

# California's New History-Social Science Curriculum Promises Richness and Depth

By emphasizing history and geography and offering more in-depth, thought-provoking units, California educators hope to enrich students' understanding of our nation and the world.

On July 9, 1987, California's Superintendent of Public Instruction, Bill Honig, presided over another milestone in the reform of the curriculum of California's public schools. On that morning, the State Board of Education unanimously adopted a new framework for history-social science education, calling for substantive change in what California students learn about their nation and the world and in how deeply and well they learn it.

## A Departure from Practice

On many counts the *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools* (1988) is a landmark document, incorporating significant departures from current practices in the social studies. Its primary program reaches geographically out through space and historically back in time to connect young children with a much wider and more interesting world. The framework returns history, the great integrative discipline, to the core of the social studies curriculum. In order to provide students a more in-

WE THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES, IN ORDER TO FORM A MORE PERFECT UNION, ESTABLISH JUSTICE, INSURE DOMESTIC TRANQUILITY, PROVIDE FOR THE COMMON DEFENSE, PROMOTE THE GENERAL WELFARE, AND SECURE THE BLESSINGS OF LIBERTY TO OURSELVES AND OUR POSTERITY, DO ORDAIN AND ESTABLISH THIS CONSTITUTION FOR THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Courtesy: California State Department of Education

depth study of major historical periods, the framework reflects a new organizational plan that substantially increases the number of years devoted

to the study of United States and world history.

We seek to develop in students a keen sense of what it must have been like to have lived in other times and places, with all the uncertainties of how events eventually would turn out. In every grade our pioneering guide deepens the study of history through the rich use of literature—both literature of the period and literature about the period under study. It emphasizes the importance of the narrative approach to history, presenting the past as a "story well told." The document calls for well-written texts that bring the past vividly to life for students by focusing upon the struggles and triumphs, the conflicts and controversies that have engaged men and women from all walks of life throughout history.

The document celebrates throughout the multicultural pluralistic nature of American society. The experiences of all these groups are integrated in the study of the nation's history and the unfinished struggle to realize the ideals of the Declaration of Independ-

dence and the Constitution. Our approach emphasizes the importance of applying ethical understanding and civic virtue to public affairs, and students at all grade levels are expected to reflect upon the individual responsibility and behavior that create a good society.

Acknowledging the importance of religion in history, the curriculum provides opportunities for students to become familiar with the basic ideas of the major religions and the ethical traditions of each time and place, as well as the role of religion in this nation's founding and development.

The framework supports the frequent study and analysis of the fundamental principles embodied in the U.S. Constitution and the Bill of Rights,

as well as the Constitutional heritage through which those principles were formed. Through analytic and participatory learning activities, the curriculum emphasizes the importance of the civic rights, values, and responsibilities of citizens. It calls for probing studies of controversial issues that take into account the differing perspectives of participants and make use of primary documents, debates, court decisions, newspapers, and speeches from the past as well as today.

Throughout all these studies, the framework's integrative approach establishes human events in their geographic setting, analyzes the interplay of historical time and geographic place, and integrates the social sciences in order to bring the explana-

tory perspectives of economics, sociology, and political science to each year's study.

Figure 1 graphically displays how these various learnings are integrated within the framework. Three major interrelated goals direct the curriculum:

- *knowledge and cultural understanding*, incorporating learnings from history and the other humanities, geography, and the social sciences;

- *democratic understanding and civic values*, incorporating understanding of our national identity, Constitutional heritage, civic values, and citizenship rights and responsibilities;

- *skills attainment and social participation*, including basic study skills, critical thinking skills, and participation skills essential for effective citizenship.

### Essential Learnings

For each of the three broad goals, the framework identifies the essential learnings that serve as the strands unifying the curriculum across all grades. The essential learnings for these strands were developed with the assistance of scholars who verified their significance and validity in their fields. Also involved were teachers, curriculum specialists, and others qualified to judge the importance of these learnings in the general education of California's children and youth.

The essential learnings defined and illustrated in the *historical literacy* strand, for example, include developing a keen sense of historical empathy; understanding the meaning of time and chronology; analyzing cause and effect; understanding the importance of history as society's "common memory," maintaining its identity and transmitting its traditions and ideals to each new generation; and understanding the importance of religion, philosophy, and other belief systems.

