NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TO: Roger Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

FROM: Donlynn Rice, Administrator, Curriculum and Instruction
Harris Payne, Director Social Studies Education

SUBJECT: Social Studies Standards Validation Report and Update on Public Comment

Proposed Board Action:

No Action - work session only

Background Information:

The Nebraska Social Studies Standards revision process has been underway for the past several months. One of the key pieces in all of Nebraska Standards development is the external review by outside experts. The Social Studies drafts were sent to 3 different sets of reviewers: Dr. Jeremy A. Stern, Ph. D. , Historian & Educational Consultant; the Mid-continent Research Center for Education and Learning (McREL) under the direction of Dr. John S. Kendall, Senior Director of Research; and Dr. Tammie Fischer, Director of the UNL Center for Economic Education. The purpose of a validation process is to ensure that the final draft is clear, covers the essential content to the appropriate level of rigor, is specific enough to give direction to students and teachers, and is measurable for determining student progress. This report will give the results of the external validation studies and summarize the edits made to the drafts as a result of the validation studies. This report will also update the Board on the public input survey and review the plans for the public hearing to be held on November 15, 2012.

Estimated Cost:

No new costs

Supporting Documentation Included:

Validation Studies done by Dr. Stern, Dr. Fischer, and McREL

For Additional Information on this item:

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An assessment of Nebraska's draft 2012 social studies standards.

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Though I was approached to write this assessment due to my recent reviews of state history standards for the Fordham Institute, I should make clear from the outset that the following critique is *not* akin to a Fordham review. I have, as requested, taken Nebraska's local-control approach and basic standards concept as a given: my aim is simply to assess the breadth, depth, clarity, specificity and measurability of the draft as laid out in the state's reviewer guidelines.

Treating each of those review categories separately would have unavoidably fragmented my observations, which frequently address several of these criteria at once. I have therefore organized my comments first by the four standards documents – history, civics, economics, geography; then by the sub-strands within each document; and finally by grade. Indicator numbers for specific content items are referred to throughout.

History:

General remarks:

● The adoption of a grade-by-grade arrangement for K-5 is a welcome change. However, within the larger 6-8 and high school blocks, I would urge the state to offer at least a suggested sequence, indicating where the specific courses might be placed within these wider bands. For example, the 6-8 and high school U.S. history courses are clearly intended, from their chronological coverage, as parts I and II of a full U.S. survey: it would be best, therefore, if those two courses were not too far apart – in grades 8 and 11, for instance, standard in many states. It would be wise at least to urge local districts to consider the issue. Many states which leave the exact grade-level sequence to local districts nonetheless provide one or more recommended sequences.

● The division of target skills between the various sub-strands ("chronological thinking," "historical comprehension," etc.) is to my mind rather arbitrary. Surely, for instance, all historical study includes "analysis and interpretation," despite the inclusion of a separate sub-strand with that name. While I can see how the study of and distinction between primary and secondary sources could fit under "multiple perspectives," it is hard to see why such study does not equally belong under "analysis and interpretation," or indeed under "research skills." Likewise, separating analysis of "cause and effect" from the actual content – the former appears

under “historical analysis,” the latter largely under “historical comprehension” – seems to split knowledge and understanding into separate boxes.

Nonetheless, I recognize that these sub-strand divisions were doubtless decided upon at a very early stage in the development of these standards, and are presumably not open to re-thinking.

● I should add, despite the concerns just noted, that I am pleased with the emphasis on reading primary sources, even in early grades, and the stress on distinguishing between primary and secondary content. I have encountered all too many college students who seem to struggle with that distinction: it is good to see it as part of Nebraska’s state mandate.

● The focus assigned to grades K-3, progressing outward from self to family to neighborhood to community, is of course standard educational practice, and not an unreasonable way to introduce early learners to a broader world-view. However, it is important urge teachers not to take too limited an approach. Young children are capable of more sophistication than is often asked of them. Basics of history and government can, for instance, be introduced in early grades – teachers should be urged not to take the assigned focuses too strictly or to reject glimpses of broader issues.

● I would advise expanding the course title for grade 5, and for world history at the 6-8 and high school levels. The 6-8 and high school U.S. courses indicate their chronological coverage in the titles. Since the world courses are also given a chronological split, breaking at about 1000 CE, it seems reasonable for clarity’s sake that their titles should reflect the course scope, as the titles of the U.S. courses do. I would strongly urge some such specificity in the title for grade 5 as well, since, as it stands, there is no sense how far the grade 5 course is meant to extend chronologically.

“Chronological Thinking”:

Grade 4:

The “chronology” concepts aimed at in grades K-3 seem reasonable as far as they go. But those assigned to grade 4 (4.4.1.a) – “decades, centuries, millennia” – are extremely broad and basic concepts that could certainly be included by grade 3. (If 3rd graders can be asked, at 3.4.2.c, to discuss primary and secondary sources, they can certainly understand what centuries and millennia are.) The content in grade 4 should also have some specific connection to Nebraska, since this grade is clearly meant to offer an introductory course on Nebraska’s local history. In middle school and high school courses with specific historical focus, the standards quite properly use the “temporal sequence” heading to lay out the broad chronological eras to be covered in that grade. The same would be highly advisable in grade 4, where a basic sense of Nebraska

chronology (i.e., Native American peoples to American settlement etc.) would better connect this standard to the grade's focus, and would be more age-appropriate than the very basic concepts now listed here.

Grade 5:

The same basic problem appears in grade 5 (5.4.1.a). Again, the "temporal sequences" concept introduced here ("BC, BCE, AD, CE") is very basic, and could be introduced earlier. Even if it is specifically desired to include those concepts at this level (they are after all recapped in middle school world history), the very vague reference to "eras" should be expanded upon – for exactly the reasons I urged for grade 4 above. A basic list of U.S. eras would be particularly helpful here since (as I noted in my general remarks above) the intended scope of the grade 5 course is in no way specified. The specific historical examples given in later 5th grade sub-strands all appear to be pre-Civil War, yet it is not indicated what time period the course is ideally meant to reach. I realize much is being left to local schools and districts, but given the emphasis on "measurability," uniform assessment surely requires at least a broadly similar approach to the course's scope across the state.

High school:

The list of eras at 12.4.1.a should distinguish key 20th century events more carefully. A single "World Wars" heading leaves out the Depression and New Deal, which had massive impact on the course of the century both domestically and globally. I would strongly recommend replacing this single item with three: World War I, Depression & New Deal, World War II.

"Historical Comprehension":

Grade 1:

The list of examples at 1.4.2.a could certainly be expanded – particularly the list of historical individuals. While Lincoln and King are both wholly appropriate, teachers could be given broader pointers. (Examples might include an important figure or two from Nebraska.)

Grade 3:

3.4.2.a is actually less specific and more narrow than 2.4.2.a, even though the grade level is higher, and the 3rd grade "community" focus is a far broader concept than 2nd grade's "neighborhood" topic. Grade 2 includes such broad-scale concepts as Native Americans, Colonists, the White House and Independence Day, suggesting some study of wider American history. Grade 3 refers, in purely general terms, to local figures, landmarks, celebrations and

events. If grade 3 is intended to turn to a closer local focus, the grade-level headings do not reflect that intention – and more specific examples of the listed concepts could be provided in any case.

Grade 4:

4.4.2.a mixes a few very general "era" concepts (westward expansion, statehood) with a smattering of named individuals. As I noted above in the "chronological thinking" sub-strand, I would urge better matching the format here to that of later grades. In middle and high school, an attempt is made to lay out the key chronology – first in very broad terms under "chronological thinking," then with greater specificity in the "comprehension" sub-strand. That model should be followed wherever a specific course on particular content is intended… including here in the grade 4 overview of Nebraska history. A listing of the basic themes (from Native American peoples, to American settlement and expansion, to the key Kansas-Nebraska disputes of the 1850s, etc.) would not only help teachers, it would help ensure a degree of common coverage across the state – essential to any aims of measureable assessment. Specific names the state wishes to list could be tied to the themes in a brief outline – which is indeed done in later grades.

A further point arises with 4.4.2.b – which equally applies to unit "2.b" in all subsequent grade levels. Students are to describe "change over time" using maps, documents, and other artifacts. While this is a reasonable requirement, here and at all levels, I suspect it would be useful if teachers were provided with at least a single example at each grade level. For Nebraska, changing settlement patterns could be noted as an example, or the gradual loss of land by Native Americans. And so forth, for subsequent grades – there are thousands of possible choices, but *some* concrete example would certainly help teachers grasp what is being asked.

Grade 5:

As I noted above, the scope of the grade 5 course is not clearly defined. As in grade 4, 5.4.2.a offers only a rather random list of people (two founders, two Native Americans and that's it), plus a few general concepts ("colonization," "early conflicts," etc.). Again, the *scope* is never specified, and the scattershot list of examples is little help in discerning it: there should be a basic list of periods, as in later grades. I understand that the aim here was not to be comprehensive – but this is simply too vague as it stands. Some effort should be made to indicate to teachers which concepts are *key*, at least basic concepts such as the Revolution, Constitution, westward expansion, Civil War, etc.

Grades 6-8, U.S.:

Firstly, I wish to draw sharp attention to one very important point: the reference to the Iroquois Confederation in 8.4.2.a should **NOT** be there. In the list of periods/specifics, the Iroquois are joined together with "Founders and Founding Documents." The clear purpose is to invoke the idea, all too common in state standards and beyond, that the Iroquois Confederation was an important influence on the Constitution's framers. I can assure you most vigorously as a historian of the Revolutionary era that this claim is **a *myth***: it has been completely debunked time and time again, and is not taken seriously by any serious scholar of the period.[*] This is a question of historical fact, not a matter of opinion or interpretation. If a reference to the Iroquois is desired, it should be placed earlier, in connection for instance with the French and Indian War. It should ***not*** be linked with the Constitution.

Beyond that notable problem, the content overview at 8.4.2.a is a significant improvement over the earlier grades – it aims, at least, to offer teachers across the state a basic checklist of periods and concepts. There are, however, some problems as it stands. Firstly, there are some odd violations of chronology: why, for instance, are "First Americans" listed *after* European contact and the triangular trade? The triangular trade itself should be contextualized with some reference to the rise of slavery in the colonies, and there should be some reference to the rise of democratic institutions in the colonial world as well. Some of the specifics also seem a bit random. Why "Spanish missions" but not the broader Spanish conquest or empire, for example? A few added words here and there could make the list stronger and more useful.

