

The Rise and Fall of the Study of American History in Massachusetts

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■ **The Rise and Fall of the Study of American History in Massachusetts**

Preface: The State of U.S. History Today

by Willard Sterne Randall

To begin to understand the troubled state of United States history today requires a step back to a time when there was no question about the need, or the purpose, of teaching American history, let alone *what* history, or *which* history, or how to teach and test it. At first, in a young republic, there was no question what the purpose of history was: it was to inspire patriotism. The sons of the Revolution hastily erected a pantheon of all-male, virtuous heroes on which to place, on pedestals, our Founding Fathers.

In his 1800 biography of George Washington, Maryland Episcopal parson and Freemason Mason Weems depicted him as a messenger sent by God to free his people from (British) slavery – never mentioning his own 300-plus black slaves. When sales flagged after the fourth edition, Parson Weems invented the cherry-tree-chopping-down myth for the fifth edition: young Americans thus were taught they should not to tell a lie.

Poets and folklorists added more gods to the mythology that passed for American history. Longfellow's Paul Revere made his intrepid midnight ride alone; Ethan Allen and his Green Mountain Boys seized Fort Ticonderoga without a shot: his joint commander, the later-traitor Benedict Arnold, was deleted from the uncomplicated yarn.

As 40 million immigrants, mostly Europeans, teemed America's shores between the Irish potato famine and World War I, the focus of history teaching was Americanization of the new people through a homogenized, trouble-free history, still mostly all male and all white. Slave owner Andrew Jackson ascended his

throne, the death march of expelled natives he ordered as president along the Trail of Tears unmentioned. Abraham Lincoln and Clara Barton became deified exemplars of the horrendous Civil War that claimed, by the latest estimate, 750,000 Americans, roughly 40 percent of the casualties on both sides being first generation Americans.

A record of glorious achievements and victories, their heroes, dates and places had to be internalized by rote memorization. States instituted rigorous examinations for eighth graders—few Americans went on to colleges—to prepare their true-believing citizens.

As in so many spheres, the 1960's questioned the subject matter and the motives of U. S. history. The Great Man, toppled from his perch by women and by native and African Americans, was replaced by a more complicated and nuanced rendition of the dark side, of slavery, the Triangle Shirt fire, the KKK, Nisei internment, government repression of dissent and labor strife.

By the 1970's, the New History with its mind-numbing, numbers-crunching micro-studies produced turgid textbooks for a new type of course entitled Problems in American History. In toppling the Great Man, immutable economic and social forces displaced the individual. The new Paul Revere was now only a part of a group of riders. What Great Men survived had dark underbellies and were covered with warts and worse. Thomas Jefferson's lofty pronouncement that "all men are created equal" was mocked by revelations of his relationship with his slave concubine, Sally Hemings.

By the 1980's, where this study sponsored by Pioneer Institute takes up the history of

Massachusetts reform efforts, the historical community was polarized, divided over not just *what* history to teach but *which* history, with many schools of education spending more time on methodology than content, as factual knowledge was now renamed.

For the past twenty-five years as I have taught freshman American history classes in Vermont colleges many of my students have graduated from Massachusetts high schools. For many years, they stood out as the best prepared. But in recent years, I have seen that changing.

Too many of these students could not pass the 1908 Kansas final examination then required of all eighth graders. With little knowledge of historical geography, many are unable to point out on a map let alone explain the catalytic importance of the Louisiana Purchase. All too often, they confuse Harriet Tubman with Harriet Beecher Stowe. They've studied slavery at great length but don't know who won the Civil War.

Many of my students today take their only news from the *Daily Show* on Comedy Central. Because they haven't studied the U. S. Constitution, they have no concept of the connection between its Commerce Clause and anonymous unlimited Presidential election campaign donations. They know who Jon Stewart is, but not John Roberts.

Some educators blame this seemingly sudden dumbing down on the superficial distractions of social media and the Internet, where there are more than a million blogs but few juried experts. Others, as do I, see ways to meet the students on their own ground and incorporate the new technologies into our courses along with reading and storytelling.

Justifiably, many educators are concerned that the teaching of American history in high schools is not preparing students for success in college. Now, an alarming number of students fail to complete their degrees and are left only with mountainous debts and stunted prospects. Adhering to standards and testing their efficacy seem obvious steps toward assuring success in college, the lack of them, failure.

Students able to begin their college education by bringing to it a basic knowledge of the history of their own country would begin to be able to articulate their own mindset. That developed sense of identity as Americans and, yes, as global citizens, would inform their study of other subjects: literature, political science, sociology, art history and religion, among others. History enriches all these subjects. Why insist that what happens in history class stays in history classes?

At a time of national debate over immigration reform, will the only Americans who can demonstrate that they have learned our rich historical heritage be the new Americans who have passed their required citizenship examination? All Americans need to be well-prepared in U.S. history, equipped to act as responsible, well-informed, motivated citizens, in order to make intelligent, not propagandized, choices.

As the authors suggest, more than ever, Massachusetts students need a standardized test that guarantees that they will graduate from high school equipped to succeed in higher education, in their careers, in the full richness of democratic life.

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Executive Summary

Across Massachusetts public schools, history teachers believe that the study of U.S. history through the grades is in jeopardy if not in a poor state altogether.¹ To judge from recent national tests, students are graduating from the state's high schools as well as from high schools across the country with little understanding of our nation's history, its founding principles, its major institutions, and the central figures and events that shaped who we are as a people.

This state of affairs in the Bay State is surprising because Massachusetts played such a central role in our nation's history. The Puritans who came to Massachusetts starting in the 1600s created enduring forms of local self-government and laid the foundations for public education in this country. From the late 18th century through the 19th century, Massachusetts politicians, intellectuals, and writers—people such as John Adams, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and Horace Mann—shaped American intellectual life and American politics. Many presidents—John Adams, John Quincy Adams, Calvin Coolidge, and John F. Kennedy—had family roots in the Commonwealth. One would think that the study of U.S. history could be taken for granted in Massachusetts.

This state of affairs is also troubling because Massachusetts has the basic ingredients necessary to promote the study of U.S. history. Massachusetts has been judged to have one of the strongest sets of state history standards and a commendable state assessment system, and the state affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies has expressed eagerness to teach to the state's standards and have Bay State students assessed by state tests. However, despite the state's rich history and the educational assets it possesses, advocates

of the study of U.S. history do not know whether our students have a basic grasp of our major political institutions, procedures, and principles by the time they graduate.

Advocates have been gravely disappointed by recent decisions of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. After so much progress in the early- and mid-2000s as reflected in the board's adoption of a fully revised set of history standards in 2002, the beginning of the process of creating a U.S. history test for high school students, and the board's 2006 decision mandating that all students pass this test as part of a graduation requirement, the board reversed course in 2009 by postponing administration of this test, thus implying, in effect, that Massachusetts schools do not need to be held accountable for ensuring that our high school students know the important ideas, events, and figures in American history when they graduate.

