

HONEST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIAL STUDIES

A toolkit for defending equitable learning
that honors all Minnesota students

Produced by



As part of

**OUR HISTORY
OUR SCHOOLS**
MINNESOTA ETHNIC STUDIES COALITION

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BACKGROUND

Updates to the state's academic standards and a new law for Ethnic Studies aim to give Minnesota students more honest and inclusive learning experiences.

This progress has riled out-of-touch political pundits—who turn folks to their side with myths about anti-racist teaching.

This toolkit is for educators, students, and community members who value honest and inclusive education. It provides facts, tips, and talking points to defend against those who would deny Minnesota students an education that better reflects them.

WHAT'S HAPPENING WITH SOCIAL STUDIES

Minnesota's academic standards in social studies have been revised for more honest, inclusive, and equitable social studies education.

You can weigh in on the standards via public comment, now **until 4:30pm on Nov 29**. The next pages talk about how you can submit strong comments to support the standards.

Before the standards can be adopted, a judge must rule in their favor. Your comments help those chances.

The revised standards add an Ethnic Studies “strand” alongside the existing social studies strands—citizenship and government, economics, geography, history—and integrate the contributions of Minnesota's American Indian tribes and communities.

All standards were intentionally developed to better reflect the diverse racial and ethnic groups in Minnesota's student population.

Supporters praise the standards for honoring all students, making what they learn more relevant to their lives—and the skills they hone more valuable to their community.

Critics argue the standards pit kids against each other and teach them to hate. But we know the opposite is true.

The standards spur in students empathy and curiosity—not animosity. They are frank, but fair. They don't tell young minds what to think, but trust students to think critically about the past so they understand the present.

What are the Minnesota K-12 Academic Standards?

The top-level knowledge and skills all Minnesota students learn in school.

For each standard, there are benchmarks for what students need to learn each grade and before graduating. Major subject areas each have their own set of standards.

HOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS IN SUPPORT

STEP ONE

Go to this link:

<https://minnesotaoah.granicusideas.com/discussions/37919-minnesota-department-of-education-post-hearing-comment-period>

STEP TWO

Go to the upper right-hand corner of the screen and click on “sign up.” (If you’ve submitted comments before, “sign in” and skip to step five.)

STEP THREE

Fill out the sign-up form with the required information (name, email, password).

STEP FOUR

You will receive a “Welcome” email into the email account you submitted. Follow the instructions in that email to confirm your information.

STEP FIVE

Return to the public comment page and this time, sign in. Scroll ALL THE WAY DOWN to the bottom of all the comments to find where to submit your comment.

STEP SIX

Draft and post your comment! Feel free to use the template comments on the next page if useful.

Comments must be submitted by 4:30pm on Wednesday, November 29.



You can also comment by
fax (651-539-0310) or mail:

Office of Administrative Hearings
Attn: Docket No. 8-9005-37919
P.O. Box 64620
St. Paul, MN 55164-0620

SAMPLE LANGUAGE TO GET YOU STARTED

QUICK TIP In your comments, describe your relationship to students and schools to demonstrate what stake you hold in more equitable social studies standards. “I am a Minnesota parent/student/social studies teacher/etc...”

COPY+PASTE THEN MAKE IT YOUR OWN

I’m writing to express my strong support for the Ethnic Studies standards (Subp. 6) within the proposed permanent rules related to K-12 Academic Standards in Social Studies.

Minnesota students deserve an education in which they can learn about the histories of all communities, and understand our collective history from a variety of different perspectives. Ethnic Studies provide students with these tools and knowledge, which will equip them to lead in our increasingly diverse state and country. Ethnic Studies also ensure that students of color see themselves, their families, and their communities reflected in their curriculum, which is proven to contribute to positive student outcomes.

Social studies education would be incomplete without Ethnic Studies.

Subp. 2, (F); Subp. 4, (B) & (E); and Subp. 5 & 6 ensure students study the rich history of Minnesota’s Indigenous Relatives, deepening students’ appreciation and understanding of the geography we call home.”

Subp. 6, (A) through (C), in the Ethnic Studies strand, promotes cross-cultural understanding and strong positive identity development among all students. This nurtures stronger community ties inside the school and a richer understanding of our neighbors. Inequitable social studies disservice not just students from marginalized groups but students of the dominant culture, who benefit from an appreciation of their peers’ contexts.

Subp. 6, (C) ensures students ‘understand the roots of contemporary systems of oppression and apply lessons from the past in order to eliminate historical and contemporary injustices.’ The standard urges students to question, evaluate, critique, communicate, and take action. Hallmarks of talented workers, in line with the respected C3 framework for standards that prepare students for college, career, and civic life used to help develop these standards.

TIPS FOR COMMENTS THAT CUT THROUGH

Don't let your comments get lost in the crowd

- 1 **Be informed:** Review the standards yourself. Summaries from outside groups (us included!) might skim past details important to you.
- 2 **Be concise:** Focus on a few main points so they hold more weight.
- 3 **Be specific:** Identify which part of the standards you're addressing.
- 4 **Be honest:** Give reasons for your views. Use your own words and share personal experiences that show the need for honest, inclusive social studies.
- 5 **Be yourself:** Describe your relationship to Minnesota students and schools to demonstrate what stake you have in more equitable standards.
- 6 **Be respectful:** Offer constructive feedback. Don't attack anyone or use inflammatory language; harassing comments are rightly deleted.
- 7 **Back yourself up:** Cite evidence, research, or examples that show the value of honest, inclusive social studies.
- 8 **Don't be late:** Submit by 4:30pm on Nov 29 to ensure you are heard.



KEY POINTS FOR HONEST, INCLUSIVE SOCIAL STUDIES

Use these as inspiration for your comments. The broader talking points are intended to be helpful even after the rulemaking process ends—in conversations as schools begin adopting the standards.

Students *can handle* an honest teaching of history.

Social studies should help students develop a **comprehensive and accurate** understanding of history that includes the struggles, achievements, and contributions of diverse groups.

Teaching history without acknowledging systemic inequalities paints an **incomplete and misleading** picture.

Students *deserve* more inclusive social studies.

By teaching the narratives and histories of marginalized groups, students from those groups find **new relevance** in what they learn. They feel recognized for who they are and what they bring to their community.

It's good for white kids too.

Inequitable social studies disservice not just students from marginalized groups but students of the dominant culture, who benefit from an appreciation of their peers' contexts.

Equitable social studies nurture **stronger community ties** inside the school and a richer understanding of our neighbors.

These are the skills employers want.

The standards align with respected national guidelines for standards that prepare students for college, career, and civic life. They urge students to question, evaluate, critique, communicate, and take action. **Hallmarks of talented workers.**

What we mean by *honest* and *inclusive*

hon·est *adjective*

unafraid to talk about the ugly parts of our past so we can understand our present

in·clu·sive *adjective*

representing all people and their stories, especially those so often untold and erased



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educationevolving.org/social-studies