Grades 6-8, World:

Even more so than the 6-8 U.S. listing at 8.4.2.a, the content laid out for world suffers from randomness and chronological confusion. Why is the Gupta Empire listed before Ramses II, when it rose some 1500 years later? Why does Judaism appear (grouped oddly with Buddhism) well after Christianity and Islam, both of which arose out of Judaism? Why, too, is the "Roman Coliseum" listed without any reference to the Roman Empire as such? (Also, "Colosseum" is the preferred spelling for the ancient structure, as opposed to "Coliseum" used for modern sports facilities.) Why are the Olympics mentioned without reference to the classical Greeks, and the Mayan calendar without reference to the Maya, or Maya writing? It's fine to have specific "hooks" to help teachers grab students' interest, but such hooks should be explicitly linked to the broader themes they are meant to illustrate.

High school, U.S.:

The overview of modern U.S. specifics at 12.4.2.a is again a reasonable start, but it has some odd omissions and other flaws. "World Wars" is too general – especially when it is linked with

[*] See, for instance, Pulitzer Prize-winner Gordon Wood in "The Purpose of the Past: Reflections on the Use of History," *Historically Speaking*, Vol. 10, no. 1, Jan. 2009, p. 4.

Woodrow Wilson and the League of Nations: World War I should be mentioned specifically. I would urge that a reference to Prohibition be added after WWI, given its tremendous influence on the 1920s. The Depression and FDR are listed, but the New Deal is not named: it should be. WWII should be mentioned specifically before the references to Eisenhower, the Holocaust, etc. Eleanor Roosevelt should not appear *after* JFK. Ronald Reagan, leader of the 1980s conservative movement, should not appear before the 1960s Civil Rights era, and Watergate should not be lumped with "contemporary" events such as 9/11. "Supreme court decisions" and "key legislation" are extremely vague pointers: some specifics would doubtless be welcomed – *Brown v. Board* and the Voting Rights Act to go with the Civil Rights era, for instance.

High school, World:

The high school World history overview suffers from the same flaws noted above: while many key concepts are appropriately mentioned, some choices seem random and much is missing. Why is Charlemagne the only example for the medieval period – especially given that he reigned quite early in the Middle Ages? Feudalism and chivalry should, at least, rate a mention. Why does Montezuma appear without specific reference to the Aztecs? Examples for the "Contemporary World" consist solely of three African and Indian nationalist resistance figures, and a reference to globalization. While I have no objection to these examples, there is rather more to the contemporary world: reference to the actual fact of decolonization and nationalist movements might, for instance, make more sense of the figures listed, while other developments (the fall of Communism, democracy movements, Islamist tensions, developments in technology and communications) might certainly be mentioned.

"Multiple Perspectives":

Grade 4:

4.4.3.a and b are examples of the approach I was suggesting for 4.4.2.b above: they ask students to think about the differences between variant accounts (a praiseworthy goal) and offer specific examples to help teachers implement the objective. 4.4.2.b should be handled similarly.

Grades 6-8, U.S.:

The use of examples in the 4.3.a & b headings for later grades is generally reasonable – details remain somewhat random, but I realize they are meant to illustrate concepts rather than to be comprehensive. But there are a few specific issues here and there.

The reference to the "New Colossus Speech" in 8.4.3.b is puzzling. "The New Colossus" is the title of Emma Lazarus's famed poem about the Statue of Liberty. Unless this item is meant as a

reference to President Obama's 2010 immigration speech which quoted the poem (which I assume it is not), "speech" is a mistake.

Grades 6-8, World:

The reference to "Mt. Everest" in 8.4.3.a's world history coverage is confusing. What about it, exactly? It is the only example given in the list that isn't obviously linked to historical events or issues.

High school:

Given the reference to Olaudah Equiano in 12.4.3.b, you should be aware of the recent scholarship on the subject, which has raised doubts about whether Equiano was actually born in Africa (he may have been born in South Carolina), and has thus raised questions about important parts of his narrative. These issues are far from settled, but should be approached with due caution – though the impact his narrative had when it was published is beyond dispute.

"Historical Analysis and Interpretation":

All grades:

4.4.a: This item, introduced in grade 3 and continuing through all grades, is in my opinion not clearly worded. The directive to examine or analyze "resources through sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration" is likely to cause confusion. "Resources" should be defined: historical documents and narrative accounts are clearly meant. It should also be clearer that students are to consider the impact of a narrative's source on its reliability, that documents must be understood in their context, and that reliability depends heavily on corroboration. As it is worded, though the concepts are sound, I think some will miss the point.

In grades 6-8, the word "resources" is replaced by "sources" – a better choice if still not fully explicated. In high school, it becomes "competing historical narratives" – again, I see what is meant, but "competing" may cause confusion. Perhaps "conflicting" or "contradictory"?

4.4.b: Here I would question the term "alternative courses of action." The focus seems to be on decision making and the different paths historical events could take… not quite the same thing as "alternative courses of action."

Also, in the grade 5 item under this heading (5.4.4.b) the example given – "What causes revolutions to occur" – seems better suited for world history (and even there, I would caution against overbroad generalizations about unique events). It's not clear, further, how this question

relates to "alternative courses of action," or which revolutions it refers to in an American context: in the literal sense, we've only had one.

4.4.c: "Human decisions" is, in my opinion, also not the best phrasing. What decisions in history are not "human"? Perhaps instead "the decisions of historical individuals," or something to that effect?

Also, "Supreme Court decisions" are mentioned in this heading for grades 6-8 (8.4.4.c) – why are they not mentioned for the second part of the U.S. survey at 12.4.4.c? Supreme Court decisions were just as central in the 20th century as in the 19th.

4.4.e: In relating historical events to current events, some examples would undoubtedly be helpful. Students might, for example, consider how the government structures developed in the Constitutional Convention impact today's political battles; or they might consider how the Civil Rights movement has affected today's America; or how the rise of many global religions affects today's globalizing world. And so forth.

"Historical Research Skills":

All grades:

4.5.a: The directive to "develop questions" about history is *so* general I question whether it needs to stand as a separate heading. It could easily be integrated with the three headings below directing students to develop research skills.

4.5.c.: I commend the emphasis on active research in the early grades, an excellent aim.

<u>Civics:</u>

"Forms and Functions of Government":

Grades 1-3: Certain basic concepts about U.S. government should in my opinion be added to these grades. As it stands, in grade 4 students are suddenly asked to relate their state government to the three-branch model of the U.S. government – without that model having been introduced at an earlier level. Likewise, grade 4 invokes unicameralism in the Nebraska context, without it or bicameralism being discussed earlier. Students in early grades are certainly capable of grasping the rudiments, and should do so before they are asked to apply such concepts to local government in grade 4.

Grade 5:

5.1.1.b, discussing the roots of American constitutionalism, should contain a reference in its examples to the early U.S. state constitutions created after independence – a crucial but too-often overlooked step in American constitutionalism. I am pleased to see that the Iroquois do *not* appear here. They should **NOT** be added.

If the reference to tribal forms of government in 5.1.1.c (contrasted with the British monarchy and American colonial governments) is meant to again invoke the mythical Iroquois influence on American constitutionalism, this item should be reworded.

In 5.1.1.d, the reference to "nobles" among early American political groups is misleading and probably confusing. There was never a system of nobility in the U.S. or the British-American colonies. The only nobles in the colonies were some royally appointed officials (mainly governors) that held British titles.

In 5.1.1.f, invoking the national government's influence on local and state governments, an "e.g." could be added mentioning the Constitution's supremacy clause, together with the 10th and 14th amendments.

Grades 6-8:

In 8.8.1.b, listing key political documents, the Bill of Rights should be added to the list of examples.

The wording of 8.1.1.c – "describe the structure and roles of government" – is overbroad and nonspecific. I would suggest, at the very least, adding "in different times, places and societies" (a global focus seems to be implied by the other 6-8 items, linked to the middle school world history course).

High school:

Again, I am pleased to see in 12.1.1.a, where influences on American constitutionalism are listed, that the Iroquois do *not* appear. Again, they absolutely should **NOT** be added. However, a reference to the state constitutions of the 1780s *should* be added.

In 12.1.1.f, "Communism" and "Fascism" do not belong in a discussion of "supranational organizations": both are ideologies and systems of totalitarian rule, not international bodies. Given the current political controversies involving such organizations (particularly the U.N.), listing Fascism and Communism here could easily be taken as an effort at guilt-by-association, a

political statement that I'm sure was not intended. Communism and Fascism belong in world history or in a discussion of different modes of government – not in this item.

"Civic Participation":

Grade 2:

In 2.1.2.a, listing characteristics of good citizenship, I would add tolerance for a diversity of opinions (which is suggested in 3.1.2.c).

Grade 5:

5.1.2.b, mentioning the reasons for the settlement of the American colonies, does not obviously fit in a civics context unless pursuit of personal, communal and religious freedom is mentioned as an aim. Likewise, I would add a reference here to the rise of democratic institutions in the colonies (town meetings in New England, elected representative bodies in many colonies), which meshes with the U.S. history content meant to be covered in this grade.

Grades 6-8:

The "civic participation" curriculum laid out here for the middle school grades seems rather basic for the age level – there is considerably less substance here than in grade 5. Given that the first part of the full U.S. history sequence is also placed in these grades, I would urge adding some specific references to the steady efforts of more and more Americans to gain a political voice: e.g., Jacksonian democracy, Seneca Falls, and so forth.

High school:

In 12.1.2.d, the directive to "demonstrate an ability to appropriately engage" with various levels of government is not entirely clear. Are students meant to demonstrate knowledge of the appropriate *methods* by which to engage with government, or are they actually meant to go out and do so?

Economics:

There is comparatively little to say about the economics standards. They are, on the whole, factual and competent, pointing to key issues and concepts. I am aware of the political pressure that was put on the state to trumpet the supremacy of free markets (as Texas did in its recent and highly problematic standards). I am pleased to see that a more balanced tone has instead been

pursued, appropriately focusing on and explaining market economics but without undue ideological baggage.

"Markets":

Grade 1:

In 1.2.2.a, I would urge adding "minerals" to the list of natural resources – mineral resources have been key in all regions throughout history.

Grade 2:

In the heading for 2.2.1, I find the phrasing unclear. What exactly is meant by "something must be given up"? Is that meant to imply a something-for-something exchange? Or is it meant to indicate that resources are limited, and that students must learn to choose between different wants in order to stay within their means? In either case, the wording could be improved.