The consequences, our nation's founders would agree, bode ill for our future. A nation that does not know its past will not be prepared to make the informed decisions needed for the future. It is time to reverse course. Although a staff member in the department of elementary and secondary education indicated that there are "no current plans to develop an assessment in history and social science" for the state, there is no need to develop *de novo* such an assessment. All Commissioner Chester and the board of elementary and secondary education need to do is to reinstate the grade 10 U.S. history test planned for pilot testing in 2009—a test the field wanted and was prepared for in 2009—and make passing a slightly revised version of it a graduation requirement starting in 2015-2016.

This paper has three objectives. First, it provides some reasons for the historical illiteracy of our students at a national level and some indices of their lack of historical knowledge. Second, it describes how the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act sought to improve the study of history and how the 1997 and 2002 curriculum frameworks in history and social science implemented that legislative charge. Third, it offers several recommendations to improve the teaching of history and the social sciences in the context of the Common Core standards adopted by the state in July 2010:

- (1) that the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provide suggestions for secondary school English and U.S. history and government teachers of specific texts that could be assigned in grades 6-10 to prepare students for reading a particular seminal text in U.S. history in grade 11 or 12.
- (2) that the legislature require the board of elementary and secondary education to reinstate the high school U.S. history test planned in 2009 for a high school diploma, starting in 2015-2016.

I. The Purpose for History Education Envisioned by the Founders

The condition of history education in contemporary Massachusetts would have surprised our nation's founders as well as leading educators in Massachusetts history. They knew that the preservation of a republican form of government, and this republic in particular, depended to a large extent on an understanding of the history of the Puritans in the 17th century and on the reasons for the American Revolution and the War of 1812. "History," Thomas Jefferson wrote, "by apprizing [students] of the past,

will enable them to judge of the future; it will avail them of the experience of other times and other nations; it will qualify them as judges of the actions and designs of men."²

Benjamin Franklin knew that in a world of monarchs and despots, a republic was a fragile experiment in self-government. In 1787, when the Constitutional Convention ended, a woman asked Franklin: "Well, Doctor, what have we got, a republic or a monarchy?" Franklin responded by saying "A republic, if you can keep it."³

The sustainability of the American experiment in democracy could not be dependent on great men like George Washington. Instead, it was dependent on the virtue, knowledge, and active participation of an informed citizenry. The people were the holders of what Washington—in his first inaugural address—referred to as the "sacred fire of liberty."

In the 19th century, leading figures in Massachusetts literature and politics embraced the vision our Founders shared of educated and active citizens who knew the history of their republic. Called the "father of the common school movement," Horace Mann, secretary of the state board of education in mid-nineteenth century Massachusetts, believed that public schools give the gift of opportunity to all, rich and poor alike. "Education then, beyond all other devices of human origin," Mann wrote, "is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery."⁴ A rigorous education would improve our society and a strong education in history would help Americans understand who we are as a people. In an 1841 essay, Ralph Waldo Emerson declared that "man is explicable by nothing less than all his history... there is," he observed, "a relation between the hours of

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our life and the centuries of time.”⁵

Education, and a strong education in our own nation’s history, was not just valued by our nation and our state’s founders, it was central to their hope that the American experiment in democracy could survive. In 1838, a young Abraham Lincoln pondered what would happen to a nation that forgets its history. He recalled the legacy provided by those who lived through the Revolution – those brave men who fought and died for liberty but were no more. “Those histories,” Lincoln said, “are gone....They were a fortress of strength; but what invading foemen could never do, the silent artillery of time has done – the leveling of its walls.”

Lincoln’s concern that the “silent artillery of time” would erase memories of the past need not happen when schools commit time, resources, and effort to teaching history. But it has happened. The study of U.S. history across the nation is in poor condition. To judge by scores on recent history tests given by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), students graduate from the nation’s high schools with little knowledge of our nation’s past or our founding principles and institutions. This may be as true in the Bay State as nationwide.

In Massachusetts, historical illiteracy has not resulted from poor state standards. To the contrary, the state has a highly rated set of history and social science standards, and in 2006 the board of elementary and secondary education chaired by James Peyser voted to include a high school U.S. history test based on these standards as part of the state’s high school diploma requirements. In 2009, however, the board chaired by Maura Banta voted to suspend the test for two years.

Because there have been no tests making schools accountable for teaching to the state’s 2002 standards for history, geography, economics, and U.S. government (civics) from K-12, law makers and education leaders have paid little attention to the history curriculum even though the General Law directs that history be taught. According to one high school history chair, social studies teachers have not been given professional days to develop their teaching because social studies is not a “testable subject.” As a result, academic achievement has been measured in Massachusetts mostly by assessments in language arts, mathematics, and science, with no assurance to the public that students would learn about the U.S. Constitution and Bill of Rights, the purpose for a federal form of government, the reason for and functions of the three branches of government, the “law” of supply and demand, the location and nature of countries across the world, and such seminal documents as *The Federalist Papers*.

This paper has three objectives. It first provides some reasons for the historical illiteracy of our students and some indices of their lack of historical knowledge. It then describes how the 1993 Massachusetts Education Reform Act sought to improve the study of history and how the 1997 and 2002 curriculum frameworks in history and social science implemented that legislative charge. Finally, it offers several recommendations to improve the teaching of history and the social sciences in the context of the Common Core standards adopted by the state in July 2010.

II. American Students' Lack of Historical Knowledge

Historical illiteracy in the nation's high school students is not new. It has been discussed by historians and others for a generation. It has also been documented by the NAEP history tests starting in 1986 and continuing up to the last administration of these NAEP tests in 2010. Scores on the NAEP tests (which are administered to a stratified random sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 in every state including Massachusetts) have been consistently low in all states.

On the 1986 grade 12 test, 60 percent did not know that the purpose of *The Federalist Papers* was to promote ratification of the Constitution in New York State; 60 percent failed to recognize the purpose of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation; 40 percent were not familiar with the concept of checks and balances; and 33 percent failed to identify the Declaration of Independence properly. The results demonstrated a lack of understanding of the Constitution and significant Supreme Court decisions. "Many [students]," as one study commented at the time, "lack a clear understanding of the fundamental document that defines the organization and powers of the federal government, as well as the rights and liberties of citizens."⁶

Some educators saw the results of the 1986 grade 12 test as only a snapshot in time and an aberration. Surely, scores would improve. In the 1990s, scores did not improve and it became clear that a lack of historical knowledge extended into elementary and middle schools as well. In 1995, after another round of tests, there was no longer any doubt that knowledge of U.S. history was abysmal. Over 80 percent of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 failed to demonstrate knowledge of American history at a Proficient level, a level

that, according to NAEP, demonstrates "solid academic performance."⁷

Throughout the 1990s, graduating seniors headed to college or the workforce with minimal understanding of their nation's past. "More than half of America's high school seniors," the *New York Times* wrote, "do not know basic facts about American history..."⁸ On the 2006 NAEP test, only 13 percent of seniors scored Proficient, while over 50 percent failed to score at the Basic level. Scores on the 2010 test, the most recent test, remained dismal. Only 12 percent of seniors scored Proficient, while over 50 percent failed to score at the Basic level. Fourth graders failed to explain why Lincoln was important, high school students failed to explain the Korean War, and 98 percent of graduating seniors could not explain the importance of *Brown v. Board of Education*.⁹ Worse yet, there were very few high scorers on any NAEP test. No more than 2 percent of students in grades 4, 8, and 12 scored at the Advanced level on either the 1994, 2001, 2006, or 2010 NAEP tests.

