



2023-24 Social Studies Standards Revision FAQ

What are Content Area Standards?

Content standards outline the skills and knowledge expected of students from grade to grade and subject to subject. Content standards establish a framework for teaching and learning, outlining how knowledge acquisition progresses across grade levels and builds from one grade to the next. By setting clear learning benchmarks, content standards guide educators in developing effective learning experiences for all students across Alaska.

How were the Social Studies Content Standards Developed?

The Alaska social studies standards were developed with a vision to promote an excellent education for all students, celebrating diversity and empowering meaningful civic engagement. These standards emphasize Alaska's context, including Indigenous ways of knowing, and connect students to their community, state, nation, and world. The development process involved various community partners from across Alaska including educators, superintendents, social studies curriculum coordinators, state board members, and representatives of Alaska tribes (e.g., Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, and Alaska Native Heritage Center). For a more in-depth look at the process of how the social studies standards were developed, please review the [Alaska Social Studies Standards Process Guide](#).

Why Do We Need Social Studies Content Area Standards?

There are several reasons social studies content area standards are developed and adopted. They include:

1. *Setting Expectations for Student Learning throughout Alaska*

A standard represents a goal or expected outcome of an educational program; they do not dictate the design of a lesson plan or how units should be organized. The standards establish an Alaska-wide baseline of what students should know and be able to do at the conclusion of a grade or grade band (e.g., K-2 or 9-12).

2. *Understanding Strengths and Gaps in Student Learning*

Content area standards assist Alaska educators in identifying where students are at in the learning process to inform decisions that enhance teaching and learning. This

knowledge enables Alaska educators to tailor instruction and meet the diverse learning needs of all students.

3. *Ensuring all Students are Presented with Diverse Perspectives and Knowledge*

The standards collaboratively promote and encourage an excellent education for all students that celebrates the diversity of peoples, cultures, perspectives, voices, and ideologies in Alaska while simultaneously empowering students to be meaningfully engaged citizens. The content standards outline the key content, concepts, ideas, and understandings central to the Alaska context that honor and respect diverse perspectives and experiences, including Alaska Native and Indigenous ways of knowing and learning. The revised standards also support the development of students' habits of mind and skills imperative for active civic participation and discourse through connections to their community, state, nation, and world.

4. *Establishing Rigorous Expectations and Setting High Standards in All Schools*

Alaska will utilize a single set of social studies standards to ensure students across the state are taught essential content and do not miss important learning milestones. Implementing consistent academic standards across the state ensures that all students receive a high-quality and rigorous education. It also holds educators accountable for teaching standardized information, promoting continuity and minimizing disparities in learning outcomes.

5. *Promoting Alaska-Wide Educator Collaboration*

When educators utilize shared content standards, they can more easily collaborate on lesson planning and assessment development. Collaboration leads to more effective lessons, better alignment between instruction and assessment, and positive impacts on professional growth student learning.

What is the difference between Content Area Standards and Curriculum?

Standards are not curriculum. The Alaska social studies standards address what is to be learned; they do not address how learning experiences are to be designed or what resources should be used. Decisions on how best to help students meet these standards are left to districts, schools, and educators, as shown in Figure 1.

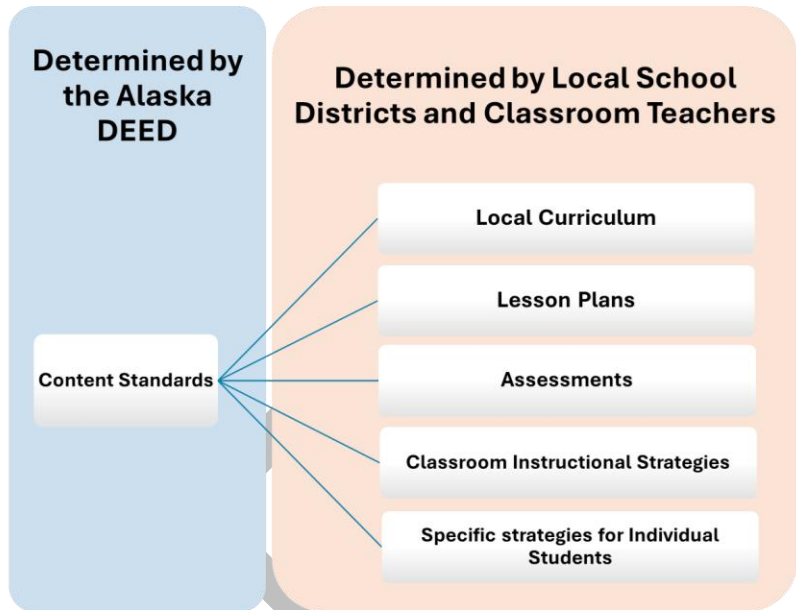


Figure 1: Content Standards and Curriculum in Alaska

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