"Financial Literacy":

High school:

The emphasis on teaching students personal financial responsibility is an excellent idea – especially as students are preparing for adulthood. I still cringe at the memory of a high school student I encountered: she had just received her first credit card, and loudly declared "It's like getting stuff for free!" Units on understanding and managing personal credit seem well advised.

"*Government*":

All grades:

Units 2.10.a & b again wisely avoid an ideological pitfall, urging students to understand the role of government in providing services and the role of taxes in financing such services – basic concepts that should transcend political quarrels.

High school:

In 12.2.11.a's directive to "critique how governments can use tax and spend policies to influence behavior" – firstly, that should be "spending," not "spend" ("tax and spend" is rather politically loaded). Secondly, I would urge a more neutral word than "critique." Perhaps "consider" or "examine"?

12.2.13.b discusses tariffs, quotas and embargos. All have played major roles in U.S. history, from the non-importation movements of the Revolutionary period, to the 1807 embargo in the buildup to the War of 1812, to the sectional battles over tariffs before the Civil War, etc., on up to recent debates about free trade and protectionism. A few historical examples here could amplify the point, tying it in to the history standards and to contemporary issues.

Geography:

"The World in Spatial Terms":

In broad terms, I think too little is being asked of students in early grades. Students even at the earliest grade-levels are, for example, perfectly capable of learning where "home" is on a map (I remember learning to recognize Massachusetts when I was three). Grade 2's 2.3.1.a directs students to "identify the globe as a model of Earth." While true map-reading skills obviously come later, I would argue that students can grasp such concepts before grade 2.

"Places and Regions":

Grades 6-8:

In 8.3.2.b, students are to analyze the impact of terrain "on human decisions." This is, I think, too vague. Examples of terrain features are given, but nothing is said about what humans might decide in consequence. There should, I would say, be reference to settlement patterns, hunting options, natural resources, city siting, routing of roads, etc.

"Human Environment Interaction":

This sub-strand title is marked with a query in the current draft, and I agree it is somewhat awkward. Perhaps "Humans and their Environment," or something along those lines?

Grades 4 & 5:

The grade 5 heading refers to Native Americans' adaptation to and impact on the environment, but the item referring to those issues appears instead in grade 4 (4.3.5.a) – with wording almost identical to that in the grade 5 heading. That seems to suggest a mistake in alignment.

High school:

The issues of climate change and environmental damage, made in 12.3.5.g, should really be introduced in earlier grades. Though I recognize that there may be political pressures not to do so, these are questions today's children will regularly encounter from an early age.

Concluding remarks:

Even taking Nebraska's belief in local control and broad approach to standards as a given, content overviews should be clear and consistent in detail. Chronological sequence should be respected, to avoid confusing readers; broad concepts of equivalent importance should be touched upon in equivalent depth. Since the state aims to guide the general contours of social studies courses throughout the state, those contours should be adequately defined. Otherwise, it is unlikely that students across the state will be exposed to a shared core of basic knowledge – which Nebraska clearly intends that they should.

Dr. Tammie Fischer ***October 1, 2012***

Nebraska Standards in Economics Review Report

The writing committees of the Nebraska Standards are to be commended on their outstanding work as a result of many hours of writing and reviewing to revise the standards for our state. It is clear from the draft of the economic standards that the committee members had a clear understanding of the subject and knowledge in the area of economic education.

What follows is a summary of my review of the Nebraska Standards in Economics within the categories of breadth, depth, clarity, specificity, and measurability. My suggestions for content inclusion are provided within each of the five areas. I have also reviewed the economics content within each of the other three areas of Social Studies in Geography, Civics and History and noted suggestions.

Breadth:

The Voluntary National Standards in Economics produced by the Council for Economic Education is the most comprehensive and generally accepted document for this area. It contains an outline of twenty standards which specify important concepts and issues in economics in grades K-12. The Nebraska Economic Standards mirror this well-known resource in terms of its recommended economic content and skills necessary for our students.

Economics is a natural application to other areas of social studies and it clearly present in Geography, Civics and History. Economic concepts such as labor and natural

resources are visible throughout the K-12 standards within the human systems theme in Geography. The knowledge of economics supports many of the issues in the application of Geography and History. Within the Civics standards, the topic of taxation and the role of government to meet the wants of society provide the economic foundation to the area of forms and functions of government.

Suggestions for improvement:

As a general note, there is a tab for a Glossary section and is mentioned in the materials yet is incomplete in the draft. This is a good component to include in the final draft.

A few suggestions in the Geography standards are mostly in the area of international trade mentioned in the human systems as well as places and regions. There is a lot of detail on economic issues and concepts related to international trade in the grade 12 standard (12.3.3) with little depth in grades 6-8.

In the area of Civics, 12.1.1f could be better defined if the concepts of economic and political systems were added. The standard 8.1.1d should be revised to “meeting the wants of society” as needs can become a normative concept with less clarity.

Economics helps explain the “why” when teaching History and should be included in the application of these standards.

Depth:

The standards are appropriately written at the recommended cognitive levels. The level of complexity deepens within the existing social studies curriculum. The foundation of basic economic content is laid in the early grades within the context of

self, family, neighborhood, community, etc. and carefully articulated throughout the remaining grade levels. The standards contain examples and notation of when a concept may be later introduced.

Suggestions for improvement:

The depth in the area of Financial Literacy needs modification. The detailed specification of content and skills at the high school level needs to be added to the middle level. Economic concepts to include in grades 6-8 to best spiral into the high school standards include careers, budgeting, and the role of banks and stocks (beyond the general statement in the area of institutions).

The other area for improvement is within the area of globalization. The economic concept of exchange rates is appropriately introduced in grade 3, but is absent in the standards which follow. The depth of content in international trade in the other social sciences is much more detailed; and should be articulated with the Geography standard in the area of human systems.

Clarity:

The standards contain all of the necessary economic concepts, ideas and skills, written in a very clear manner. The organization of the content within five main areas (markets, economic institutions, financial literacy, government, and globalization) is an effective way to communicate to educators, administrators and the general public the important ideas, concepts and skills in economic education. The subsets of indicators further define the outcome of the standard; examples give further suggestions on the necessary knowledge and skills required of students. There is clear articulation of the

economics content, with no duplication. While every subject contains its own level of jargon, it is absent in the standards.

Suggestions for improvement:

The committee should look at the high school Geography standards related to globalization on the many examples and lists associated with international trade for better articulation.

The wording of “winners and losers” in 12.2.12 could be seen as jargon; perhaps a modification to “benefits of trade short/long term” would be better stated.

Specificity

Following the generally accepted sequencing within the existing Nebraska social studies standards, (self, family, neighborhood, etc.) the revised Nebraska Standards can be easily adapted to any local curriculum. The language is clear with an ample amount of built-in flexibility. For example, a local district could use some or the entire Financial Literacy component of the standard in its existing Personal Finance class. The specificity of the standards will also assist local districts in developing new economics and personal finance courses.

Suggestions for improvement:

Providing a reference list of recommended resources in economic education is suggested. This can be done as an appendix to the final document or part of a web component on the Nebraska Department of Education website. These additional resources provide classroom lesson supplements and grade appropriate language on all economic content.

Measurability

The standards contain language which includes clearly defined, operative verbs making the standards easily assessable at the local level. They are also free of instructional strategies which are difficult to measure in an assessment format. Because the standards are correlated to established national standards in economics, they are also tied to existing nationally normed assessments available to school districts. It is not necessary to spend scarce local and state resources to re-create valid and reliable instruments to assess the economics standards.

Suggestions for improvement:

Refrain from using the operative verb of “assess” in the benchmarks below the upper level Geography standards. A more measureable objective may include language such as to “evaluate, compare/contrast, analyze”.

The educator/district resource section of the final document should include a list of available nationally normed assessments in economics (print and online) in which local districts can adapt to create grade level assessments by standard or individual concepts. Include a list of assessments related to other disciplines if available.

For the Nebraska Department of Education

EVALUATION OF THE DRAFT NEBRASKA SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS, GRADES K–12

October 2012

About McREL

Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) is a nonprofit education and research organization based in Denver, Colorado. For more than 40 years, McREL has been helping educators use research to improve student achievement. As a national leader in research, school improvement, standards-based education, balanced leadership, professional development, and scenario planning, our highly respected experts provide services to educators in 50 states and 18 foreign countries. McREL's client list includes federal, regional, and state agencies; school districts; institutions of higher education; foundations; private organizations; and international entities.

Our Web site (www.mcrel.org) offers hundreds of reports, tools, guides, and services designed to improve school and student performance. If you have a question about McREL, contact us at 303.337.0990 or info@mcrel.org.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over the last fifteen years, Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) has provided standards review services for more than seventy school districts, a dozen state departments of education, education agencies in two U.S. territories, and the U.S. Departments of Defense and Labor. At the request of the Nebraska Department of Education, McREL conducted an analysis of a draft of the *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* for grades kindergarten through grade 12. These standards identify essential knowledge and skills for students at each grade K-5 and within grade bands for middle and high school. The analysis required the comparison of the Nebraska standards against standards from exemplary states and a review against a Nebraska statue regarding to social studies related content. The comparison focused upon the criteria of breadth, depth, clarity, specificity, and measurability.

OVERVIEW OF ANALYSIS METHOD

Documents Used for Comparison

The application of the criteria in the McREL study required a comparison of the Nebraska standards against a number of documents. These included state standards documents that have received high rankings from the Fordham Foundation. States receiving such recognition for standards in the social studies include California, Indiana, Georgia, and Massachusetts. McREL also compared the standards against items specified in the Nebraska Statute 79-724. These documents provided a basis of comparison for the analysis of breadth and/or depth and for some aspects of the analysis of clarity and specificity. These criteria are described in more detail below.

Methods for Comparison

McREL uses a comparative analysis model to conduct standards review. Documents from selected states provide an "anchor" against which the document of interest (here, the Nebraska standards) is compared. The primary role of the content analysts is to make a fair inference as to the absence or presence of content within each document and to provide evidence for that judgment.

Analysts & Reviewers

The analysts who conducted the review have received training in content analysis. The primary analyst holds a Ph.D. in history and has twenty years of experience teaching social studies in elementary and high school, as well as college level history. Analysts and reviewers have reviewed standards for many state departments of education and school districts and together represent over 15 years of experience in standards analysis.