III. Causes of the Lack of Historical Knowledge

1. Distractions in Contemporary Life

What is the explanation for the lack of knowledge about U.S. history? Some scholars suggest that the root of the problem is our contemporary culture.¹⁰ Mark Bauerlein, author of *The Dumbest Generation*, believes that modern technology—the Internet, Facebook, smart phones, email, and instant messaging—act to stupefy our nation's youth. "Yes," Bauerlein writes, "young Americans are energetic, ambitious, enterprising, and good, but their talents and interests and money thrust them not into books and ideas and history and civics, but into a whole other

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realm and other consciousness... The fonts of knowledge are everywhere, but the rising generation is camped in the desert, passing stories, pictures, tunes, and texts back and forth, living off the thrill of peer attention. Meanwhile, their intellects refuse the culture and civic inheritance that has made us what we are up to now.”¹¹ Teenagers spend over 53 hours per week on electronic entertainment, a 2010 Kaiser Family Foundation study tells us.¹²

2. Focus on Pedagogy in Schools of Education

Other commentators on the school curriculum have argued that the problem originates with schools of education. Numerous contributors to a 2003 collection of essays titled *Where Did Social Studies Go Wrong?* point out the lack of substantive professional training for our nation’s teachers as a core part of the problem. Rather than stressing the knowledge of U.S. history that prospective history teachers should help students to acquire, many schools of education focus on pedagogical matters, as if the “how” of teaching history substitutes for the “what” of history. Practicing teachers also spend inordinate amounts of time in professional development programs that fail to link pedagogy to specific content.

Contributors to *Where did Social Studies Go Wrong?* acknowledge that pedagogy is necessary but not at the expense of content. Too many prospective teachers, political scientist J. Martin Rochester points out, are taught to teach students to learn how to learn (or “inquire”). They are not taught to emphasize the teaching of important content. “We need,” Rochester argues, “teachers who have not only read books on teaching about slavery and the Holocaust but have also read books on slavery and the Holocaust. Process is not a substitute for content.”¹³ That many

history teachers lack adequate historical knowledge for many important topics they teach about today is suggested by the “facts” over 20 Massachusetts teachers incorporated into outlines of proposed lessons for their classes after a week-long workshop on Islamic culture and history.¹⁴

3. Dominance of the Social Studies, not U.S. History, in the School Curriculum

One major reason for the declining study of U.S. history in the school curriculum was the development of the social studies, an umbrella term for a broad curricular movement begun over 100 years ago. The social studies movement, culminating in the establishment of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) in 1921, sought an integrated curriculum from K-12 encompassing not only U.S. and world history but also sociology, anthropology, psychology, economics, geography, and U.S. government (often called “civic” education), in effect lessening the emphasis and time on U.S. history alone. It also stressed a participatory notion of citizenship, which many thought was more appropriate for the hundreds of thousands of new high school students required by compulsory attendance laws to stay in school until 16 and who were forbidden by child labor laws to work in a factory. A social studies curriculum that simply included the study of history (and not necessarily chronologically) became the dominant model in the elementary and middle school, leaving only the high school years for concentrated study of U.S. and world history.

4. Lack of a Professional Organization for History Teachers

The domination of the social studies in education schools and in the school curriculum reflects the lack of national professional organizations for U.S. history and U.S.

government teachers. The only national K-12 teacher organization available to them is the NCSS. The only dedicated organization for history teachers is regional—the New England History Teachers Association.

The absence of a dedicated national organization for history teachers (and one for U.S. government teachers) in K-12 may be particularly serious for high school teachers, even though most members of NCSS are history teachers. They lack the kind of support and visibility that a dedicated national organization could give them. The K-12 curriculum cannot provide adequate time for serious coursework in sociology, anthropology, and psychology, but it might do much better with respect to U.S. history (and U.S. government) if an organization devoted to the discipline existed to clarify and promote its specific content. Most history teachers aren't members of any professional organization.

5. Ideology in the Academic World

Some scholars have suggested that a major source of the decline in the teaching of U.S. history is the prevalence of an anti-western and/or anti-American mentality on our nation's colleges and universities. According to sociologist Paul Hollander, “higher education remains a major and truly institutionalized source of domestic denunciations of American society”—and western society in general.

An anti-western and anti-American mentality has seeped into many K-12 schools through the academic coursework that prospective history and government teachers take, as well as through their professional training at schools of education. Since the 1960s, colleges have promoted the development of a host of programs that end up as forums for advocacy

or identity politics and not scholarship. As Hollander noted with respect to Whiteness Studies, “its apparent goal is to immerse (white) students in feelings of collective guilt about their conscious or unconscious racism and their ‘white privilege,’ and to persuade them that the pervasive and profound racism of American society is virtually ineradicable.”

These trends have alarmed scholars of diverse political points of view. In *Save the World on Your Own Time*, Stanley Fish urged college professors to introduce “students to bodies of knowledge and traditions of inquiry that had not previously been part of their experience” and “equip those same students with the analytical skills—of argument, statistical modeling, laboratory procedure—that will enable them to move confidently within those traditions and to engage in independent research after a course is over.”¹⁶

IV. Reform at the National Level

For at least a generation, the problems with the study of U.S. history have been visible to political leaders and education reformers. As early as 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education, in response to rising competition from abroad and declining Verbal and Mathematics SAT scores from the early 1960s onward, issued a ringing call for national education reform in all subjects, including history. The Commission's report, titled *A Nation at Risk*, noted that “in many schools, the time spent learning how to cook and drive counts as much toward a high school diploma as the time spent studying mathematics, English, chemistry, U.S. history, or biology.”¹⁷

Leading historians soon followed *A Nation at Risk* with equally urgent calls for reform. In 1987, a report by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools called upon the nation

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to make history and civics a fundamental focus of education at every level. “No matter what the time or place,” the Bradley Commission insisted, “human beings need a sense of self, a sense of how they got where they are in order to understand and evaluate where they are going next.” That is, the Commission argued, what history is for. “History answers not only the what, the when, the where, and the who about the course of human experience on our planet but, of more importance, the why.”¹⁸ Members of the Bradley Commission noted that their recommendations were among a host of reforms for public education but that serious changes in the study of U.S. history were urgent. States and districts, the Commission stressed, needed to implement a more rigorous U.S. history and government curriculum, and to require stronger content knowledge in their teaching staff and at least four years of history for all students from grades 7-12.