Learnings in the *ethical literacy* strand, for example, include respect for the sanctity of life and the dignity of the individual; understanding of ways in which different societies have tried to resolve ethical issues; understanding that the ideas people profess affect their behavior; and realization that

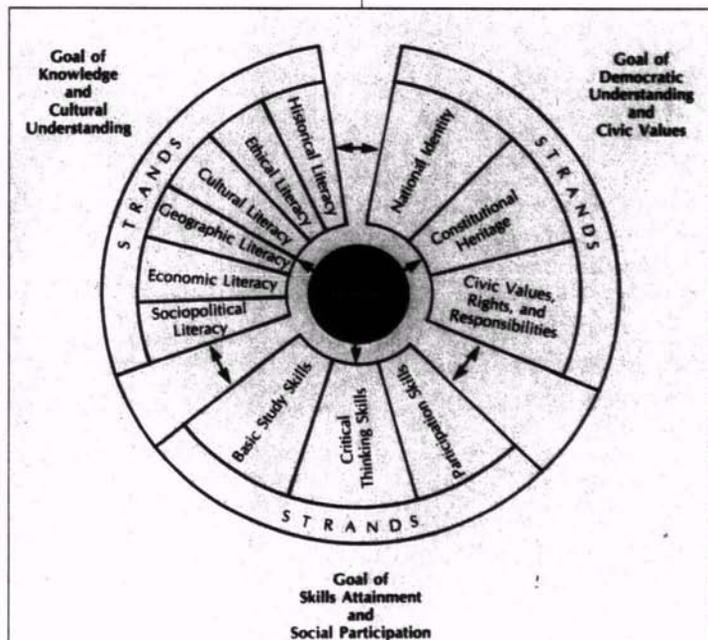


Fig. 1. History-Social Science K-12 Goals and Curriculum Strands

Reprinted from California State Board of Education. *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1986, p. 11.

concern for ethics and human rights is universal and represents the aspirations of men and women in every time and place.

Learnings in the *geographic literacy* strand include awareness of geographic place; locational skills and understandings; understanding of human and environmental interactions; understanding of human movement; and understanding of world regions and their historical, cultural, economic, and political characteristics. In similar manner, the remaining nine curriculum strands specify, illustrate, and justify other essential learnings.

These learnings are first introduced in the primary grades, in ways young children can understand, and then are deepened, enriched, and extended each year. (See fig. 2 for a sequential listing of studies, K-12.) The K-3 program departs from current programs by significantly deepening and extending the learnings typical of today's dominant "near to far" curriculum model. Studies build each year upon the spatial, temporal, and social learnings young children have acquired by moving spatially outward to help young children develop important geographic linkages with places near and far. The studies also reach historically back through time—through fairy tales, legends, historical stories, and biographies—to develop children's understanding and apprecia-

tion of times past and of people long ago. We enlisted the help of children's librarians in selecting stories that young children identify with and enjoy. These stories have the power to widen children's horizons and to build sensitivity and empathy for people, ordinary and extraordinary, of many cultures, now and long ago.

California's K-12 curriculum also departs from current practice by substantially increasing the time devoted to history. Each of the three years of United States history (grades 5, 8, and 11) and the three years of world history (grades 6, 7, and 10) emphasizes a period of history that students will study in depth.

### A Chronological Overview

Figure 3 illustrates the chronological sequence of the studies. By limiting each year the historical period to be studied in depth, this plan provides the time teachers need to incorporate literature, art, music, primary documents, and social history records that enliven these studies and increase the chances that students will enjoy and remember what they have learned.

The staggered sequence of U.S. and world history courses is purposeful. Its year-to-year continuity is *chronological*, with U.S. history each time presented within the global context of world history established the year before. Thus, the 8th grade study of the

founding of the nation grows out of the 7th grade study of the Protestant Reformation and the European Enlightenment. Similarly, the 11th grade course in 20th century U.S. history grows out of the 10th grade course in 19th and 20th century world history.

Review units in grades 7, 8, 10, and 11 reinforce earlier learnings necessary for understanding the historical period emphasized in these courses; they also enable teachers to develop new learnings that students were unable to grasp at a younger age. In each course there are opportunities for teachers to link past to present and to connect studies of earlier times to the present day.

Reserving the modern world for grades 10 and 11 allows students to grapple with the critical controversial issues of the 20th century at a time when they are intellectually mature enough to understand these issues and to debate the consequences of alternative policy decisions and their ethical implications. Teachers who worry that later adolescence is also the age when students are best able to analyze the fundamental issues and values in the development of the Constitution and the Bill of Rights will be heartened to know these studies are revisited after grade 8. They are incorporated in grade 11 as background for understanding the many contemporary constitutional issues raised throughout this course. These constitutional learnings are further extended in the first two units of the grade 12 course in American government.