Rating Method

Each of the five areas under review—Clarity, Breadth, Specificity, Depth, and Measurability—has been accorded a score from 1 to 4 (lowest to highest) that indicates the degree of revision that, in the opinion of the reviewers, may be required to bring the standards to high quality.

THE CRITERION OF CLARITY

Clarity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska social studies standards serve to effectively communicate what students should know and be able to do. Evaluation for clarity includes whether or not the standards are organized in a way that makes them easy to use, if this structure is consistently applied across the standards, and content is not duplicated. The standards were also evaluated for whether or not it they are clear in expression, and free of jargon.

The *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* were found to be clearly organized and well written, yet could be improved by small adjustments. Although there are categorically different standards in history — U.S., world, and historical understanding— at each grade they share the same code, which

results in unnecessary ambiguity. A few indicators were found to be inconsistent in the scope of content they addressed, covering too much or too little content when compared with the rest of the document. In a number of cases content was found repeated in more than one grade.

Rating for Clarity: 3

The standards for all social studies subject areas generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standards are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standards, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

THE CRITERION OF BREADTH

Breadth refers to the requirement that the Nebraska English Social Studies standards address all significant knowledge and skills that are considered important for students to acquire. Two questions direct the process used to evaluate the indicators on this criterion:

1. Are all significant student knowledge and skills addressed in the indicators?
2. Is there content in the indicators not commonly found in social studies documents?

In order to address these two questions regarding breadth, analysts compared the Nebraska standards against the content in four state standards documents, as well as reviewed the content against a Nebraska statute required of all social studies classes

The Nebraska standards were reviewed to determine whether they address all significant knowledge and skills in the four social studies subject areas. Overall, the Nebraska standards cover the majority of knowledge and skills articulated in the comparison documents. In civics and economics, however, a number of topics appear in the majority of state standards documents that should be reviewed for possible inclusion within the Nebraska standards.

The Nebraska standards for the social studies were also reviewed against Nebraska Statue 79-724 on American citizenship. All items within the statute that addressed topics typically part of a social studies standards document were found to be present in the Nebraska state standards.

The standards were also reviewed to determine if they include content that is not commonly found in the comparison documents. Just two indicators were found had the support of a single document and one indicator that had no equivalent in any of the comparison documents.

For the most part, all the content addressed in the indicators is important, as defined by its presence in the comparison documents.

Ratings for Breadth

Civics: 2 One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

Economics: 2 One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

Geography: 3 The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to

the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

History: 4 The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

THE CRITERION OF SPECIFICITY

Specificity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska social studies standards effectively communicate the level of detail needed to provide guidance to districts and schools about what students should know and be able to do. It is distinct from the criterion of breadth, which addresses socials studies at the topic level, in that it is about whether the examples provided for each topic provide a clear sense of the kind of details that are important for each topic. A lack of specificity undermines one of the central purposes of standards: to make clear to students and teachers what is expected and to inform everyone in the system of those expectations.

The Nebraska Social Studies Standards provide useful specificity that is on a par with the documents used for comparison. A number of selected examples from the comparison documents have been provided that, if added to existing indicators in civics, economics, and history, would ensure that all important details in the social studies are present in the standards.

Rating for Specificity

Civics: 3 The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

Economics: 3 The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

Geography: 4 The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

History: 3 The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

THE CRITERION OF DEPTH

Depth concerns whether students are appropriately challenged. Specifically, the indicators were examined to determine whether the students are held to expectations comparable by grade level to expectations held for students in comparison documents. For the analysis of depth, analysts compared the depth of the content of the Nebraska standards with that of the comparison documents. Depth refers to the cognitive complexity required to demonstrate mastery and appropriate usage of the knowledge and skills contained in a particular standard. In order to evaluate depth, McREL used Robert J. Marzano's *New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2007).

Overall, the grade placement of content in the Nebraska standards is comparable to the state documents analyzed. Nearly all of the indicators progressed in cognitive complexity across the grade levels. Most of the indicators that could be evaluated for depth were found to be within an appropriate grade range and written at an appropriate level of difficulty in comparison to the reference documents. In some instances, the Nebraska standards require students to master knowledge or skills in earlier grades than comparison documents; in a few cases, content appeared in the comparison documents at an earlier grade.

Rating for Depth: 3

The standards for all social studies subject areas generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standards are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

THE CRITERION OF MEASURABILITY

Measurability addresses the question of whether the Nebraska Social Studies standards identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed. Generally stated goals of the curriculum may help to introduce or frame standards, but ultimately teachers must have a clear sense of what is expected of students, and students should be capable of demonstrating this knowledge and skill.

A few issues were found in the *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* related to measurability. Nearly all indicators in the social studies standards were found to be measurable.

Rating for Measurability: 4 The standards for all social studies subject areas are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

1. INTRODUCTION

This report provides an evaluation of the Nebraska Social Studies Standards from the Nebraska Department of Education for grades K–12. The analysis focuses on five significant aspects of the standards, beginning with the *breadth* of the standards, or whether the standards represent important knowledge and skills that all students should learn. The report also provides a review of the *depth* of the standards, or whether the level of challenge represented in the expectations for students is on par with comparison documents. The review also considers the Nebraska standards in terms of their *clarity*, or whether the content presented is well organized and clearly stated. The *specificity* of the standards is examined in terms of whether or not the standards provide adequate guidance for each grade. Finally, the review considers the Nebraska standards in terms of their *measurability*, or whether the standards identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed.

Analyses were performed at the topic or indicator level for each of the social studies subject areas: civics, economics, geography, and the historical understanding section in history. For the U.S. and world history sections, analysis was performed at the standard level due to the generalized content of Nebraska's indicators for U.S. and world history. This level of general description accords with the state's system of local school district autonomy.

Each aspect is assigned one of four possible scores to indicate the degree to which standards meet the criterion. The rubric is expressed in terms of the degree of readiness of the standards, that is, the amount of correction necessary in order to meet the criterion.

4 The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

3 The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

2 One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

1 Significant and extensive revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section.

The report on each criterion includes recommendations for improvement, where appropriate.

Comparison Documents

The application of the criteria in the McREL study required a comparison of the Nebraska standards against a number of significant documents. These documents include standards that have received high rankings from the Fordham Foundation, whose analysts identified a handful of state documents that were rated highly for the appropriateness of their coverage of content and depth, that is, the challenge the standards present to students. The states used for comparison in this study were given A and B ratings in the fields of U.S. history, world history, and geography. Fordham has not reviewed civics or economic standards, but the quality of standards in these areas accorded with analysts' perception of high quality standards, based on their experience reviewing and revising many state standards documents over the last decade. The states selected for comparison include California, Indiana, Georgia, and Massachusetts. In

addition to the comparison states' standards, the Nebraska standards were reviewed for coverage of relevant content in the Nebraska Statute 79-724.

The most recent standards documents published by the states were consulted and are listed below.

- *History-Social Studies Content Standards for California Public Schools; Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve* (2000) by the California State Board of Education (CA)
- *Georgia Performance Standards Social Studies* (2004) by the Georgia Department of Education (GA)
- *Indiana's Academic Standards Social Studies* (2001) by the Indiana State Board of Education (IN)
- *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* (2003) by the Massachusetts Department of Education (MA)
- *Nebraska Revised Statutes 79-724. American citizenship; committee on Americanism; created; duties; required instruction; patriotic exercises; duties of officers.*

2. THE CRITERION OF CLARITY

Clarity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska social studies standards serve to effectively communicate what students should know and be able to do. Evaluation for clarity includes whether or not the standards are organized in a way that makes them easy to use, if this structure is consistently applied across the standards, and content is not duplicated. The standards were also evaluated for whether or not it they are clear in expression, and free of jargon.

Coherent Organization

The *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* organize student learning through subject area/disciplines, standards, organizing concepts (in some areas termed 'big ideas')**,** and indicators. The Nebraska standards use a code to identify and track each statement of student knowledge and skill, such as 0.2.5.a. The first number of the code signifies grade level (kindergarten is coded as 0), the second number is the subject area/discipline (e.g., 2 signifies economics), the third number is the standard, and a lower case letter signifies the specific indicator.

The standards are organized first by the disciplines of civics, economics, geography, and history. The content within each discipline is organized by statements of student knowledge and skill called standards. The standards themselves are organized topically. For example, the Nebraska civics standards are grouped under expectations related to the roles of citizenship, form and function of government, and basic principles and documents of democracy. The Nebraska social studies standards for each discipline use similar categories to organize standards as the state documents used for comparison. Beneath the standard, the indicator provides specific information about student knowledge and skill appropriate to the grade and topic.

An exception to this structure is the Nebraska history standards, which differ somewhat in organization from the comparison states. In the comparison documents historical understanding content (i.e., historiography skills) is described separately from knowledge about historical events (local events in K–3, U.S. and world events from grade 4 onwards). The major organizing levels of Nebraska's history standards are related to historical understanding — which includes perspectives, interpretation, research, and chronological thinking—and provide the organizational level under which the history standards are then chronologically and regionally arranged. The standards repeat the historical understanding concepts at each grade level with limited variations for grade bands (middle and high school).

The Nebraska indicators are organized under historical understanding standards, providing extensive examples of how students may apply historical understanding to history. Taken together, the indicators serve as recommended examples of generalized principles of historical understanding, yet allow teachers a wide degree of latitude in tailoring the actual historical content of an indicator. This result reflects the state interest in providing districts local autonomy in their curriculum.

The Nebraska standards organize discipline content effectively, and there is only one instance in which the placement of content within a discipline is anomalous.

> *SS 12.3.4.i - Identify and explain the factors that contribute to cooperation and conflict within and between countries.*

This content, found in a Nebraska geography indicator, was typically organized within world history sections for a majority of comparison documents.

Coherence: Consistency of Scope

Scope refers to the degree of detail or generalization addressed by a statement. It is important that indicators be consistent in scope throughout the standards so that teachers can anticipate the demands that any one indicator may place on instruction. If an indicator encompasses too much material, then it may demand significantly more class time than all other indicators. One indicator was found to be unusually large:

> *SS 12.2.13.b Identify goods which are available at a lower price because of international trade. Explain how trade barriers (tariffs, quotas, embargos) impact the prices and quantity of goods in the domestic market.*

This indicator from economics consists of two separate and equally significant, though related, ideas, each of which is roughly equivalent to other indicators in the Nebraska standards. The economics indicator identified should be separated into two distinct indicators.

