

Dear Minnesota Social Studies Standards Committee:

I am writing to express concern and feedback about the first draft of the K-12 academic standards in social studies. I applaud this open process – it's important many voices are heard as we make decisions about what our children are taught about history, civics and the world around them.

I'm concerned the committee's admitted "shift in approach to standards and social studies learning" eliminated many important aspects of history and civics and replaced them with controversial and hard to measure standards that ask students to "recognize unfairness" and "develop respectful awareness."

The new draft no longer provides a comprehensive approach to history and social studies our children deserve. The following specific changes would restore balance to the draft social studies standards and create a document all Minnesotans can be proud of:

WORLD/U.S. HISTORY

There are several key pieces of our world and nation's history that are missing when compared with the 2011 standards.

Keep some or all of the benchmarks that teach about World War I, World War II, the Holocaust (including references to the Nazi regime and Jews), the rise and effects of communism and socialism, the American Revolution and the Civil War.

Do not weaken benchmarks that teach about the Vietnam War, China and genocide. Indigenous peoples is the only group named in reference to genocide (21.5.1), and genocide is only framed as a past occurrence (17.6.2).

MINNESOTA HISTORY

The history and culture of Minnesota's Anishinaabe and Dakota peoples were included in five benchmarks in the 2011 standards. Their lives and perspective are important, but now with 15 benchmarks in the 2020 first draft specifically naming these two groups, there is concern this comes at the expense of other people groups and other history.

Keep some or all of the benchmarks that teach about Minnesota's involvement in the Civil War, the impact of Iron Range mining during World War II, the response of Minnesotans to global conflicts and displaced peoples since 1945, the causes

and effects of the United States Secret War in Laos and the role Norman Borlaug played in the agricultural revolution.

PATRIOTISM

Replacing specific mentions of flag etiquette and the Pledge of Allegiance with a vague reference to how people show patriotism does not serve our students.

Do not weaken the benchmark that teaches about the Pledge of Allegiance, basic flag etiquette and other demonstrations of patriotism. (2.1.1) Add a benchmark on the study of September 11, 2001.

RACISM/MARGINALIZATION

While the study of racism is relevant, how it is framed in the draft standards is political and controversial and comes at the expense of more important topics.

Eliminate some or all of the new benchmarks that add controversial and hard to measure language regarding bias (22.1.1); inclusion (18.7.1); gender marginalization (22.9.1); and references to “whiteness” (18.9.6); and “persistent discrimination and inequity” (18.9.7).

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide this feedback and I look forward to future drafts.

Respectfully,

Your Name