At the national level, government efforts to reform the teaching of American history got off to a shaky and overly politicized start. In 1990, President George H.W. Bush announced several education goals in his State of the Union Address. By the year 2000, “American students will leave grades 4, 8, and 12 having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, mathematics, science, and geography; and every school will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern economy.”¹⁹ A year later, he created the America 2000 plan that recommended the writing of national standards in all major subjects, including history. According to Secretary of Education Lamar Alexander, the America 2000 plan was intended to serve as a “catalyst of change.” “We have,” Alexander

stated, “embarked on a new voyage in the American experience.”²⁰

The voyage did not last long. The National Endowment for the Humanities under the leadership of Lynne Cheney and the U.S. Department of Education provided funds to the National Center for History in the Schools at the University of California in Los Angeles to draft a set of national history standards. The document it produced, under the direction of historian Gary Nash, was charged with bias for its one-sided portrayal of American history. The standards emphasized only negative aspects of American history such as the KKK, McCarthyism, and slavery.²¹ The positive was excluded or minimally stressed. Once-important names in history such as Thomas Edison and Daniel Webster were absent. Even the Constitution was not one of the 31 core national standards; it was confined to subsections of the document.

The national history standards were a political statement reflecting the ideological predispositions of its writers, not a scholarly set of standards elucidating our nation’s past. After a major controversy in the media, they were rejected by the U.S. Senate by a vote of 99 to 1. When No Child Left Behind was voted on in 2001, neither Congress nor President George W. Bush sought to make history a priority.

V. A Glimmer of Hope: Education Reform in Massachusetts

While national standards efforts foundered, several states forged ahead on their own. Massachusetts was one of them, starting in 1993 with passage of the Massachusetts Education Reform Act (MERA). MERA mandated state standards and assessments in all core subjects, including history and social science, as well as a dramatic increase

in state funding of education. The standards in the curriculum frameworks had to “be formulated so as to set high expectations of student performance and to provide clear and specific examples that embody and reflect these high expectations...”²² With respect to U.S. history, MERA was very clear. It mandated standards that “shall provide for instruction in at least the major principles of the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.”²³

MERA had been stimulated in part by the State Supreme Court’s decision in 1993 in what became known as the McDuffy case—a lawsuit by property-poor communities on equity in educational opportunity. At the conclusion of its decision, the court set out broad guidelines regarding the nature of the duty to educate. The court stated that an educated child must possess among other things “sufficient knowledge of economic, social, and political systems to enable students to make informed choices.”

In 1997, only a few years after MERA became law, the Massachusetts Board of Education under the leadership of Boston University President John Silber voted to approve a history and social science curriculum framework.²⁴ Advocates of a substantive history education had reason to believe that the state was starting to address the problem of a weak history and social science curriculum.

1. The 1997 Curriculum Framework in History and Social Science

The Commonwealth’s first curriculum framework for history and social science was a strong one. The stated goal of the 1997 framework was to “enable students to acquire knowledge, skills, and judgment

so as to continue to learn for themselves, [and] participate intelligently in civic life...” Its mission was to enable students to understand our nation’s constitutional foundation, our fundamental political institutions, traditions, and ideals. To do this, the 1997 framework called for the study of history every year from Pre-K to grade 12. The framework also called for the integration of disciplines related to history: geography, economics, and government. It further provided a commendable list of “core knowledge” topics for U.S. history, doing so in chronological fashion starting with early America before 1650 and going all the way up to modern America. Core knowledge topics from colonial America included the study of Massachusetts town government as well as the “intellectual and religious heritage of [the] Anglo-American colonials.” Students were also expected to learn the roots of Revolutionary and Constitutional thought from “Greco-Roman history, the Magna Carta, [the] evolution of Parliament, [the] Mayflower Compact, the English Revolution, colonial government, and ideas of the Enlightenment era.”²⁵

The 1997 framework represented a major step in the right direction. It did, however, have its faults, faults that ultimately made it an inadequate reform tool for advocates of history. It lacked grade by grade standards and the standards themselves were often vague, making them difficult to assess in an accurate manner. For example, when it came to the Civil War, the document contained a core knowledge standard that read “A nation divided; the failed attempts at compromise over slavery.” None of the core knowledge standards provided teachers a guide as to what compromises should be studied. The 1997 document did not list the 1820 Missouri Compromise or the Compromise of 1850

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as core knowledge requirements. It also did not list the 1854 Kansas Nebraska Act, the legislation that led to the formation of the Republican Party and the rise of Abraham Lincoln, as a core knowledge requirement.

In similar fashion, the core knowledge topics provided for World War II left much to be desired. The two standards on the war were: “American isolationism; Axis aggression and conquest in Asia and Europe” and “From Pearl Harbor to victory; the course and human costs of World War II.” Absent was any mention of the Battle of Midway, D-Day, or the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan. Absent as well was any mention of the entry of large numbers of women into the workforce, the internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast, or wartime efforts to end racial discrimination. The 1997 document was equally unhelpful about the Cold War. The only core standard on the Cold War stated: “Widespread ruin and the Cold War call forth new American foreign policies.” From an assessment perspective, such a standard is almost useless. What foreign policies are students expected to know? Further, the standard was entirely silent on the causes of the Cold War.

The 1997 document included a list of “commonly taught subtopics” that provided greater clarity, mentioning, for example, the key compromises leading up to the Civil War. But all of these commonly taught subtopics were listed “for the convenience of teachers and curriculum planners” and were simply suggestions, thus not necessarily to be assessed.

Perhaps the major problem with the 1997 document was its placement of world history, not U.S. history, in grade 10. This placement undermined the hopes of advocates of U.S. history who wanted the state test (which by

law had to be based on grade 10 standards) and the related competency determination for a high school diploma to be based on our own nation’s history. World history was important to teach but not, in the eyes of many teachers, administrators, and policy makers, as the basis for the high school diploma requirement.

2. The 2002 Curriculum Framework in History and Social Science

Advocates of a strong U.S. history curriculum and assessment system realized that changes were needed. Fortunately, MERA contained a process to “develop procedures for updating, improving or refining standards.” Revising the 1997 framework only a few years after its creation, however, struck some teachers as too much change too quickly. To accommodate teacher concerns, James Peyser (who replaced John Silber as Chairman of the board of education), David Driscoll (who replaced Robert Antonucci as commissioner of education), and department of education personnel created (as they did with all of the frameworks) a process to gather extensive teacher feedback.