A related problem appears when indicators are too specific. If one statement describes knowledge and skill that would take a student weeks to master and another statement just minutes, the document becomes less useful for planning a unit or lesson. One indicator, in geography, describes a specific classroom activity:

> *SS 8.3.1.c Analyze their own world view using mental maps (e.g. have students sketch a map to see how they view their world).*

The activity described might be accomplished in the space of an hour. The content it communicates might better serve to illustrate a larger idea, such as an indicator on how participants may view an event differently based upon their perspective, formed in part by their mental map of a geo-political region.

In another case, the work required by an indicator might be completed by a student very quickly, in part because the purpose of the indicator is unclear. In the subject of history, the following expectation is held for students at each level:

> *Develop questions about [… neighborhood, U.S., world…] history.*

The language in brackets changes at each grade level to reflect the area of history that is the focus for that grade. Students without knowledge of the history they study should be able to develop easy questions fairly quickly. The indicator could be revised so that it is more similar in scope to the other indicators and also make clear that students should be growing in their capacity to recognize and ask meaningful questions about the history they are studying. The indicator may be made more clearly applicable to different levels of student achievement if it were revised to reflect the complexity of text or depth of information that the student encounters:

> *Develop grade-appropriate questions about events or people in […] history based upon texts of appropriate difficulty.*

Although the change is not significant, it serves to refocus the indicator on expectations held for the student rather than an activity repeated at each grade on a different area of history.

Indicators were also found that prescribe how students show their knowledge of a topic, a level of detail that is more appropriate to a lesson plan or curriculum. In the following examples, students are asked to discuss the topic of the indicator:

Civics:

SS 4.1.2.a Discuss how various individuals and groups influence the way an issue affecting the state is viewed and resolved (e.g., lobbying, petitions, media, social media).

Geography:

SS 0.3.1.f Discuss why things are located where they are (e.g., why is the playground outside?).

SS 4.3.5.e Discuss environmental issues (e.g., water stewardship, air quality, solid waste).

SS 5.3.5.d Discuss environmental issues (e.g., water supply, air quality, solid waste).

Asking that students discuss a topic appears to unnecessarily narrow the scope of possible student demonstrations of knowledge. Verbs that allow a range of possible student actions include "describe", "explain", "compare", or "explain why"; any of which might be displayed through student discussion.

Duplication

Duplication of content undermines one of the central purposes of standards: to make clear to students and teachers what is expected at each grade and to inform everyone in the system of those expectations. The primary problem of duplication that arises in the Nebraska standards is the presence of identical grade-level indicators over the span of several grades. This duplication of content occurs in geography and history.

The duplication of indicators across grade levels creates two problems: first, the teacher at any one grade level does not know to what extent students are expected to master the content, and second, teachers at each grade level cannot know what will be or has been addressed by their peers, and so cannot plan accordingly.

Because grade-by-grade standards documents must capture the increasing level of difficulty as well as provide a clear focus for assessment, indicators that appear virtually unchanged at two or more grade levels do not provide meaningful grade-level instruction or assessment information for teachers. It is unclear as to whether the grade an indicator first appears is the grade intended for introduction of the concept or skill, or for mastery, and the following grade intended for review. Content that is duplicated also increases the overall number of indicators, which makes the standards document appear unfocused and cumbersome. Table 2.1 lists the standards that duplicate content.

TABLE 2.1. DUPLICATED CONTENT

Nebraska Indicators: Duplicated Content	
Geography	
SS 0.3.1.e and 1.3.1.e	Demonstrate relative location (e.g., near/far, above/below).
SS 0.3.2.a and 1.3.2.a	Identify and differentiate between physical features (e.g., mountains, plains, hills, oceans, islands).

Nebraska Indicators: Duplicated Content	
SS 0.3.4.a and 1.3.4.a	Identify places where people work.
SS 0.3.4.c and 1.3.4.c	Identify cultures of the local community and other communities (e.g., food, language, celebrations).
SS 0.3.4.b and 1.3.4.b	Identify places in the community (e.g., farms, parks, houses, stores).
SS 1.3.1.f and 2.3.1.b	Distinguish between continents and oceans.
SS 2.3.2.a and 3.3.2.a	Identify and differentiate between physical and human features of neighborhood and community (e.g., vegetation, housing).
SS 2.3.2.b and 3.3.2.b	Compare and contrast local places and regions with other places and regions (e.g., prairie and forest, local community with another community, products from Nebraska and another state, crops grown in Nebraska and another state).
SS 2.3.6.b and 3.3.6.b	Identify spatial dimensions of geographic problems. (e.g., trash collection and disposal in school, loss of habitat to development).
History	
Historical Understanding	
SS 4.4.4.a – 8.4.4.a	Analyze resources through sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration.
SS 5.4.1.c and 8.4.1.c	Select and record key national events in chronological order (e.g., timelines).
SS 5.4.4.e – 8.4.4.e and 12.4.4.e	Describe the relationships among historical events in the United States and the students' lives today (i.e., current events).
SS 4.4.5.b and 5.4.5.b	Identify, obtain, and cite appropriate sources for research incorporating primary and secondary sources (e.g., cite sources using a prescribed format).
U.S. and world history	
SS 5.4.5.d, 8.4.5.d, 12.4.5.d (U.S.)	Present historical information about the United States (e.g., pictures, posters, oral/written narratives, and electronic presentations).
SS 8.4.5.d and 12.4.5.d (World)	Present historical information about the world (e.g., pictures, posters, oral/written narratives, and electronic presentations).
Economics	
SS 8.2.10.b and 12.2.10.b	Explain how governments provide economic assistance (e.g., disaster relief, social security, Medicare).

The issue of duplication might be resolved in some cases by changing the taxonomy level of the verb to present a greater challenge to students (see the section on Depth, below, for details on verb taxonomy). For example:

> *SS 0.3.4.a and 1.3.4.a Identify places where people work.*

Applying the taxonomy, one solution may be to change 1.3.4. to read "Compare places where people work."

Another means of resolving duplication is to provide different specific examples, based on a sound rationale. To use the same example:

> *SS 0.3.4.a Identify places where people work (e.g., grocery store, post office, school).*
>
> *1.3.4.a Identify places where people work (e.g., cities, farms, state capital).*

The provided examples distinguish indicators based on the "expanding horizons" model for organizing social studies content. This model, which is reflected in the language of the Nebraska standards in K–5, identifies content that expands to include ever wider circles of student understanding – from the self to family, and ultimately to other countries. Such an approach is a model for designing a sequence of instruction, but does not have strong research support for reflecting students' learning development.

It should be noted that duplications of thinking skills in indicators in the Historical Understanding section are less problematic than duplication of specific information and knowledge. In some cases, thinking skills may be useful to repeat in the standards both because they support the study of history and also because the nature of the material on which students apply these processes becomes more challenging. So, for example, the student of history should always *Analyze resources through sourcing, contextualization, and corroboration,* as described in the historical understanding indicators at grades 4 and 8. It is probable that the sources students at these grades analyze will be at different levels of difficulty, so the duplication of the benchmark is less problematic. In such cases, however, it would be helpful to clarify those aspects of the process that are grade-level appropriate, especially if it results in revising the language of the indicator so that it is more accessible to students at that age. For example, students at grade 4 may be asked to identify the source of information, ask how it is presented, and whether other sources confirm the information.

If there is no clear justification for the duplication of content and no satisfactory way of revising so that it is not a duplicate, the most appropriate grade for mastery should be selected and the duplicates at other grades deleted.

Jargon and Technical Terms

The language used in standards documents should be clear and free of jargon and technical terms; if the use of technical terms is unavoidable, a glossary should be provided. Sometimes, technical terminology within standards helps to explicate accurately and precisely what students should know and be able to do. In such cases, terms should be explained clearly and as if for members of the general public. For example, indicators in the Nebraska standards include such terms as bicameral, biome, and budget. Teachers and other readers of the standards would benefit by having a readily accessible definition of such terms. The draft Nebraska standards include a number of glossary entries; additional words or phrases that would benefit from a glossary entry are listed in Appendix A.

Summary of Findings

The *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* were found to be clearly organized and well written, yet could be improved by small adjustments. Although there are categorically different standards in history — U.S., world, and historical understanding— at each grade they share the same code, which results in unnecessary ambiguity. A few indicators were found to be inconsistent in the scope of content they addressed, covering too much or too little content when compared with the rest of the document. In a number of cases content was found repeated in more than one grade.

Rating for Clarity: 3

The standards for all social studies subject areas generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standards are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standards, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

3. THE CRITERION OF BREADTH

Breadth refers to the requirement that the Nebraska social studies standards address all significant knowledge and skills that are considered important for students to acquire. Two questions direct the process used to evaluate the indicators on this criterion:

3. Are all significant student knowledge and skills addressed in the indicators?
4. Is there content in the indicators not commonly found in social studies documents?

In order to address these two questions regarding breadth, analysts compared the Nebraska standards against the content in four state standards documents, as well as reviewed the content against a Nebraska statute required of all social studies classes.

Content Not Addressed

In order to answer the first question on breadth—whether all significant student knowledge and skills are addressed in the Nebraska standards—analysts determined whether topics that appear in the comparison documents also appear within the Nebraska standards. Table 3.1 provides the findings on gaps in content coverage. Content listed in the table was present in at least 2 of the 4 comparison state documents but was not found in the Nebraska standards.

