

2023-24 Social Studies Standards Revision Process

The Alaska Department of Education and Early Development (DEED) is committed to ensuring an excellent education for all students. To further these efforts, in 2023, DEED initiated the process for updating the Alaska Social Studies Standards, which have not been reviewed since 1998.

Updating the social studies standards provided an opportunity to exemplify current best practices and address civics, Alaska history, and Tribal Government in the standards.

Highlights from the standards revision process are outlined below:

Principles for Developing the Standards

Revision Process

Throughout the standards review and revision process, the following principles were integrated throughout:

- *Transparent:* Decisions and processes for the standards review and revision process will be transparent.
- *Research-informed:* Recommendations will be based on research, lessons learned from other states, and input from community partners on the standards.
- *Inclusive:* The review and revision process will honor all community perspectives. The review process will include substantial and frequent opportunities for input and engagement, allowing the public to weigh in on every standard.
- *Focus on equity:* Standards/indicators will be designed so that ALL students are engaged and are flexible enough to allow them to demonstrate proficiency in multiple ways.
- *Grounded in Evidence:* The review and revision process will be grounded in the best available evidence and proven practices. Additionally, the revision process will provide opportunities to collect data and generate evidence of effectiveness.
- *Collaborative Approach:* The revision process will be a collaborative and coordinated approach grounded in thoughtful, collegial discourse.

Standards

Throughout the writing process, DEED ensured the quality of the standards using the [Criteria for High Quality Standards](#). The following were key elements underlying the development of the standards:

- Standards outline what students need to know, understand, and be able to do.
- Standards should be developmentally appropriate and relevant to future employment and education needs.
- Standards should be written so that all students are capable of achieving them, reflecting the belief that all students are capable of learning and meeting high expectations. Both advanced and struggling students can learn new things in their own ways and at their own rates.

- Standards should value both excellence and equity.
- Standards should be written to empower teachers to make decisions essential for effective learning, rather than having a teaching style prescribed.

Design and Content Considerations

- **Emphasize and celebrate diversity in Alaska.**

The vision for Alaska's social studies standards was to use current evidence-based practices, research, and data to collaboratively promote and encourage an excellent education for all students that celebrates the diversity of peoples, cultures, perspectives, voices, and ideologies in Alaska while empowering students to be meaningfully engaged citizens. Revisions to the standards were intended to 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.

- **Prepare students to become civically engaged, socially responsible, and culturally aware citizens.**

The standards 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.

Roles and Responsibilities

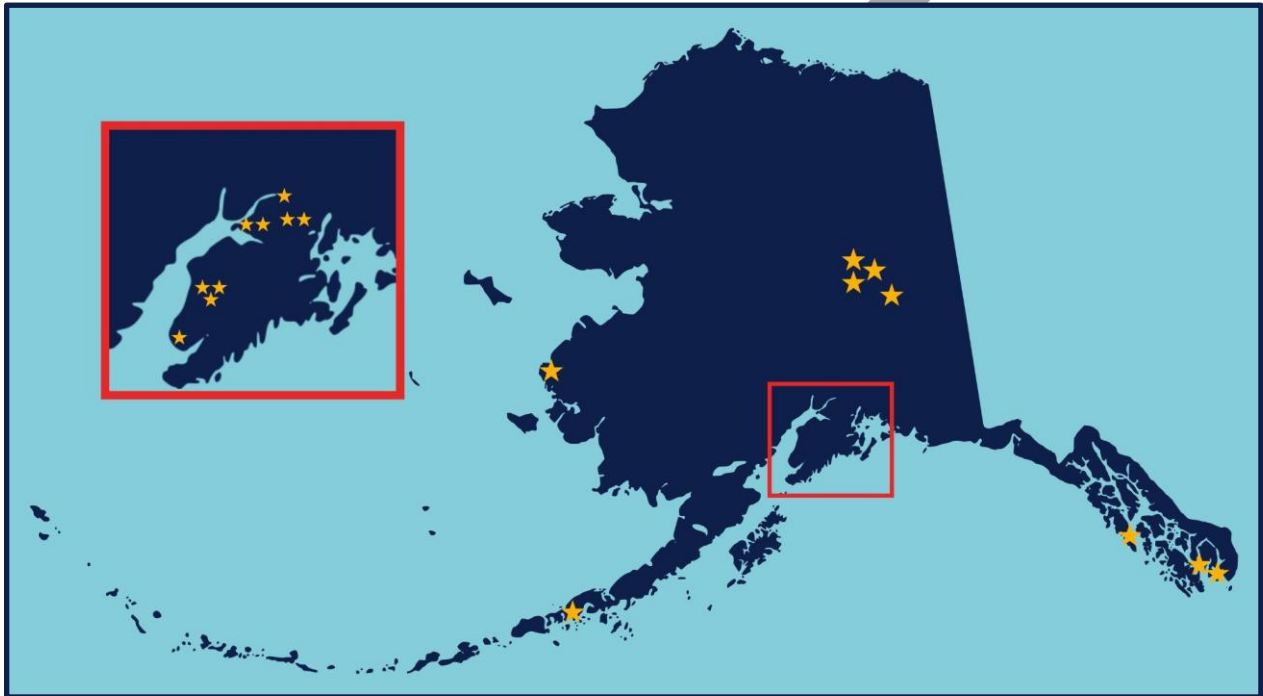
The Alaska Social Studies Standards are intended to celebrate the diversity of peoples, cultures, perspectives, voice, and ideologies in Alaska while empowering students to be meaningfully engaged citizens. To accomplish this end, a diverse group of individuals that represented a wide variety of experiences and perspectives in Alaska were involved throughout the standards revision process. Participants represented the following towns/cities: Anchor Point, Soldotna, Anchorage, Eagle River, Chevak, Teller, Metlakatla, Fairbanks, King Cove, Chugiak, and North Pole.