The efforts made by department staff to reach out to the state’s history teachers were extensive. By 2000, a Curriculum Review Panel comprised of educators from across the state and department staff began to meet. From September 2000 to March 2001 the panel conducted 23 regional meetings, working on ideas and drafts of the standards, gathering feedback, and debating how best to improve the 1997 framework. In addition, in March 2001 the department surveyed all history teachers on their concerns with the 1997 framework: over one thousand teachers from 161 schools responded. The department also distributed draft after draft of the revised framework for public comment, receiving over 700 comments, and conducted over a

dozen regional meetings to gather further feedback on the drafts. Among the many scholars who reviewed portions of these drafts were: Richard Pipes (Harvard University); Michael Kort (Boston University); Charles Bahmueller (Center for Civic Education); Sheldon Stern (Kennedy Library); Mary Lefkowitz (Wellesley College); and Michael Poliakoff (National Endowment for the Humanities).

In October 2002, the board of elementary and secondary education voted unanimously to approve the revised framework, a delay of almost a year which we explain later on. Officially distributed in August 2003, this framework corrected the limitations of the 1997 framework. It provides clear grade by grade standards from Pre-K through grade 12 and it permits schools the choice of placing a two-year U.S. history sequence into the high school curriculum, either in grades 9 and 10, or in grades 10 and 11.

Standards for grades 8-12 are split into two sets of two-year courses: World History I and II (covering the years 500-2001) and U.S. History I and II (covering the years 1763 to 2001). The document also provides a series of “pathways” or suggestions as to how schools can sequence their high school curriculum. To unify study across the grades and across both U.S. and world history, the document suggests a few overarching themes on the origins and development of democratic principles, individual freedoms, and democratic institutions.

The document integrates skills in civics, geography, and economics with a historical narrative wherever chronology could be maintained. Thus, unlike most other states’ documents, this document provides teachers with only one set of content standards to

address at each grade level, together with related concepts and skills. The grade 6 standards focus on world geography, while the grade 7 standards address the ancient world from ancient Sumer and Egypt to the roots of Western civilization: ancient Israel, Greece, and Rome. The framework also provides a complete set of grade 12 standards for an economics course and a course on U.S. government.

The rigor of the standards in the 2002 curriculum framework clearly emerges in a comparison with the core knowledge topics in the 1997 Framework. The 1997 core knowledge topic on the coming of the Civil War lacked detail. In contrast, the standard on the coming of the Civil War in the revised framework is very clear: it asks students to “summarize the critical developments leading to the Civil War” and includes the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act. So too does it list other essential events often overlooked, such as the South Carolina Nullification Crises, the Wilmot Proviso, the publication of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, the Supreme Court’s decision on Dred Scott, and the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Similarly, while the topic for the origins of the Cold War in the 1997 framework provided little direction, the standard on the origins of the Cold War in the revised framework asks students to analyze the “differences between the Soviet and American political and economic systems” as well as “Soviet aggression in Eastern Europe.” In addition, the 2002 framework specifies the U.S. Cold War policies that students should learn about: George Kennan’s containment policy, the Truman Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and NATO. By doing so, the revised framework creates clear, measurable standards for a statewide history assessment.²⁶

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The 2002 framework also includes several appendices. The first appendix lists documents required for understanding our nation's history (e.g., the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, *Federalist #10*, and Lincoln's Gettysburg Address). The third appendix lists recommended readings for teachers of world history, U.S. history, and U.S. government, including such classics as Bernard Bailyn's *Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*; David Hackett Fischer's *Albion's Seed*; Richard Hofstadter's *Age of Reform*; James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom*; and Gordon Wood's *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. In addition, the introduction to the 2002 framework is a reprint of an essay that historian Paul Gagnon had written on the meaning of democracy for the American Federation of Teachers in 1987.

3. The Attempt to Alter the Content and Thrust of the 2002 Curriculum Framework

Almost a year before the October 2002 vote on the document, critics—chiefly social studies and multicultural educators—set forth various complaints. 1) They quarreled with the (deliberate) omission of several social sciences (anthropology, sociology, and psychology) and a lack of encouragement of political activism—reviving the old quarrel between social studies and history educators. 2) They erroneously claimed that the document lacked “overarching” themes mainly because they did not like the themes in the document—on the evolution of democratic principles and personal freedoms. 3) They charged the document with being too “prescriptive,” having too many facts and standards for each grade, promoting “drill and kill” and rote memorization, and leaving little room for “creative” teaching. 4) They complained of insufficient standards on native Indian tribes and on Africa, Asia,

and South America before the 16th century. 5) They found the document too Eurocentric and provided details for what amounted to an Islamo-centric curriculum. 6) They perceived the standards on Islam as “biased” if not “racist” because they addressed problematic as well as positive aspects of Islamic civilization (such as the trans-Saharan slave trade from West Africa to the Middle East from the 8th to the 20th century).²⁷

Who were the critics? The chief critics were a district superintendent, at the time head of the Massachusetts superintendents' association and once head of Educators for Social Responsibility, and a network of educators and politicians spanning Harvard's Center for Middle Eastern Studies, Boston University's African Studies Center, an organization called Primary Source providing consultants and curriculum materials to the schools, and the Boston City Council.

In an effort to prevent these standards from coming into being, these critics first tried to delay the vote on the standards, then, after the vote, to distort the state assessments to be based on them, and, finally, to delay implementation of the standards in the schools. For example, during the final stage of preparing the document for a vote, the head of the superintendents' association sent inaccurate information about the contents of the document to all the other superintendents in the state and asked for their signatures on a petition to the department seeking time for major revisions that would incorporate “essential questions.”

Both sets of critics requested non-public meetings with the chairman of the board, the commissioner, and/or department staff to present the changes they wanted in the final draft. Several critics communicated regularly with some department of education

staff (through telephone calls and requests for meetings) to get changes made—almost to the point of harassment. Almost no changes were made because the requests were outside of a public process, the suggestions were unsound, unacceptable (a *Boston Globe* editorial agreed that we were a “Eurocentric” country), or made the document too long, and most teachers and administrators did not support the critics or want the vote delayed. The only substantive change resulting from the critics’ comments was a re-wording of the standard that had asked students to explain why Islamic societies after 1500 failed “to keep pace” with Europe intellectually, technologically, economically, militarily, and politically.

4. The Development of State Tests Based on the 2002 Framework

The 2002 curriculum framework, a significant leap forward in comparison with 1997 framework, heartened advocates of history. As required, the department began developing a series of history and social science tests, one for American history in grade 5, a second for ancient history and world geography in grade 7, and the third to address U.S. history in grade 10 or 11 depending on when a school district opted to complete their U.S. history sequence. In May 2005 the department began a series of question tryouts (and did so again in 2006).

Momentum was on the side of U.S. history and, indeed, all those who valued an educated citizenry capable of making informed political decisions. Amidst all the disturbing trends—the NAEP scores, the larger decline in civic participation and voting, and the reluctance of colleges and universities to require classes in U.S. history—the state of Massachusetts was clearly charting a different, more hopeful course.