TABLE 3.1. EXAMPLES OF CONTENT NOT PRESENT IN NEBRASKA STANDARDS BUT PRESENT IN TWO OR MORE OF FOUR COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

Content	*Comparison Documents*	*Grade Level(s)*
Civics		
Compare civic life in the US and other countries and non-democratic systems.	CA, IN	6-8
Describe the types of political organization of nations and states.	IN, MA	6-12
Describe US foreign policy issues such as methods, approaches, events.	IN, MA	8-12
Civic identity as embodied founding documents and acted upon historically.	IN, MA	8-12
Describe the history of political parties in the US.	CA, GA, IN, MA	8-12
Explain efforts to narrow discrepancy between foundational ideals and civic realities.	IN, MA	8-12
Explain natural rights and social contract theory present in foundation documents.	IN, GA, MA	8-12
Explain the US Constitution's amendment process.	CA, GA	8-12
Describe sources of revenue and fiscal responsibilities of state and local government.	CA, GA, MA	8-12
Understand reserved and concurrent powers of state and national governments.	CA, GA	8-12

Content	*Comparison Documents*	*Grade Level(s)*
Examine reasons for competition between nations.	IN, MA	8-12
Economics		
Analyze business cycles and their historic impact.	GA, IN, MA	5
Describe causes and effects of inflation.	CA, GA, IN, MA	5-12
Describe the role of a market economy in U.S. history.	CA, IN	5-12
Describe the development and effects of technology in US economic history.	CA, IN	5-12
Explain role of currency exchange in international trade, including the effects purchasing power in the US.	CA, GA, IN, MA	6
Compare the standard of living between the US and other countries.	IN, MA	6-8
Explain how wages/earnings are affected by the market value of products, supply and demand, and worker qualifications.	CA, GA, IN, MA	6-12
Illustrate the relationship between aggregate supply and aggregate demand and their impact on unemployment and inflation.	IN, MA	8-12
Describe how GDP, economic growth, unemployment, and inflation are calculated.	GA, IN, MA	12
Explain significance of the unemployment rate.	CA, IN	12
Describe natural monopolies and their regulation by government.	IN, MA	12
Geography		
Define and locate hemispheres and the equator.	CA, GA, IN, MA	3-5
History		
Describe the evolutionary and cultural origins of humans prior to urbanized settlements (before ca. 4000 BC).	CA, IN, MA	6-12

These findings show content that is found in two or more of the comparison documents but not found in the Nebraska standards. The content statement for each row synthesizes the language and details of documents cited in that row. The degree of support for the content may be gauged by reviewing the states cited for each piece of content. Also, the range of grade levels in which the content was found in indicated in the far right column. Overall, the analysis found about a dozen cases of content found in two or more comparison documents and missing in Nebraska in both civics and economics, and only one case in both geography and history. All findings are reported, although it may be argued that only content found in three or four documents should be seriously considered for inclusion within the Nebraska standards.

Nebraska Statute 79-724

The Nebraska Statue 79-724 on American citizenship, passed by the Nebraska legislature, specifies directives on topics related to the schools and civic education. A number of items within the statute address topics that fall outside the scope of academic standards as traditionally understood, and so were not reviewed for their presence in the Nebraska social studies standards. For example, analysts did not review questions addressing the inspection and approval of textbooks, the character of teachers, or the establishment of school-day activities, such as singing patriotic songs. The following discussion excerpts those items within the statute that address content that could be reasonably expected to be found in social studies and identifies whether and where this content is present in the standards.

Subsection 2

This section of the statute specifies that

> All American history courses approved for grade levels as provided by this section shall include and adequately stress contributions of all ethnic groups (a) to the development and growth of America into a great nation, (b) to art, music, education, medicine, literature, science, politics, and government, and (c) to the war services in all wars of this nation.

The Nebraska standards for the social studies ensure that students study the contributions of cultures and ethnic groups from kindergarten through high school. For example, the following indicator appears at grade 5:

> SS 5.4.2.a Demonstrate an understanding of the impact of people, events, and symbols from various cultures and ethnic groups (e.g., Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Jefferson, Powhattan, Sacagawea, and other founders/presidents, historical documents, colonization, settlement, early conflicts, national symbols)

This standard and similar standards across the grades (coded 4.2) address contributions of individuals and cultures. By stipulating the names of individuals who had an impact on a wide variety of fields, the standard appears to satisfactorily address the requirements of the statute. For example, the study of Benjamin Franklin is relevant for contributions to address not only politics and government, but science; the study of Sacagawea will further understanding of the impact of people of different cultures on early exploration of the U.S.

Subsection 4

This section of the statute specifies that

> In at least two of the three grades from the fifth to the eighth grade…at least three periods per week shall be set aside to be devoted to the teaching of American history…

It is outside the purview of academic standards to specify the number of periods per week of instruction on any content. However, it can be noted that there are sufficient academic content standards regarding American history identified in the Nebraska social studies standards such that schools that do schedule three periods per week will have sufficient content for these classes.

Subsection 5

This section of the statute specifies that

> In at least two grades of every high school, at least three periods per week shall be devoted to the teaching of civics, during which courses specific attention shall be given to the following matters:
>
> (a) The United States Constitution and the Constitution of Nebraska
>
> (b) The benefits and advantages of our form of government and the dangers and fallacies of Nazism, Communism, and similar ideologies; and
>
> (c) The duties of citizenship, including active participation in the improvement of a citizen's community, state, country, and world and the value and practice of civil discourse between opposing interests.

As noted earlier, academic standards do not address periods of instruction. Nor are high school standards typically specified for a particular grade or grades, though for convenience, as is done for the Nebraska standards, they are coded at the final, 12th grade. Schools or districts may elect to distribute the content across two grades in high school in order to strictly address the statute language. The content identified in the high school civics standards is such that it could provide content for two grades within high school. Each lettered item of the subsection will now be addressed in turn.

The standards clearly address item (a) regarding the constitution of the U.S. and Nebraska. Standard 12.11.1 in Civics states:

> Students will analyze and evaluate the foundation, structures, and functions of American constitutional government as well as local, state and international governments.

Item (b) regarding an analysis of alternative forms of government is addressed in part within indicator 12.11.f, in which students are expected to evaluate government organizations, which implies they will study the benefits, dangers, and fallacies of these forms:

> Analyze and evaluate the foundation, structures, and functions of current and historical supranational organizations (e.g., United Nations, NATO, European Union, treaties, Communism, Fascism, dictatorships, trade organizations)

Item (c) regarding civic participation is addressed in Civics indicator 12.1.2.a:

> Engage in appropriate civic activities (e.g., discussing current issues, advocating for personal rights and the rights of others, influencing governmental actions, participating in civil discourse, registering for selective service, participating in community improvement activities)

In summary, the content of the standards appear to satisfactorily address the statute when they are reviewed in light of the purpose and intent of the standards, namely, to identify knowledge, skills – and in the case of civics, participation – expected of all students.

Content Not Commonly Found

It has been observed that all of the knowledge and skills identified as important by national organizations in the subject areas cannot be addressed in the classroom given the time available in the school day. A related concern is addressed in a report of the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), a large-scale, cross-national comparative study of math and science curricula. In addressing the relatively poor performance of U.S. students, the report's authors note that our "preoccupation with breadth rather than depth, with quantity rather than quality, probably affects how well U.S. students

perform in relation to their counterparts in other countries" (Schmidt, McKnight, & Raizen, 1997). Researchers Marzano & Kendall (1999) show that at least by one measure, attempting to address all the content identified in standards documents would mean that "schooling would have to be extended from kindergarten to grade 21" (p. 104).

Thus, it is critical that the process of evaluating the standards for the breadth of content include a means for identifying content that might not be considered essential. In order to provide this information, analysts identified, in the course of their comparison of the content against other standards documents, content present in Nebraska that is present in less than two comparison state standards documents.

The review was performed at the indicator level. In a few instances, details within specific indicators were present in only one or none of the comparison documents, including references to ecosystems, biomes, and glaciation. Because the overall content of the indicators that contained references to these concepts are supported by comparison documents, the indicators are not shown in Table 3.2. Only three indicators had no support or the support of just one of the comparison documents, as shown in table 3.2.

TABLE 3.2. CONTENT PRESENT IN NEBRASKA STANDARDS BUT FOUND IN ONE OR NONE OF FOUR COMPARISON DOCUMENTS

Curricular Indicator	*Students:*
Civics:	
SS 3.1.2.c	Identify and describe the importance of listening to the views of others and sharing personal views in a respectful manner. (Appears in one other state's standards)
SS.4.1.2.b	Give examples of issues faced by the state and develop possible solutions. (Appears in no other state standards)
Geography:	
SS 12.3.4.er	Distinguish between convergence and divergence of cultures. (Appears in one other state's standards.)

Overall, there are few cases of content present in the Nebraska standards that is not also found in at least two comparison documents. There is one case in civics and one in geography for which there is content in one comparison document; and one case in civics for which there is no content in the comparison documents.

Summary of Findings

The Nebraska standards were reviewed to determine whether they address all significant knowledge and skills in the four social studies subject areas. Overall, the Nebraska standards cover the majority of knowledge and skills articulated in the comparison documents. In civics and economics, however, a number of topics appear in the majority of state standards documents that should be reviewed for possible inclusion within the Nebraska standards.

The Nebraska standards for the social studies were also reviewed against Nebraska Statue 79-724 on American citizenship. All items within the statute that addressed topics typically part of a social studies standards document were found to be present in the Nebraska state standards.

The standards were also reviewed to determine if they include content that is not commonly found in the comparison documents. Just two indicators were found had the support of a single document and one indicator that had no equivalent in any of the comparison documents.

For the most part, all the content addressed in the indicators is important, as defined by its presence in the comparison documents.

Ratings for Breadth

Civics: 2 One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

Economics: 2 One or more revisions of the standards are necessary in order to meet the criterion addressed in this section. Although the revisions that are recommended are not extensive, they have a noteworthy impact on the overall usefulness of the standard.

Geography: 3 The standard generally meets the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

History: 4 The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

4. THE CRITERION OF SPECIFICITY

Specificity addresses the question of whether the Nebraska social studies standards effectively communicate the level of detail needed to provide guidance to districts and schools about what students should know and be able to do. It is distinct from the criterion of breadth, which addresses socials studies at the topic level, in that it is about whether the examples provided for each topic provide a clear sense of the kind of details that are important for each topic. A lack of specificity undermines one of the central purposes of standards: to make clear to students and teachers what is expected and to inform everyone in the system of those expectations.

Use of Examples

Analysts found topics in the four comparison documents that were not specified in the Nebraska standards, but could be incorporated into the parenthetical examples of existing Nebraska indicators that address related content. Topics for inclusion as examples were chosen if they were found in two or more of the comparison documents. The topics are listed in Table 4.1 on the following page.

