

To the South Dakota Board of Education Standards,

We urge the South Dakota Board of Education Standards to adopt the proposed Social Studies Standards. We recognize that you have a profound responsibility and appreciate the time you have invested in this process and the courage required to make such change.

We have reviewed the proposed standards and recommend their adoption. We find them to be fundamentally rooted in the well-informed premises that content *knowledge is essential to literacy*, and that content literacy is a necessary precondition for thinking critically about our civic life.

For decades content knowledge has been deemphasized, particularly in elementary social studies. The result has been particularly harmful to under-privileged children who are more dependent on their formal schooling for knowledge acquisition. It has also diminished the ability of high school and higher education instruction to enrich the lives of all students toward reaching their potential, because they must spend precious (and expensive) time remediating their students. While this has impacted all professions, trades, and walks of life, the lack of knowledge in social studies is readily visible in our national civic life today. No matter one's political or ideological views, we recognize that we won't achieve a citizenry equipped to make informed choices without knowledge that is thoughtfully constructed as it is in these proposed standards.

It is heartening to see standards rich in the people, places, events, and ideas that shaped our world, nation, and your state of South Dakota. They neither whitewash nor indoctrinate, and they are written in a manner that parents will find clear and useful. Furthermore, with strong support from you, the state's Department of Education, the Legislature, the Governor, and parents providing the resources and time to make successful implementation possible, we're confident the opportunities you would be providing South Dakota's students would put South Dakota at the forefront of what we know to work for children.

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