Progress continued. In October 2006, in a historic vote, the board of elementary and secondary education mandated the passing of the high school U.S. history test as a high school graduation requirement, starting with the class of 2012. Chairman James Peyser stated that “our experience over the past six years has made clear that barely passing a 10th grade exam in two subjects [mathematics and English] is simply not good enough to prepare students for success in college or a successful career in the global marketplace.”²⁸ The following year, the department produced a 77-page report outlining plans for the history and social science tests.²⁹ The plan included a stage by stage implementation schedule with pilot tests in 2007 and 2008, and operational tests to begin in 2009. History’s time as a valued subject had arrived, it appeared.

With momentum behind the 2002 framework and the state’s history tests building, good news continued in the form of strong reviews for the framework itself. In 2003, the Fordham Institute declared that the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework was among the best in the nation. “Its balanced consideration of both historical thinking and historical content,” the review noted, “provides a substantive model that many other states would do well to study.”³⁰ That same year, Diane Ravitch declared the Massachusetts document, along with the California history framework, the best in the nation. The standards for both states, Ravitch argued, “clearly identify the ideas, events, and individuals that students should learn about, without prescribing interpretations. This builds a solid body of knowledge about history and provides guidance to teachers, students, assessment developers, and textbook writers.”³¹

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Now a decade old, the 2002 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework continues to stand out as among the best in the nation. Ten years after his first review of state history frameworks on behalf of the Fordham Institute, Sheldon Stern provided an updated report on the state of history across the nation. For most of the nation, the results were discouraging. According to Stern, forty-nine states have standards and most state history standards are of poor quality. Some states have standards that are overly broad. Other states have standards that offer politically correct lists of the names of famous Americans, with Abraham Lincoln and Sacagawea given equal footing. Still other states have standards that are simply factually incorrect – asserting, for example, that America’s Founding Fathers were influenced by the Iroquois League when they wrote the Constitution. Finally, Stern notes that some states do a poor job of sequencing their standards, leaving important parts of American history covered either in middle or elementary school.

Stern did criticize the 2002 Massachusetts curriculum framework for placing the teaching of colonial history only in grade 5, with the high school standards covering U.S. history beginning with the ending of the Seven Years War in 1763.³² Unless high school teachers take it upon themselves to review colonial history, Massachusetts high school students may be graduating from high school with a minimal understanding of this country’s colonial foundations.

However, Stern still considers the 2002 Massachusetts Framework among the best in the nation. The Massachusetts standards “offer clear, comprehensible outlines, rigorously focused on historical substance and comprehension...the content is detailed

and sophisticated, offering explanation and context as well as lists—a model of how history standards should be organized.”

By 2009 all the pieces were in place. The Massachusetts curriculum framework for history and social science had garnered outstanding reviews. The state test for grade 10 was close to being operational. Schools had re-ordered the sequence of their history courses to facilitate adoption of the new curriculum and to prepare for state tests. According to a January 2007 department of education poll, over 95 percent of Massachusetts high schools required graduating seniors to take at least three years of history.³³ And according to internal department data from 2009, approximately 60 percent of schools had their ninth graders studying the first half American history and their 10th graders studying the second half, enabling these schools to administer the state U.S. history test at the end of grade 10. Alternatively, the other 40 percent of Massachusetts schools had their 10th graders studying the first half of U.S. history in grade 10 and the second half in grade 11.³⁴

VI. Momentum Lost

History’s moment of opportunity did not last. On February 24, 2009, the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education chaired by Maura Banta voted to suspend for two years all state history and social science tests, as well as the history and social science graduation requirement. Commissioner of Education Mitchell Chester professed that “I have not come lightly to this decision, and I am deeply committed to the teaching and learning of history and social science as part of a well-rounded curriculum.” Chester insisted that a lack of financial resources was the key reason behind the suspension of the tests. Both Chester and

the board pledged to reinstitute the tests as soon as possible. According to minutes of the February 9 meeting, “the board intends to establish a timeline for reinstating the history and social science requirement for the competency determination as expeditiously as possible.”³⁵

The news was deeply disappointing to supporters of a strong U.S. history curriculum. After so much progress, the board of elementary and secondary education and Commissioner Chester had reversed course. Although many history advocates took faith in the board’s and Chester’s pledge to reinstate the test quickly, this faith has so far not been rewarded.

Since 2009, neither Chester nor the board of elementary and secondary education has taken any steps to reinstate the state tests for history and social science. In May 2011, the board—perhaps embarrassed by its lack of progress on resuming testing—voted to give the department of elementary and secondary education even greater leeway for determining when it will resume testing. Although the board had explicitly limited the waiver to the graduating classes of 2012 and 2013, in May 2011 the board revised its previous vote, thereby—as stated in the board’s minutes—“deleting the obsolete reference to the classes of 2012 and 2013...” Now the board simply refused to make much of any commitment to the history test, adding only that “the Competency Determination for history and social science would take effect in the third consecutive year that the history and social science high school assessment is administered,” adding that all testing was “contingent on the appropriation of funding necessary...”³⁶ The board’s and the department’s actions represented a stunning about-face. As of October 2012, the

department was doing nothing to reinstate the history tests. In an e-mail to a co-author of this paper, a staff member with the department’s Center for Curriculum and Instruction wrote that “there are no current plans to develop an assessment in History and Social Science for the Commonwealth.”³⁷

To advocates of history teaching and to those concerned with the ideas and values of citizenship, the board’s decision represented a stunning and discouraging about-face. The director of social studies in the Braintree Public Schools stated that “without sufficient knowledge in the various fields of history and the social studies our students will enter their adult lives and the world of work in the 21st century with a juvenile understanding of their roles...”³⁸ Reinstatement of the test, he insists, is necessary to do this. A former teacher at Bridgewater-Raynham High School who has lobbied to restore the test declared that the “central mission of schools is to develop compassionate, informed, and active citizens.” The board’s elimination of the history tests, he believes, severely cripples the ability of schools to fulfill this mission.³⁹ A grade 8 teacher in Dracut pointed out that “the state has repeatedly put off requiring a history test and there is apathy throughout many districts.” School districts no longer see “the need to teach civics, geography, economics, and of course history.”⁴⁰

Massachusetts history teachers are clearly concerned with the state of U.S. history education. So too is the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies, which has tirelessly advocated for reinstatement of the state’s history test. Its president has testified to the board of elementary and secondary education, written numerous editorials in papers across the state, and urged Commissioner Chester to stand up for history education. “One would

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think,” he declared, “that a basic education for any living and breathing American citizen would include learning about how the nation was founded, where the people came from, why they came here, and the significant events that have shaped our heritage and culture.”⁴¹ In a letter to the department, he dismissed Commissioner Chester’s arguments that financial concerns prohibited moving forward with the state history test. The state, he pointed out, spends over \$3 billion a year on public education. The cost of instituting the state history test is \$2.4 million.