TABLE 4.1. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BETTER GRADE SPECIFICITY: TOPICS FOR EXAMPLES

Topic to add as example	*Related Nebraska indicator*
Civics	
Shared powers of government	SS 12.1.1.b
Rule of law	SS.8.1.1.e
Popular sovereignty/consent of the governed	SS.8.1.1.e
Interpretations of Bill of Rights	SS 5.1.1.a
Enumerated and implied powers	SS 12.1.1.b
Preamble to Constitution	SS 12.1.1.a
State constitutions	SS 12.1.1.d
Reserved and concurrent powers of state	SS 12.1.1.e
National government foreign affairs powers	SS 8.1.1.c, SS 12.1.1.c
Economics	
Types of competition	SS 12.2.2.d
Definition of exchange rate	SS 3.2.12.b
Production possibilities curve	SS 12.2.1.b
Consumer sovereignty	SS 12.2.2.c
Role of buyers and seller s in equilibrium price	SS 12.2.2.c
Price elasticity	SS 8.2.2.c
Price signals	SS 8.2.2.c
Reasons for working	SS 2.2.3.a
Work activities at home	SS 2.2.3.a

Topic to add as example	*Related Nebraska indicator*
Geography	
Locations of legends and stories	SS 12.3.2.b
Customs and traditions	SS 3.3.4.b
Central America, South Asia, Caribbean, Canada	SS 8.3.2.e
History	
U.S.	
Kansas-Nebraska Act	SS 4.4.4.d, SS 8.4.4.b
Regionalism, evangelism, transcendentalists	SS 3.4.2.a
Organized labor	SS 8.4.3.a, SS8.4.3.b
Jazz, radio, sports, Hollywood, Lost Generation, Prohibition, organized crime, New Deal	SS 12.4.2.a
Consumer affluence, economic boom and recessions, popular culture, space exploration	SS 12.4.1.a
World	
Vedism, Taoism, Khmer Kingdom, Nara Japan, Toltecs, Chavin, Aztec and Inca empires	SS 8.4.2.a
Gupta Empire	SS 8.4.4.d
Trade routes and empires, Renaissance, Age of Revolution, Cold War, de-colonization, nuclear power, space exploration, computerization, post-Cold War conflicts	SS 12.4.2.a
Eurasian trade routes and empires	SS 12.4.2.b
Prosperity and global depression, rise of totalitarian states, League of Nations, Cold War	SS 12.4.4.c

For civics, economics, and geography, the recommended use of these topics as examples serve to strengthen the content depth or breadth of the indicators. For history, due to the intended generalized content of the indicators, the recommended additional examples would strengthen the comprehensiveness of the indicators, allowing teachers to better locate related content in instructional materials.

Summary of Findings

The Nebraska Social Studies Standards provide useful specificity that is on a par with the documents used for comparison. A number of selected examples from the comparison documents have been provided that, if added to existing indicators in civics, economics, and history, would ensure that all important details in the social studies are present in the standards.

Rating for Specificity

Civics: 3. The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

Economics: 3. The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

Geography: 4. The standards are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

History: 3. The standards generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standard are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended change.

5. THE CRITERION OF DEPTH

Depth concerns whether students are appropriately challenged. Specifically, the Nebraska standards were examined to determine whether students are held to expectations comparable by grade level to expectations held for students in comparison documents. For the analysis of depth, analysts compared the depth of the content of the Nebraska standards with that of the comparison state standards. Analysts also examined Nebraska standards from grade band to grade band to determine whether the progression of knowledge and skills within the Nebraska standards increase appropriately over time. In addition to grade placement, the indicators were reviewed for their cognitive complexity using Robert J. Marzano's *New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* (2007).

A Brief Description of Marzano's Taxonomy

Marzano's taxonomy was chosen for this evaluation because it is consistent with recent research in cognitive science about the relative difficulty of mental tasks. Marzano notes that, with the complexity of a mental process or skill— such as explaining a historic event — the more familiar one is with a process, the more quickly one executes it and the easier it becomes. Thus, mental processes and skills should not be ordered hierarchically in terms of their complexity. They can, however, be ordered in terms of levels of control; that is, some mental processes exercise control over other processes.

Processes can also be ordered in terms of the conscious awareness that is required to execute them. For example, the lowest level, the retrieval process, can be monitored for accuracy by the higher mental process of metacognition. For example, a student might use metacognitive skills to assess why he or she continues to make the same mistake in his or her writing. In this taxonomic organization, the process of comprehension requires slightly more conscious thought than the process of retrieval, and the process of analysis, and of utilization, even more conscious thought. Thus, the hierarchically ordered levels of difficulty, which do not depend upon the complexity of a task for their ordering, provide a useful means for analyzing and describing levels of student performance.

Particularly useful in the taxonomy is the distinction maintained between declarative and procedural knowledge. Levels of difficulty are described not only in their relationship to each other, but also with respect to how they relate differently to information (declarative knowledge) and skill (procedural knowledge).

Marzano's Taxonomy consists of six levels:
1. Retrieval
2. Comprehension
3. Analysis
4. Knowledge Utilization
5. Metacognition
6. Self-system thinking

Exhibit 5.1 provides a summary of the first five cognitive levels in Marzano's taxonomy.

EXHIBIT 5.1 SUMMARY: CATEGORIES IN THE NEW TAXONOMY

Level 1: Retrieval **Recognizing:** The standard requires the student to identify features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components. **Recalling:** The standard requires the student to provide features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components. **Executing**: The standard requires the student to perform a procedure without significant error, but does not necessarily require that the student understand how and why the procedure works.
Level 2: Comprehension **Integrating:** The standard requires the student to identify the basic structure of knowledge and the critical as opposed to non-critical characteristics of that structure. **Symbolizing:** The standard requires the student to identify or recognize features of information, but does not necessarily require the student to understand the structure of knowledge or require that the student be able to differentiate critical from non-critical components.
Level 3: Analysis **Matching:** The standard requires the student to identify important similarities and differences between knowledge. **Classifying:** The standard requires the student to identify superordinate and subordinate categories related to knowledge. **Analyzing Errors:** The standard requires the student to identify errors in the presentation or use of knowledge. **Generalizing:** The standard requires the student to construct new generalizations or principles based on knowledge. **Specifying:** The standard requires the student to identify specific applications or logical consequences of knowledge.
Level 4: Knowledge Utilization **Decision Making:** The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to make decisions or expects the student to be able to make decisions about the use of the knowledge. **Problem Solving:** The standard expects the student to use the knowledge to solve problems or to solve problems about the knowledge. **Experimenting:** The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to generate and test hypotheses or to generate and test hypotheses about the knowledge. **Investigating:** The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to conduct investigations or to conduct investigations about the knowledge.
Level 5: Metacognition **Specifying Goals:** The standard requires the student to set a plan for goals relative to the knowledge. **Process Monitoring:** The standard requires the student to monitor the execution of the knowledge. **Monitoring Clarity:** The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she has clarity about the knowledge. **Monitoring Accuracy:** The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she is accurate about the knowledge.

Adapted from: Marzano, Robert (2007) *The New Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*

Exhibit 5.1 displays only the first five levels of Marzano's taxonomy because they are useful for rating standards and assessments, while the sixth is more appropriate for classroom-based observations. Broadly speaking, the hierarchy is based on the idea that each level requires more sophisticated processing in short-term memory before information is moved to long-term memory. This empirically derived framework is based on brain research and cognitive and information processing sciences. (For an expanded table of the Marzano's taxonomy, see Appendix B.)

Comparison Against State Standards

In order to evaluate the relative depth or challenge presented by standards, analysts compared topics addressed in the Nebraska standards against comparable topics within comparison state standards documents (specifically, state standards from California, Georgia, Indiana, Massachusetts).

Analysts reviewed the content for relative grade placement, identifying content that appears at an *earlier* grade than is commonly found in the comparison standards documents or a *later* grade than is commonly found in standards documents. In social studies, for grades K–8, when Nebraska grade placement of content differed by two grades or more in two or more comparison documents, such content was likewise addressed. The two-grade discrepancy permitted before further analysis was required reflects the wide and frequent variation among states in their assignment of grades to the same or similar academic content in the social studies. When the Nebraska content from the grade band 9–12 commonly appeared in two or more grades *earlier* in comparison standards documents, it was addressed in the depth analysis table.

Topics in comparison documents and the Nebraska standards are commonly addressed at several grade levels. Often, these grade levels varied among the documents. Within those variations, if Nebraska and other documents were found to correlate at the same or close levels in one of the variations, the topic was judged comparable in depth. These results appear in Table 5.1.

TABLE 5.1. DEPTH ANALYSIS: TOPICS AND GRADE LEVEL DEMAND

Nebraska Indicator	Comparison Documents' Grade Placement of Content
Civics	
Competing principles and values: SS 3.1.2.d Identify rights and responsibilities of local citizens (e.g., local public service projects). [Taxonomic level 1.] SS 4.1.2.e Identify rights and responsibilities of state citizens. (e.g., roadside cleanup). [Taxonomic level 1.] SS 5.1.2.i Identify the rights and responsibilities of US citizens (e.g., freedom of speech, voting, staying informed of issues, respecting the rights, opinions, and beliefs of others, joining a civic group). [Taxonomic level 1.]	Content appears in High School band in 3 states (CA, MA, GA) and Middle School band 1 state (IN) at taxonomic levels 3 and 4.
Economics	
Buyer and sellers: SS 5.2.1.a Differentiate various markets where buyers and seller meet (e.g., shopping malls, classifieds, garage sales, Internet). [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in Grade 2 in 2 states (CA, MA) at taxonomic levels 1 & 2.

Nebraska Indicator	Comparison Documents' Grade Placement of Content
SS 12.2.2.d Describe how competition between sellers results in lower prices, higher quality products, and better customer service. [Taxonomic level 2.]	
Producers and Consumers: SS 8.2.1.a Recognize the relationship between consumers and producers in a market economy. (e.g., circular flow). [Taxonomic level 1.] SS 8.2.2.a Explain how individuals are both consumers and producers. [Taxonomic level 2.] SS 12.2.2.e Analyze how producers and consumers affect market prices and quantities through the goods and services they produce and buy (e.g., shifts in supply and demand). [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in Grades 1-2 in 2 states (IN, MA) at taxonomic levels 1 & 2.
Absolute and Comparative trade: SS 5.2.12.a Investigate early US specialization and trade. [Taxonomic level 4.] SS 4.2.12.a Compare Nebraska with different regions and the goods and services they produce. [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in High School in 1 state (IN) and Grades 8-12 in one state (MA) at taxonomic level 3.
Geography	
Constructing maps: SS 8.3.1.c Analyze their own world view using mental maps (e.g. have students sketch a map to see how they view their world). [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in grade 1 in two states (CA, IN), in grades 3 & 5 in one state (IN) at taxonomic level 2.
Graphs and charts: SS 12.3.1.a Analyze geographical Information sources (e.g., map, globe, atlas, remote sensing, GPS, and GIS). [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in grade 5 in one state (GA), in grade 6 in one state (MA), both at taxonomic level 2.
Regional cultural characteristics: SS 2.3.4.a Identify patterns of cultural traits (e.g., language, religion, food). [Taxonomic level 1.]	Content appears in grade 6 in one state (IN), in high school in one state (GA) at Taxonomic levels 1 & 2.
Resources – local use: SS 8.3.5.b Evaluate global effects on the human environment by changes in the physical environment. [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in grade 1 in one state (IN), in grades 3, 4 in one state (CA) at taxonomic level 1.
Geography used to interpret the past: SS 0.3.6.a Describe places in past times (e.g., recall places seen in the past). [Taxonomic level 1.]	Content appears in grade 4 in three states (IN, GA, MA), grades 8-12 in one state (MA), in Grades 5 in two states (GA, IN), in Grades 6,7 in one state (IN) at taxonomic levels 1, 2, 3, & 4.

