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MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Utah State Board of Education

FROM: Diana Suddreth
Director, Teaching and Learning

DATE: August 11 - 12, 2016

**INFORMATION/
ACTION:** Update on Public Comment of Secondary Social Studies Standards

Background:

The Secondary Social Studies Standards were approved at the April Board meeting for 90 days of public comment. Online surveys have been created and posted on the USBE homepage. In addition, five public hearings have been scheduled across the state. An update on the revision process will be submitted.

Board Strategic Plan:

This item supports the following imperative(s) and strategies in the Board's Strategic Plan:

- Imperatives Educational Equity and Quality Learning
- Strategies Educational Options

Anticipated Action:

Staff is seeking additional input from the Board regarding next steps in the revision process.

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Update on 90-day Review Period for Utah Secondary Social Studies Standards



Prepared by the
Utah State Board of Education

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Update on 90-day Review Period for Utah Secondary Social Studies Standards

The secondary social studies standards were approved for 90 days of public comment at the April 15, 2016 Utah State Board of Education meeting.

Five public hearings were held across the state, in Logan, Cedar City, Roosevelt, Provo, and Salt Lake City. These public hearings were sparsely attended, and it is possible that online surveys have taken the place of public comment meetings because of their convenience. Surveys for each of the secondary courses were posted on the USBE web site and advertised. All survey comments, to date, as well as any additional specific emailed comments have been collected and are included in the attachment to this update.

Public comments via the survey will still be collected well beyond the required 90 days and the date of this summary, until August 8. This extension will provide the Board's new ACEESS committee members time to respond to the draft revision, per the request of Board member Hansen.

The writing team will meet to consider the recommendations put forth in the surveys and public meetings. They will make what they consider to be the appropriate revisions based on all of the feedback, including Board input, and then submit that draft for consideration by the USBE.

Public Hearing Summary

In summary, the feedback in public hearings has been very positive. The participants were supportive of the focus on disciplinary skills such as historical thinking and spatial analysis, the inclusion of economic concepts when appropriate, and the emphasis on civic engagement. A teacher participant in Duchesne asked whether thought had been given to rearranging the sequence of the courses, which had been considered by the writing team. A teacher participant in Iron County questioned the removal of a review unit in U.S. History 2, but also acknowledged the logic of the decision as it was explained.

The comments from public hearing participants also included questions regarding implementation and assistance with resources rather than merely the standards themselves. There were some questions regarding whether there would be assessments tied to the standards, and discussion of how the standards would support student achievement on other assessments.

Survey/Email Summary

The feedback on the surveys has been positive, in general, and will undoubtedly prove to be very useful to the writers. Most of the comments regarding the standards, made by both the general public and Board members, are very specific recommendations that are minor corrections or obvious improvements that have already been incorporated. Some recommendations will require additional deliberations by the writers and Board guidance.

Utah Studies: The general feedback to the Utah Studies course has been very positive. The emphasis on skills, deeper thinking, chronology, examining historical interpretations, using evidence, and analyzing sources are some of the changes that were noted as positives. One of the biggest challenges with the course is the fact that it is taught for half a year in some LEAs and for a full year in other LEAs, so there is a tension between the desire to teach all of the concepts and skills in the standards and the reality of the constraints of time.

Board member Hansen requested that some attention be paid to the personal histories of students, possibly including the history of families and their ancestors. This may be accomplished through a more explicit standard regarding the role of oral history, and the writing team will work to see how this can best be addressed.

Utah studies also seems like a perfect place to include references to the important role that boards and other civic bodies play in the public sphere, and the writing committee will duly note Board member Johnson's desire to include that concept. The role of boards will also be considered for inclusion in U.S. Government and Citizenship.

US History 1: The feedback we have received supports the inclusion of guiding questions, with a range of ideas about how to edit them to make improvements. In addition, there is general praise for the inclusive nature of the standards, the focus on skills, the emphasis on civic education and involvement, and the connection of the past to the present.

A common theme is the desire to have the resources to teach the content, and there is the recurring tension between wanting to reduce the amount of content while at the same time wanting to make sure specific content is included, and the writing team will have to weigh all of these recommendations.

There are specific comments for consideration made by Board member Thomas. A number center around the inclusion of a specific mention of the concept of American Exceptionalism, and board guidance will be helpful regarding this topic.

World History: "These standards seem like a great guide for teaching World History. My concern is that they are so extensive that there may not be time to get through them all." This comment from the survey sums up the challenge of world history. This course is also taught sometimes in a full year, and sometimes in a half year, and as such poses significant challenges.

There are a number of specific recommendations for the guiding questions, underscoring once again that the survey respondents found the questions to be very useful, but needing some additional editing.

A few comments, also reflected in a comment from Board member Thomas, questioned the best way to reference all major religions and belief systems. The writing team has focused on historical chronology, which then moves Islam to a separate, later standard, in an effort to clarify the historical chronology of the development of these world religions. However, it may prove useful to include all of them in one

standard rather than separate them to avoid any appearance of “elevating one religion over all others,” as Board member Thomas expressed.

World Geography: The relatively few survey comments regarding world geography were positive but focus on a desire to make the standards more specific and less broad. The writing team will have to spend time considering ways to sharpen the clarity of these standards.

US History 2: One of the most significant changes from the current course is a removal of a review strand that focused on reviewing significant content from US History 1. For some reviewers, this is a welcome change: “I am pleased beyond reason that the original unit 1 review has been removed and replaced with the idea of reviewing necessary materials in context of 20th century events.” Yet for others, a review is necessary in order to contextualize the learning of new material. This question about the review of content from U.S. History 1 will have to be addressed by the writing committee. Perhaps one option would be to include in the course description a reminder that any study of history requires contextualization, and that a review of prior events is appropriate when necessary for student understanding. However, the challenge remains of also teaching students about recent and contemporary events, and to mandate a review, rather than working to include context within the study of new content, can make it difficult for teachers to address all the topics they wish to address.

In addition, there are many recommendations about specific topics to include, and which specific dates to reference in the strands, and the writing team will have to weigh all of these recommendations against the desire to maintain standards that seem achievable.

Board member Thomas raised concerns with the use of the phrase “imperialist power” to describe the U.S. in Strand 3, America on the Global Stage.

U.S. Government and Citizenship: When the focus group for this course met, one of the participants finished reading the standards and said “This will be such a breath of fresh air.” Her comments are borne out by the general consensus of the survey participants. The feedback has been positive, with support of what one participant called an “action-oriented” approach. In fact, the general desire in all of these courses has been to focus on the “doing” of social studies, and nowhere is that more important than in the final social studies course when students are on the cusp of adulthood.

Specific recommendations for changes and corrections based on all comments will be considered by the writers.

Next Steps

The writing team will meet, beginning in August after the surveys are closed, to consider all comments from the public and any specific Board directives, with a plan to submit a revised draft for consideration to the October board meeting.