Three workgroups were convened virtually and/or in-person to support the work: Guiding Principles Workgroup (GPWG), Alaska History Workgroup (AHWG), and Educator Workgroup (EWG). An overview of the workgroups is provided below.

- GPWG (9 individuals) - The function of the GPWG was to develop guiding principles for the standards revision process. This included representatives from organizations such as the Alaska Municipal League, Institute of the North, and Alaska Association of School Boards, along with a superintendent and social studies curriculum coordinator.
- AHWG (8 individuals) - The function of the AHWG was to develop guidance for the inclusion of state history, Tribal government, and Indigenous histories. This included

educators, education leaders, and representatives of Alaska tribes (e.g., Sitka Tribe of Alaska, Goldbelt Heritage Foundation, and Alaska Native Heritage Center).

- EWG (18 individuals¹) - The function of the EWG was to refine, revise, and develop appropriate standards to meet Alaska's current needs that align with current national standards and reflect the cultural perspectives of Alaska. When choosing writers, the selection committee considered statewide representation for public elementary, middle, and high school educators.



Map of educator locations throughout the state

Aside from the workgroups, feedback on the standards was gathered from reflective friends and community partners. These key community partners included a superintendent, two state board members, and an Alaska House representative, along with staff representatives for an Alaska Senator, homeschool superintendent, Association of Alaska School Boards, and Alaska Christians United for Israel. Public comment period will serve as another opportunity to gather feedback from key community partners to further refine and develop social studies standards that ensure all students receive an excellent education.

For more information on the diversity of contributors to the standards visit the [name of document] link.

¹ Due to natural attrition during the standards revision process, 13 educators supported the development of the standards throughout the revision process.

Standards Review and Revision Process and Timeline

The creation and development of the Alaska Social Studies standards followed six stages outlined in Exhibit 1 below.

Exhibit 1. Process for Standards Development



Laying the groundwork. Each workgroup (GPWG, AHWG, and EWG), prepared for the standards revision process by building their background knowledge on national and state trends, and state policies impacting the social studies standards in Alaska. The workgroups reviewed, contributed to, and reflected on compiled literature on current research, and trends in social studies. They also analyzed and identified strengths and gaps in the current Alaska social studies standards.

Building the frame. To assist in the development of the standards, the GPWG, with support from the AHWG, developed a series of overarching statements called guiding principles. The guiding principles provided a foundation for the content and structure of the standards. Both the GPWG and AHWG used their knowledge of current research/best practices, the national landscape of social studies, and various state standards to identify key components or “must haves” that could inform the social studies revision work in Alaska. The “must haves” were organized into themes and then written as draft action statements to guide the EWG’s revision of the social studies standards. The EWG had the opportunity to review the preliminary action statements and provide feedback. The action statements, later referred to as guiding principles, underwent two rounds of review by the GPWG and AHWG before they were finalized. Notably, one of the AHWG members shared the guiding principles with the Sitka Tribe of Alaska’s Education Committee for feedback.

To compliment the guiding principles, each workgroup also engaged in a visioning activity in which they brainstormed criteria for determining high-quality social studies standards and identified key knowledge, skills, and dispositions (KSDs) that all students need to master in Alaska that could be leveraged during the writing process.

Preparing to write. In addition to background information, the EWG was provided with an overview of the purpose of standards, what standards are, and criteria for high-quality standards. They built their capacity to write high-quality standards through practice activities asking them to consider,

- Is your standard observable and measurable?
- Is your standard more narrow than a goal and broader than an objective?
- Does your standard mention a specific task?
- Is your standard written in clear language?

Finally, the EWG grade-band groups created the structure of the standards to support the writing process and reflected on anchor standards to guide their work. Anchor standards provide lenses through which the essential skills and disciplinary knowledge of inquiry and action are practiced and applied.

Review and revision. The EWG was divided into three grade-band groups (K–5, 6–8, 9–12) to revise the standards based on the guiding principles. The EWG worked asynchronously and synchronously within their grade-band groups on revising the standards both in person and virtually.

Feedback loops. Feedback was gathered and used to inform the standards revision process in multiple forms. While building the standards, the EWG grade-band groups consulted with and provided feedback to one another throughout the process. The intent of this internal feedback was to develop standards that are cohesive, coherent, and vertically aligned from K-12. Once an initial draft version of the standards was developed, the GPWG, AHWG, and reflective friends were invited to provide feedback on the standards. Reflective friends were identified by DEED and included educators from different school districts who were not part of the standards revision process. Furthermore, a focus group was conducted with additional key community partners interested in the work. Feedback from the GPWG, AHWG, reflective friends, and community partners was used to update and revise the standards to produce the current version.

Finalize a draft. A template was developed for organizing the updated standards in a clear, cohesive, and accessible manner. Once the standards were drafted and imported into the template, they were reviewed to ensure 508-compliance. The final draft standards were then submitted to the State Board for review.

The draft standards will be presented at the October 2024 State Board meeting. Following approval, the standards will be available for public comment.