

From: Eileen Nokes [mailto:enokes@aos94.org]
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To: DOE, SIS <SIS.DOE@maine.gov>
Subject: social studies standards review

During the past decade, social studies has taken a very back seat to other academic disciplines. Literacy (reading/writing) and math are in the forefront, with science a close second. One result of this attitude has seeped into the public - people do NOT know their history and are not always able to make informed decisions for the greater good. One of my biggest concerns is that students leave our public schools without a strong grasp on history, lessons learned from history, and how our decisions and those of the US impact the world.

Content does matter. Students and the public need to know lessons from history and where the places are (geography) that are mentioned or in the limelight in the world news. We all need to understand how our government works, but it is obvious that many people don't when one watches the news and listens to what the public is clamoring to be done about certain issues. Civics can't be ignore, but many choose not to participate in this area. Lastly, economics is complicated, and many students and the public really don't understand how government decisions (bills and laws) will impact them.

I am often frightened by how little our citizens really understand about all of the areas of social studies. More time needs to be devoted to social studies. In many schools, social studies is not really taught until middle school. Social studies covers the five basic areas and there is a huge amount of knowledge that can't possibly be learned in the current situations found in our schools. One goal should be to have informed citizens who understand the process of the government and how the current political and world issues have evolved.

I realize that this seems general and perhaps not what you are looking for in your request for input in regard to social studies standards. I feel strongly that educators have an ominous job when considering the standards and what our ultimate goal must be - informed citizens. The number of standards can not be overwhelming and unreasonable. And, we need to be careful that content takes a back seat to applications of knowledge. All citizens need a strong understanding of the past and current issues in order to be productive citizens.

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Eileen Nokes
Ridge View Community School
Dexter, ME 04930
207.924.6000