly on standards that leave no room for ambiguity. Teachers and students should not have to guess what would be on a state history test that could be used as a graduation requirement. For example, writing a standard that asks students to identify the causes of the Civil War is an excellent start, but unless that standard identifies specific causes, such as the debate over the extension of slavery into western territories, then the test will become little more than a guessing game.

A fourth recommendation is for education officials to commit themselves to crafting standards that are strongly focused on academic content. This will require that educators stand against fashionable current trends that call for "21st century thinking skills" such as "critical thinking," "problem solving," or "innovation." Each of these are important, but none can be developed in any academic subject without a strong understanding of academic content. To refer back to the Civil Rights Movement, it would not be possible for a student to think critically about the movement without strong knowledge of a broad amount of content such as the economic, social, and political conditions that gave rise to it; the religious and philosophical ideas of movement leaders such as Dr. King; and major turning points in the history of the movement such as the Montgomery Bus Boycott, King's "I Have a Dream Speech," or the events of "Bloody Sunday" in 1965. Knowledge of content, including all the facts, names, and dates that many educators bemoan, are the necessary building blocks of critical thinking. To put one before the other is to put the cart before the horse.

A fifth recommendation is for educators, when crafting a state history framework, to specifically incorporate civics-based content into their history standards. Absent a state commitment to a required civics course, this will be the simplest way to promote the learning of material essential to understanding government and citizenship.

This can be accomplished in two ways. First, within the American history standards, writers can include — when historically appropriate — reference to fundamental topics such as the purpose and roles of the various branches of government or the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Second, we recommend that education officials emphasize foundational documents that explain the structure of our government as well as our nation's founding values and beliefs. As related to American history, such documents would include: the Declaration of Independence; the Constitution; the Bill of Rights; *The Federalist Papers*; the Seneca Falls Declaration of Sentiments and Resolutions; and seminal speeches from major American figures such as Frederick Douglass, Abraham Lincoln, and Dr. King.

A sixth recommendation would be to strongly encourage districts to promote the reading of history in each grade. Starting in grade 1 and continuing to grade 12, schools can require students to read at least one history book or history-related biography per year. Doing this will develop student vocabulary and content knowledge. Further, with properly chosen books, student engagement in history can be advanced. In the elementary grades, students can start with short biographies of inspirational Americans such as Abraham Lincoln and Jackie Robinson. As students advance into middle school they can read short histories of seminal events such as the American Revolution or World War II. High school students can then start to read more complex history works that can be aligned with the particular history and literature classes they are taking.

A seventh recommendation would be to promote historical writing in each grade. Teaching students to develop clearly written, thesis-driven papers with strong analysis and use of evidence cannot be done overnight or in any one year. Developing strong writing skills takes many years. To develop them, districts can require that students write a history essay each year — one of increasing complexity, length, and quantity of research.[77]

Finally, a word of caution. As this paper has sought to demonstrate, many states have exemplary existing standards — standards that have been well reviewed and that districts have spent many years adjusting to and working on. Massachusetts is one such state. State educational leaders may feel the need to revise or completely re-write standards to show teachers that they are interested in furthering the teaching and learning of history. But in cases where existing standards are already in place and have been ranked as among the nation's best, it would be more profitable for states to invest their time and resources to developing a statewide assessment system.[78]

Speaking in 2005, historian David McCullough remarked that "We have to get across the idea that we have to know who we were if we're to know who we are and where we're headed."[79] Over a decade later and in the midst of so much political tumult, it is clear that McCullough's words have great meaning. Class after class of students do not know their history and are now being confronted by a complex world where their choices have profound meaning. It is time for a change.

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