



Written by [Bruce Walker](#) on July 13, 2012

Nebraska To Revise Controversial School Social Studies Standards

As the [Nebraska Board of Education](#) presented its proposal for social studies standards in public schools this year, it was met with firm resistance from concerned citizens, who pointed out that the nation's Founding Fathers and other historical figures and dates were missing from the standards. The 1998 standards, currently in effect, consist of 33 pages covering the leading figures and important dates in American history.



In 2007, the Board of Education was directed by the state legislature to update the academic standards for the Cornhusker State's 250 school districts. The process was gradual, with different disciplines of learning being covered in successive years. Language, math, and science standards have all been successfully adopted. But this year, after the uproar over the proposed new guidelines for social studies (history, economics, civics, and geography), the Board of Education is having to go back to the drawing board.

Donylnn Rice, administrator of curriculum, instruction, and innovation for the Nebraska Department of Education, seems to have taken the criticism to heart, replying that the 2012 draft recommendations will be modified: "I think people will be very pleased when they see the next iteration of the draft. We will definitely be adding historical figures back in there. We listened to the input." Rice also noted that traditional American history studies, such as memorizing the 50 states and their capitals, will be included in the new standards as well.

Leaving out traditional American history, however, is only part of the problem. Omaha resident John Sieler, a member of the State Board of Education, noted that the draft standards stated that global warming was a fact and not a theory, and they advocated global government. He also pointed out that the draft has no mention of American exceptionalism, which has long been a tenet of the nation's government and culture. Additionally, he said that though the proposed standards assume that all cultures are equal, this is certainly not the case, citing a recent example of an Afghan woman who was publicly shot to death for adultery.

Fellow board member Robert Enven commented that history needed to be taught through a "lens of love of country." He added, "To me the purpose of the standards is to provide to our children an intellectual understanding of the genius of our country and an emotional connection to it so we're growing young patriots."

Administrator Donylynn Rice advised that the public will have a great deal of opportunity to comment on the revised standards, as there will be public hearings as well as an online survey.

Nearby Minnesota, which has recently adopted social studies standards, provides an example of how students' minds can be channeled depending on how educators choose to word the standards. Standard 20, for instance, states as fact rather than opinion: "As the United States shifted from its agrarian roots



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into an industrial and global power, the rise of big business, urbanization and immigration led to institutionalized racism, ethnic and class conflict, and new efforts at reform. (Development of an industrial United States: 1870-1920).”

Interestingly, the Texas State Board of Education has recently caused an uproar among secular progressives for including a requirement in its science standards that both the weaknesses and the strengths of Darwin’s theory of evolution by natural selection be included in the curriculum.

There is a continuing and extremely important battle across America about what will be taught to the youth of today, as they will be the leaders of tomorrow.



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