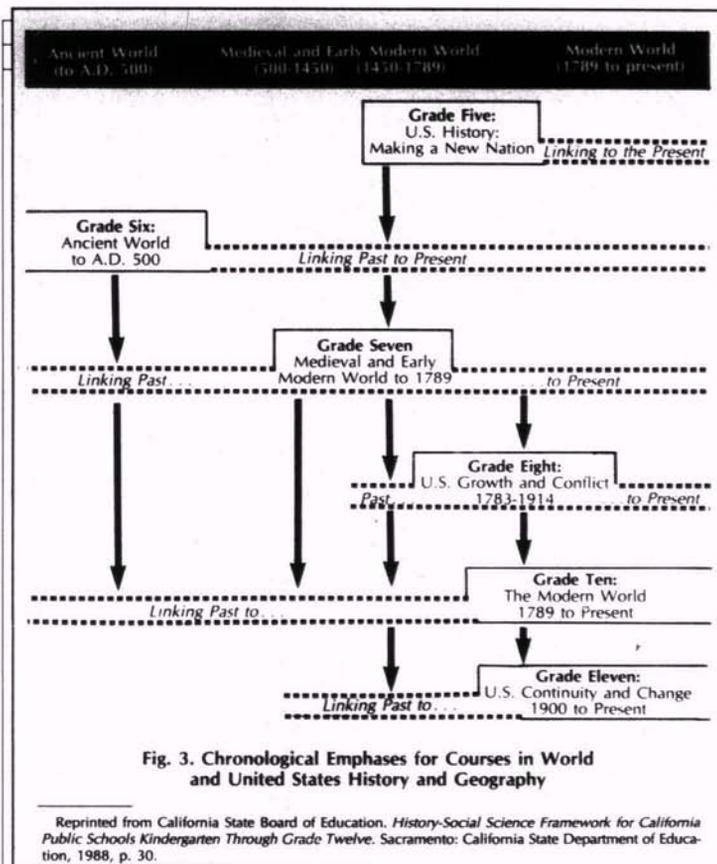
### Shared Vision Key to Implementation

The *History-Social Science Framework* is the cornerstone of our multifaceted, multi-year plan to improve history-social science instruction in the state, but we know that a curriculum guide will not succeed unless it is accompanied by a well-thought-out implementation plan. Four major strategies make up our implementation plan.

1. *Increasing opportunities for staff development.* Recent statewide conferences on the framework were well attended, and teachers and administra-

<i>Kindergarten</i>	Learning and Working Now and Long Ago
<i>Grade 1</i>	A Child's Place in Time and Space
<i>Grade 2</i>	People Who Make a Difference
<i>Grade 3</i>	Continuity and Change
<i>Grade 4</i>	California: A Changing State
<i>Grade 5</i>	United States History and Geography: Making a New Nation
<i>Grade 6</i>	World History and Geography: Ancient Civilizations
<i>Grade 7</i>	World History and Geography: Medieval and Early Modern Times
<i>Grade 8</i>	United States History and Geography: Growth and Conflict
<i>Grade 9</i>	Elective Courses in History-Social Science
<i>Grade 10</i>	World History, Culture, and Geography: The Modern World
<i>Grade 11</i>	United States History and Geography: Continuity and Change in the 20th Century
<i>Grade 12</i>	Principles of American Democracy (one semester) and Economics (one semester)

Fig. 2. History-Social Science Course Titles, K-12



tors expressed an interest in workshops and institutes that dealt with important framework issues. A Constitutional scholars institute was held in August 1987 to provide teachers in-depth training in U.S. history. The institute was part of a five-year project, "The Blessings of Liberty," designed to provide better training for teachers and administrators and to improve curriculum and instruction, testing, and instructional materials in history-social science. In addition, Administrator Training Centers, which meet the staff development needs of principals, will soon feature a module on history-social science education as part of their curriculum strand.

2. *Improving instructional materials.* In July 1987, Superintendent Honig, the State Board of Education, and the Association of American Publishers held a national textbook forum to discuss the framework's implications for publishers and producers of

instructional materials. We are optimistic that the clear standards for materials set forth in the framework and sufficient lead time of approximately three years will result in improved instructional materials. In addition, the Department of Education is in the process of publishing a literature list as a companion document to the framework. Recognizing that the new technologies are powerful tools for the new curriculum, the State Department has entered into partnerships with software and videotape producers to encourage the development of state of the art materials.

3. *Designing more appropriate tests.* Under the auspices of the California Assessment Program (CAP), new and better tests are being developed to test student achievement. In 1983, the CAP test program was expanded to include the subjects of history-social science and science and direct writing assessment, as well as basic skills in

language arts and mathematics. The tests are administered at grades 3, 6, 8, and 12, with a history-social science test administered at grade 8. The grade 8 test is being updated to better reflect the framework, and new history-social science tests are being developed for grades 6 and 12. The testing program will soon include grade 10, and we anticipate that history-social science will eventually be tested at each grade level.

4. *Planning at school and district levels.* Recognizing the importance of the schools and districts in the reform effort, the State Department recommends that plans be developed at these levels for implementing the framework. Further, the department suggests that the state's seven-year cycle for framework development and textbook and instructional materials adoption be used in preparing those plans.

Phase one (1987-88) of the cycle includes awareness and assessment activities. Planning objectives based on the needs assessments and selecting instructional materials are major activities suggested for phase two (1989-90). The third phase (1991-93) includes implementing strategies and modifying the program based on information gathered in the assessment process.

In the implementation process, we share a vision about history-social science education that is reflected in the framework. It is our hope that the vision will be translated into rich programs for California's students. □

#### Reference

California State Board of Education. *History-Social Science Framework for California Public Schools, Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve*. Sacramento: California State Department of Education, 1988.

**Francie Alexander** is Associate Superintendent, Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment Division, California State Department of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, 3rd Floor, Sacramento, CA 95814. **Charlotte Crabtree** is Professor, University of California-Los Angeles, 405 Hilgard, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

Copyright © 1988 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. All rights reserved.