Massachusetts history teachers are not alone in seeking a greater emphasis on U.S. history and civic education and a restoration of the state history test. In a May 2012 poll conducted by the Pioneer Institute, 97 percent of teachers, 95 percent of parents, and 88 percent of legislators supported a stronger focus on our nation’s founding and history.⁴² Similarly, 97 percent of teachers, 84 percent of legislators, and 82 percent of parents believed Massachusetts students should focus more attention on all of U.S. history.

The Pioneer poll also found strong support for the requirement of the state test in U.S. history: 63 percent of teachers support the state history test and only 14 percent were “strongly opposed to it.” 64 percent of legislators support the test, with only 12 percent strongly opposed to it. The attitudes of parents were similar, with 59 percent supporting the test and only 17 percent strongly opposed.

What about the cost of the test? The Pioneer poll asked legislators—those who actually are responsible for passing the state budget—and they disagree with Commissioner Chester. Almost 70 percent said the state can find the money for it.⁴³

VII. What Is to be Done? Policy Recommendations

What can be done about the de-emphasis on U.S. history? Is it possible to reverse course and commit schools in Massachusetts and across the nation to a serious effort to promote the teaching of American history?

1. Refocus the National Debate on Education

Any effort to refocus the debate will have to confront the seemingly unrelenting national and state focus on mathematics and reading. In 2001 Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB).⁴⁴ NCLB required that any public school receiving federal funding had to test all students every year in grades 3 through 8 in reading and mathematics but not in any other subject.

The national focus on mathematics and reading has gained added momentum with the adoption of the Common Core standards, created by a joint project of the National Governors Association and the Council of Chief State School Officers. The Core Standards website boasts that teachers will need to teach critical content across the curriculum, including content on “America’s Founding Documents.”⁴⁵ Several English language arts standards in fact expect seminal U.S. political documents to be studied in the English class (e.g., the Gettysburg Address).

But however much advocates of the Common Core defend their standards, they simply are unable to avoid acknowledging that they are reading and mathematics standards, not history standards. The literacy standards for history, for example, ask students to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and integrate historical information—all laudable goals. However, in the absence of standards that explain what it is that students need to analyze, interpret, evaluate, and integrate, there will be little

learning of actual history. Moreover, there is no indication yet that the seminal U.S. political documents specified for study in the English language arts standards will in fact be assessed by the two testing consortia funded by the U.S. Department of Education to develop common tests based on the Common Core standards.

This is not to say that mathematics and reading are unimportant. The point that history advocates need to make is that the neglect of our own nation's history has long-term and deeply troubling consequences for the very basis of our democratic civilization. The neglect of history is rust at the bottom of our ship of state. It is hard to see now, but eventually it will eat away at the entire ship.

In Massachusetts, advocates of history can take faith in knowing that they need not wait for reform to come at the national level. Several groups and individuals, including the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies, We the People, the Pioneer Institute, and State Senator Richard Moore (who oversaw the formulation of the U.S. history standards in the 2002 curriculum framework) have already begun to advocate on behalf of U.S. history and civics. Senator Moore has in fact led a commission on civic education and has proposed a bill to restore the state history graduation requirement. Moore points out that the state's history test was supposed to be a graduation requirement for the class of 2012. His Commission recommends (in draft form) "that the Governor and Legislature appropriate sufficient funds through the FY14 State Budget, or as early as possible, to implement the MCAS History test, and that there be sufficient lead time for prep work and remedial services."

2. Adjustments in the Curriculum and Assessments

All the necessary ingredients exist for a rigorous K-12 curriculum. The 2002 framework has been widely accepted across the Commonwealth. It need not be re-invented, just very slightly revised to reflect discipline-based criticism.

The high school test, in turn, needs to be reinstated but with a clearer focus on our nation's founding, our political institutions (Congress, the Supreme Court, and the presidency), and our fundamental documents, particularly the documents listed in the first appendix of the framework. The test should, in many respects, be similar to our nation's citizenship tests.

Pedagogically, teachers need to focus their time on what is important to understanding our nation, not through rote memorization but through serious, reasoned analysis. For example, the 2002 framework asks students to "Describe the debate over the ratification of the Constitution between Federalists and Anti-Federalists and explain the key ideas contained in *The Federalist Papers* on federalism, factions, checks and balances, and the importance of an independent judiciary." To teach to this standard and to build an assessment around it require teachers to analyze and discuss the history of America leading up to the Constitutional Convention—particularly goals and ideals of the Revolution and the accomplishments and failures of our first government under the Articles of Confederation. Teachers and students also need to analyze and discuss the debates at the Constitutional Convention, the ideas of anti-federalists such as Patrick Henry, and the ideas of Federalists such as James Madison and Alexander Hamilton. The capstone to student understanding would

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be a reading and analysis of many of the most important *Federalist Papers*.

The Roman historian Livy once wrote: "... The study of history is the best medicine for a sick mind; for in history you have a record of the infinite variety of human experience plainly set out for all to see; and in that record you can find for yourself and your country both examples and warnings; fine things to take as models, base things, rotten through and through, to avoid."⁴⁶

Livy was right. Our founders were right, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts was on the right track when it insisted that students be required to demonstrate knowledge of U.S. history in order to graduate from high school. The time has come to reinstitute the state test for U.S. history. More important, the time has come for our state leaders and our schools not only to acknowledge history's fundamental role in the creation of citizens but also to put the resources behind such words.

Recommendation 1: The legislature should require the department of elementary and secondary education to provide suggestions for secondary school English and U.S. history and government teachers showing examples of specific texts that could be assigned in grades 6-10 to prepare students for reading a particular seminal text in grade 11 or 12.⁴⁷ For example, to prepare students for reading *Federalist #10* in grade 11, students could be assigned (among other texts) Barbara Mitchell's *Father of the Constitution: A Story about James Madison* in grades 6 or 7, Catherine Drinker Bowen's *Miracle at Philadelphia* in grade 7, 8, or 9, and de Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer* in grade 9 or 10.

Recommendation 2: The legislature should require the board of elementary and

secondary education to reinstate the high school U.S. history test planned in 2009 for a high school diploma, starting in 2015-2016, after it is slightly revised, perhaps under the chairmanship of Senator Richard Moore, to focus more clearly on our basic principles and institutions, as well as on documents that are reflective of our core values.

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About Pioneer:

Pioneer Institute is an independent, non-partisan, privately funded research organization that seeks to change the intellectual climate in the Commonwealth by supporting scholarship that challenges the “conventional wisdom” on Massachusetts public policy issues.