Nebraska Indicator	Comparison Documents' Grade Placement of Content
History	
US – Pre-Columbian societies: SS 8.4.1.a Describe temporal sequences; (e.g., BC, BCE, AD, CE and Early Civilizations & Rise of Pastoral People 4000-1000 BCE, Rise of Giant Empires & Major Religions 1000-300CE, Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter 300-1000 CE). [Taxonomic level 1.] SS 8.4.2.a Analyze the impact of people, events, and symbols from various cultures and ethnic groups on history throughout the world (e.g., . . . Mayan calendar, Buddhism, Judaism, Silk Road) (World Studies might also include: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas, Europe, Asia, and Africa). [Taxonomic level 3.]	Content appears in grades 2 & 4 in one state (GA), grade 5 in three states (CA, IN, MA) at taxonomic level 1.

The Nebraska standards contain a few indicators that differ from comparison states concerning grade placement of content. In cases of more rigor, meaning similar content appeared in an earlier grade than in comparison documents, there was one topic in civics, one in economics, and two in geography. In cases of less rigor, meaning similar content appeared in a later grade than in comparison documents, there were two in economics, three in geography, and one in history.

It is important to note that standards cannot be evaluated on the criterion of depth when they either lack specificity—so that it is unclear what content is intended for which grade—or when content related to a particular topic or skill is duplicated without indication as to when students should master the identified knowledge or skill, and that ambiguity of grade placement inhibits the analysis against comparison documents. Such ambiguity can only be resolved, and depth made clear, when the indicators are made more grade-specific. Such content is identified in the sections on Clarity, Specificity, and Measurability.

Summary of Findings

Overall, the grade placement of content in the Nebraska standards is comparable to the state documents analyzed. Nearly all of the indicators progressed in cognitive complexity across the grade levels. Most of the indicators that could be evaluated for depth were found to be within an appropriate grade range and written at an appropriate level of difficulty in comparison to the reference documents. In some instances, the Nebraska standards require students to master knowledge or skills in earlier grades than comparison documents; in a few cases, content appeared in the comparison documents at an earlier grade.

Rating for Depth: 3

The standards for all social studies subject areas generally meet the criterion addressed in this section; one or more revisions of the standards are recommended to ensure high quality. These revisions are not critical to the overall usefulness of the standard, however. There also may be defensible reasons for not undertaking the recommended changes.

6. THE CRITERION OF MEASURABILITY

Measurability addresses the question of whether the *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* identify knowledge and skills that can be assessed. Generally stated goals of the curriculum may help to introduce or frame standards, but ultimately teachers must have a clear sense of what is expected of students, and students should be capable of demonstrating this knowledge and skill.

In cases where the content of the standards is not measurable, it may be due to unclear language. In other cases, it might be that the text mixes standards with useful instructional strategies or generally held goals of the curriculum. Such supporting information has value for teachers, but it does not directly serve the purpose of clearly stating the knowledge and skills expected of students. Instructional support is frequently not found in state standards, but rather in supplementary documents, such as curriculum frameworks.

The *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* contain a number of indicators that are difficult to measure because they do not make it clear what expectations are held for students. Specifically, indicators that ask students to discuss a topic (see the discussion under the Criterion of Clarity) leave unclear to what level of understanding students should master the topic; for example, whether they are expected to explain, analyze, or simply know facts about a given topic.

Summary of Findings

A few issues were found in the *Nebraska Social Studies Standards* related to measurability. Nearly all indicators in the social studies standards were found to be measurable.

Rating for Measurability: 4 The standards for all social studies subject areas are exemplary in meeting the criterion addressed in this section; minimal or no revisions of the standards are recommended.

APPENDIX A: TECHNICAL TERMS FOR INCLUSION IN A GLOSSARY

Civics	Economics	Geography	History
Advocate	Bank	Absolute location	Causal
Authoritarian	Barter	Adaptation	Century
Authority	Bonds	Atmosphere	Chronology
Bicameral	Borrow	Biome	Civilization
Branches of government	Budget	Cardinal directions	Community
Citizen	Business cycle	Cartography	contextualizing
Citizenship	Buyer	Chart	Corroboration
Civics	Capital	Climate	Culture
Civil	Cash	Climate region	Current event
Civil rights	Circular flow	Continent	Decade
Community	Coin	Cultural trait	Electronic presentation
Confederation	Command economy	Culture	Ethnic
Confederate	Consumer	Demography	Evaluate
Congress	Cooperative (noun)	Developed country	Global
Constitution	Corporation	Developing country	International
Constitutional Convention	Cost and benefit	Diffusion	Key event
Democracy	Credit	Distribution	Millennium
Election	Credit union	Earth-Sun relationship	Multiple types of sources
Executive	Currency	Ecosystem	Narrative
Federal	Debt	Element	Nation
Federalism	Deficit	Environment	Nationalism
Government	Domestic	Extreme event	Neighborhood
Governor	Economy	Geographic Information Systems	Perspective
House of Representatives	Embargo	Geographic problems	Prescribed format (MLA/APA)
	Entrepreneur	Geography	
	Export		

Civics	Economics	Geography	History
Judicial	Federal Reserve	Global grid	Primary source
Judiciary	Finance	Globe	Region
Justice	Goods	Grid	Relationship
Law	Import	Hemisphere	Secondary source
Legal	Income	Human feature	Sequence
Legislature	Interest	Intermediate directions	Sourcing
Lobby	Interest rate	Latitude	State
Lobbyist	International trade	Location	Symbol
Monarchy	Labor union	Longitude	Temporal
Patriotism	Loan	Map	Timeline
Politics	Market	Map legend	Trade route
Poll	Market forces	Map projection	Unicameral
President	Mixed	Mental map	
Privacy	Monetary policy	Migration	
Private	Money	Nation	
Public	National debt	Native Americans	
Public service	Natural resource	Natural hazard	
Reapportionment	Pawn	Natural resource	
Redistricting	Price	Nonrenewable resource	
Representative	Private property	Physical feature	
Republic	Producer	Physical processes	
Responsibility	Product	Place	
Rule	Productivity	Population density	
Senate	Public property	Population distribution	
Separation of powers	Quota	Population growth rate	
Supranational	Resource	Region	
Supreme Court	Revenue	Relative location	

Civics	Economics	Geography	History
Unicameral	Saving	Renewable resource	
Unitary	Seller	Rural	
Vote	Services	Scale	
	Specialization	Spatial	
	Stock market	Tectonics	
	Stocks	Time zone	
	Supply and demand	Timeline	
	Surplus	Transportation	
	Tariff	Urban	
	Tax	Weather	
		Weathering	

APPENDIX B: DEPTH

Level 1: Retrieval		***Sample Terms/Phrases***
Recognizing	The standard requires the student to identify features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Recognize • Select • Match
Recalling	The standard requires the student to provide features of information, but does not necessarily require understanding of the structure of knowledge or of the ability to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Identify • Label • List • Describe • Explain
Executing	The standard requires the student to perform a procedure without significant error, but does not necessarily require that the student understand how and why the procedure works.	• Describe different types of • Give examples of • Provide examples of
Level 2: Comprehension		***Sample Terms/Phrases***
Integrating	The standard requires the student to identify the basic structure of knowledge and the critical as opposed to non-critical characteristics of that structure.	• Describe/Explain why/how • Describe/Explain relationship between • Summarize
Symbolizing	The standard requires the student to identify or recognize features of information, but does not necessarily require the student to understand the structure of knowledge or require that the student be able to differentiate critical from non-critical components.	• Represent • Diagram • Illustrate • Model

Level 3: Analysis		***Sample Terms/Phrases***
Matching	The standard requires the student to identify important similarities and differences between knowledge.	• Compare • Distinguish • Categorize • Differentiate
Classifying	The standard requires the student to identify superordinate and subordinate categories related to knowledge.	• Classify and explain why • Generate categories
Analyzing Errors	The standard requires the student to identify errors in the presentation or use of knowledge.	• Assess • Diagnose • Evaluate
Generalizing	The standard requires the student to construct new generalizations or principles based on knowledge.	• Create a rule • Generalize • Determine
Specifying	The standard requires the student to identify specific applications or logical consequences of knowledge.	• Predict
Level 4: Knowledge Utilization		***Sample Terms/Phrases***
Decision Making	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to make decisions or expects the student to be able to make decisions about the use of the knowledge.	• Decide • Select • Judge
Problem Solving	The standard expects the student to use the knowledge to solve problems or to solve problems about the knowledge.	• Adapt • Apply • Plan
Experimenting	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to generate and test hypotheses or to generate and test hypotheses about the knowledge.	• Generate hypothesis • Test hypothesis
Investigating	The standard requires the student to use the knowledge to conduct investigations or to conduct investigations about the knowledge.	• Investigate • Research

Level 5: Metacognition		***Sample Terms/Phrases***
Specifying Goals	The standard requires the student to set a plan for goals relative to the knowledge.	• Set/define goals • Develop/ monitor goals • Varies approach based on purpose • Proposes/ forms a plan
Process Monitoring	The standard requires students to monitor the execution of the knowledge.	• Evaluate/ assess process • Reflect on process • Explain a procedure • Adjust for different purposes • Monitor process • Manage time/ resources • Revise process
Monitoring Clarity	The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she has clarity about the knowledge.	• Monitor understanding • Clarify thinking
Monitoring Accuracy	The standard requires the student to determine the extent to which he or she is accurate about the knowledge	• Evaluate own assumptions • Analyze own bias • Validate thinking • Revisit solutions •

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