

DATE: June 5, 2014

TO: Superintendents, Principals, Curriculum and Staff Development Personnel, Social Studies Curriculum Leaders

FROM: Dr. Beth Aune, Director, Division of Academic Standards and Instructional Effectiveness

RE: K-12 Social Studies Standards: Statutory Requirements and Supports

The 2011 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies were adopted into rule and went into effect on May 13, 2013. As required by state statute, the revised standards were fully implemented by schools for the first time during the 2013-2014 school year. Social studies is a robust subject area that fosters critical thinking, inquiry, reasoning, problem solving, literacy, and communication. These skills improve student performance on standardized tests in reading and math, as well as build a strong foundation for civic participation and lifelong learning. Social studies also provides a crucial hook for engaging students who otherwise may not see themselves reflected in the core curriculum. [View the social studies standards and the FAQ document](http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/SocialStudies/index.html) (<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/EdExc/StanCurri/K-12AcademicStandards/SocialStudies/index.html>).

Looking ahead to the second year of implementation, please keep in mind the following state requirements for social studies standards, as well as the supports that MDE and its partners provide to assist you in implementing the standards.

Statutory requirements related to social studies standards

The following are requirements found in Minnesota state statutes related to social studies standards.

1. The revised standards were fully implemented during the 2013-2014 school year.ⁱ There is no waiver, or other option, for districts to “opt out” of or delay implementation of the new standards.
2. All students, including students with unique learning needs, must satisfactorily complete **all** K-12 social studies standards and **all** corresponding benchmarks.ⁱⁱ
3. Students in kindergarten through grade 8 must complete the benchmarks at the grade level where they are identified in the 2011 Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies.ⁱⁱⁱ Grade-specific benchmarks are important for providing a more consistent educational experience for students who transfer within and outside of districts.

4. Unlike grades K-8, the benchmarks for grades 9-12 are grade-banded. Students must complete the high school benchmarks by the end of grade 12.^{iv}
5. School districts may determine the high school social studies courses and other kinds of learning opportunities that will be offered to students, provided that these courses satisfy all of the grade 9-12 standards.^v
6. The state minimum graduation requirement in social studies is three and one-half (3.5) credits, encompassing at least United States history, geography, government and citizenship, world history, and economics sufficient to satisfy all of the academic standards in social studies.^{vi} A one-half credit of economics taught in a school's agriculture education or business department may fulfill a one-half credit in social studies if the credit is sufficient to satisfy all of the academic standards in economics (Minn. Stat. § 120B.024, Subd. 2(a)).^{vii}

Please note: If your district is not offering social studies at a given grade level, or has reduced the amount of instructional time to the point that a teacher is not able to address all of the benchmarks for that grade level, your district is out of compliance with state statutes.

Support for social studies standards implementation

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) continues to support implementation of the 2011 social studies standards through a contract with the Center for Social Studies Education (CSSE) at the Minnesota Historical Society. The CSSE and its partner organizations compile resources and provide a broad array of professional development to support the teaching and learning of the standards.^{viii} Here are some suggestions for using the CSSE to assist your district in its standards implementation efforts:

1. Become part of the CSSE network to get alerts related to social studies education, including a monthly e-newsletter with information, resources, and upcoming trainings related to the social studies standards and social studies education. [Join the CSSE network on the CSSE Web page](http://csse.mnhs.org) (<http://csse.mnhs.org>).
2. Visit the CSSE website for educator resources by discipline, including lesson plans, curriculum materials, and upcoming professional development related to the standards. The website has information for families on graduation requirements and student competitions. Also, [consult the "Standards Bulletin Board" for resources on the CSSE website](#).
3. Send representatives from your district to the monthly Social Studies Curriculum Leaders meetings at MDE (teachers are welcome, too!). This is a great way to get ideas from other districts. To get connected with this group, [email Jessica Winkelaar](mailto:jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org) (jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org).
4. Send your K-6 teachers to the CSSE's Elementary Institute on June 26, 2014. There will be grade level sessions on unpacking the standards, addressing the most challenging benchmarks, and possible resources for meeting the benchmarks. This is an excellent opportunity for teachers to learn how to best implement the new standards from content experts, standards writing committee members, and elementary teachers from around the state. For more information, [email Jessica Winkelaar](mailto:jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org) (jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org) or visit the CSSE site to register.

5. Check out the multiple workshops offered this summer by the CSSE and its partner organizations, including "Using Children's Literature to Teach Economics" (along with many other workshops offered by the Minnesota Council on Economic Education), the Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education Summer Institutes, the annual "Update!" from Learning Law and Democracy, and the Minnesota Council for History Education Summer Institute. [Visit the CSSE online calendar for a list of opportunities](http://csse.mnhs.org/calendar) (<http://csse.mnhs.org/calendar>).
6. Sign up for a free GIS (geographic information systems) workshop this summer. Spatial education and GIS are now part of the revised social studies standards. Learn how your students can use map-based data to investigate questions in social studies, science and other content areas. MDE is partnering with GIS professionals around the state to host free GIS workshops (using ArcGIS Online). [Visit the Geographic Information Systems in K-12 Web page on the MDE website](http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchTech/GISinK-12/index.html) (<http://www.education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/SchTech/GISinK-12/index.html>).
7. Stay tuned for information about regional workshops for leadership teams in October/November 2014 on critical issues related to social studies standards implementation. Strategies shared in the sessions will be based on the prioritized needs of districts and informed by findings from implementation science.

If you have specific questions related to the revised standards or social studies education in general, please [contact Jessica Winkelaar](mailto:jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org) (jessica.winkelaar@mnhs.org), CSSE Program coordinator, 651-259-3448 (Minnesota History Center).

We hope that these suggestions are helpful to you and your staff. Thank you for all you do to help our students achieve the Minnesota social studies standards.

ⁱ Minn. Stat. § 120B.023 (2012).

ⁱⁱ Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.018, Subd. 2-3; 120B.023, Subd. 1(a); 120B.024, Subd. 1(5).

ⁱⁱⁱ Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.023, Subd. 1(a).

^{iv} Minn. Stat. § 120B.023, Subd. 1(a).

^v Minn. Stat. §§ 120B.023, Subd. 1(a); 120B.024, Subd. 1(5).

^{vi} Minn. Stat. § 120B.024, Subd. 1(5).

^{vii} Minn. Stat. § 120B.024, Subd. 2(a).

^{viii} The Center for Social Studies Education is a partnership of the following organizations: Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), Minnesota Historical Society, Minnesota Council for the Social Studies (MCSS), Minnesota Alliance for Geographic Education (MAGE), Minnesota Council on Economic Education (MCEE), Minnesota Council for History Education (MNCHE), Learning Law and Democracy, and Minnesota Humanities Center.