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Endnotes

1. We do not have data on the performance of Massachusetts students on U.S. history tests, in contrast to many years of state assessment data in English and mathematics. However, based on NAEP data (data that does include Massachusetts students) and the neglect of history education by the state, we have no empirical basis for assuming that Massachusetts students are performing in history at significantly higher levels than their peers in other states, despite the Bay State's highly rated history and social science standards and their acceptance by the state affiliate of the National Council for the Social Studies.
2. Quoted in Paul Gagnon, ed. *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 112.
3. Richard Beeman, *Plain, Honest Men: The Making of the Constitution* (New York: Random House, 2010), 412.
4. Horace Mann quote from <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/h/horacemann137201.html>
5. Gagnon, *Historical Literacy*, 112.
6. Diane Ravitch and Chester Finn, *What Do Our 17 Years Olds Know?* (New York: Harper and Row, 1987), chapter 2.
7. NAEP results are reported by achievement levels: basic, proficient, and advanced. For the most recent NAEP results (from the 2010 test) see "The Nation's Report Card: U.S. History 2010." National Center for Education Statistics.
<http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pubs/main2010/2011468.asp>.
8. "Most 12th Graders Know Little American History, Survey Says," *The New York Times*, November 2, 1995.
9. See the NAEP report mentioned in endnote 2. Also see Sam Dillon, "U.S. Students Remain Poor at History, Tests Show," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2011.
10. Some scholars have turned Americans lack of historical knowledge into a virtual industry by selling books to adults who realize that they have a limited understanding of their own nation. Kenneth Davis, for example, has authored *Don't Know Much About History: Everything You Need to Know About American History and Never Asked* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003) and *Don't Know Much about the American Presidents* (New York: Harper Collins, 2012).
11. Bauerlein, *Dumbest Generation*, 10.
12. <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/mh012010pkg.cfm>
13. J. Martin Rochester, "The Training of Idiots: Civics Education in America's Schools," in *Where did Social Studies Go Wrong?*, ed. James Leming, Lucien Ellington, and Kathleen Porter (Maryland: Fordham Foundation, 2003). 28.

14. Sandra Stotsky, *The stealth curriculum: Manipulating America's history teachers*. (Washington, D.C.: Thomas B. Fordham Institute, 2004). <http://www.edexcellence.net/publications/stealth.html>
15. Paul Hollander, ed., *Understanding Anti-Americanism: Its Origins and Impact at Home and Abroad* (Chicago: Ivan Dee, 2004), 23-28.
16. Stanley Fish, *Save the World on Your Own Time* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 12-13.
17. The report can be found at http://datacenter.spps.org/sites/2259653e-ffb3-45ba-8fd6-04a024ecf7a4/uploads/SOTW_A_Nation_at_Risk_1983.pdf
18. Gagnon, *Historical Literacy*, 10.
19. Bush's education objective is quoted in Gary Nash, Charlotte Crabtree, and Ross Dunn, *History on Trial: Culture Wars and the Teaching of the Past* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1997), 150.
20. *Ibid*, 152.
21. Lynne Cheney, "The End of History," *Wall Street Journal*, October 20, 1994. Also see Lynne Cheney, *Telling the Truth: Why Our Culture and Our Country Have Stopped Making Sense – and What We Can Do about It* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).
22. <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69>
23. <http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter69/Section1D>. MERA's requirements for U.S. history built upon pre-existing Massachusetts law that requires in "all public elementary and high schools American history and civics, including the Constitution of the United States, the Declaration of Independence and the Bill of Rights, and in all public high schools the constitution of the commonwealth and local history and government and a program relating to the flag of the United States of America, including, but not limited to, proper etiquette, the correct use and display of the flag, the importance of participation in the electoral process and the provisions of 36 U.S.C. 170 to 177, inclusive, shall be taught as required subjects for the purpose of promoting civic service and a greater knowledge thereof, and of fitting the pupils, morally and intellectually, for the duties of citizenship."
<http://www.malegislature.gov/Laws/GeneralLaws/PartI/TitleXII/Chapter71/Section2>
24. Silber replaced Martin Kaplan as chairman of the board in January 1996. For the background on the board of education and the department of education, see Cara Stillings Candal and Ken Ardon, *A Changing Bureaucracy: The History of the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education*. <http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/a-changing-bureaucracy-the-history-of-the-massachusetts-department-of-elementary-and-secondary-education/>
25. See pp.13-14 of Framework at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/hss/1997/>
26. The 2002 framework can be viewed at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/frameworks/current.html>

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27. The material in this section is taken from “How Should American Students Understand their Civic Culture? The Continuing Battle over the 2002 Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework,” published in English in a Spanish journal *Estudios sobre Educacion*, 2003 (5). This article, in turn, was based on testimony invited by Senator Judd Gregg of New Hampshire, Chairman of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, United States Senate, for a hearing titled “What Is Your Child Reading in School? How Standards and Textbooks Influence Education.” The hearing was held at the Dirksen Senate Building, Washington D.C., September 24, 2003.

28. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/minutes/06/0815reg.pdf>

29. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=3293>

30. Sheldon Stern, *Effective State Standards for U.S. History: A 2003 Report Card*. Fordham Institute. http://www.edexcellencemedia.net/publications/2003/200309_effectivestatestandardsforushistory/History_Standards2003.pdf

31. Diane Ravitch, *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 138.

32. Not all schools follow this design. The high school U.S. history curriculum at the Advanced Math and Science Academy Charter School begins in the 1500s.

33. <http://www.doe.mass.edu/ccr/masscore/0307surveyresults.html>

34. Kevin Dwyer email to Anders Lewis, October 2, 2012.

35. The February 2009 Massachusetts Board of Education Minutes can be accessed at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/minutes/09/0224reg.pdf>. Chester’s letter can be accessed at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/news/news.aspx?id=4597>

36. The May 2011 Massachusetts Board of Education Minutes can be accessed at <http://www.doe.mass.edu/boe/minutes/11/0524reg.pdf>

37. Kevin Dwyer email to Anders Lewis, October 2, 2012.

38. *Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies Newsletter* (Winter 2012). <http://67.227.195.50/~masscoun/wp-content/uploads/NewslineWinter2012.pdf>

39. *Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies Newsletter* (Spring 2011). <http://67.227.195.50/~masscoun/wp-content/uploads/Newsline-Spring-2011.pdf>

40. *Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies Newsletter* (Winter 2012). <http://67.227.195.50/~masscoun/wp-content/uploads/NewslineWinter2012.pdf>

41. See <http://www.masscouncil.org/?p=2214>

42. <http://pioneerinstitute.org/download/pioneer-institute-report-on-history-in-schools/>

43. Pioneer Institute Report on History in Schools, May 10, 2012.
44. President G.W. Bush signed NCLB into law in January 2002.
45. <http://www.corestandards.org/about-the-standards/myths-vs-facts>
46. Livy, *The Early History of Rome* (New York: Penguin Press, 2002), 5.
47. See Sandra Stotsky, *The Death and Resurrection of a Coherent Literature Curriculum* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2012) for an example of a coherent sequence of well-written informational texts from grades 6 to 10 (as well as a supporting sequence of literary selections from grades 6 to 11) on pp. 132-136.

