



February 9, 2023

February 15, 2023 Public Meeting

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Greetings Executive Director Butler, Representatives, and staff of the D.C. State Board of Education (SBOE), my name is Jessica Giles. I am a ward seven resident and the Executive Director of Education Reform Now D.C. (ERN DC). ERN D.C. is a non-profit organization fighting for a just and equitable public education system for all students in Washington, D.C. I am pleased to submit my written testimony for the February 15 public meeting.

There are several ways for the Social Studies standards to be strengthened.¹²

1. Include financial literacy as a critical content area within the Social Studies standards.

D.C. does not require students to learn personal financial literacy skills.³ Personal financial literacy teaches essential concepts like saving, investing, debt, budgeting, setting short- and long-term financial goals, and money management. These are integral to the financial well-being of students. The Colorado Department of Education summarizes personal financial literacy as the following “[it] applies the economic way of thinking to help individuals understand how to manage their scarce resources using a logical decision-making process of prioritization based on analysis of the costs and benefits of every choice.”⁴ Currently, ten states⁵ offer financial literacy as a part of the social studies standards, and the District should do the same at every appropriate grade level. It’s a shame that students will learn about the Global Economy but not how to manage their budget, which is a vital life skill.

¹ I have already submitted my public comment to the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE).

² I have a B.A. in History from Furman University and a Master in Public Policy from American University, if a helpful reference point for my public comment.

³ Seven schools currently offer financial literacy as a course, and 10 city schools offer an Algebra class that includes similar concepts. Source:

<https://wtop.com/education/2022/06/school-zone-how-financial-literacy-is-making-its-way-into-dc-area-school-curricula/>

⁴ Pg 6 Colorado Department of Education. Social Studies Standards
<https://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/cas-ss-p12-2022>

⁵ Civics Alliance.

<https://civicsalliance.org/financial-literacy/#:~:text=Five%20states%20offer%20a%20standardized,stand%20Dalone%20personal%20finance%20course.&text=States%20with%20stand%20Dalone%20personal,approach%20to%20financial%20literacy%20education.>



2. Provide more clarity on how teachers implement the Social Studies standards in practice.

Currently, the Social Studies standards provide little guidance on how teachers might implement the standards. I recommend adding a section under each grade level that includes context for interpreting, connecting, and applying the content and skills of each standard. Some states already have this essential information in their standards, including California (with a narrative description)⁶ and Colorado⁷ (through Academic Context and Connections).

3. Review the Social Studies Standards to ensure ample opportunities for students to receive dual high school and college credit.

The District must make higher education quality, affordability, and opportunity an absolute priority for our students furthest from opportunity. Therefore, OSSE should take every measure to ensure the updated Social Studies standards allow for dual high school credit and college credit with the institutions of Higher Education (IHE) the District currently has partnerships with and even future ones.

4. Include important context to various sections within the standards.

I would be remiss if I did not mention how shameful it was for the College Board to water down the AP African American Studies.⁸ I encourage the SBOE to ensure that African Americans' history, culture, and contributions are taught to students in full and unfiltered by including (where appropriate) such topics as womanism, intersectionality, Black queer studies, and reparations in the Social Studies standards. I recommend a few areas below.

Include: Georgetown University and the Maryland Jesuit's history of "selling" more than 272 enslaved African Americans in 1838 and other documented institutional wealth accumulation from chattel slavery.

- DC.Hist.DHC.8 Evaluate the geographic, economic, and political factors that resulted in the location and design of the nation's capital, including the role of slavery; or
- 3.Geo.HC.19 Describe the lives, experiences, culture, and communities of free and enslaved Black Americans in the Chesapeake Bay region during the 18th century.

⁶ California Department of Education. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ci/hs/cf/documents/hssfchapter4.pdf>

⁷ Colorado Department of Education. <https://www.cde.state.co.us/cosocialstudies/cas-ss-p12-2022>

⁸ February 9, 2023. The New York Times. "The College Board Strips Down Its A.P. Curriculum for African American Studies"

<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/02/01/us/college-board-advanced-placement-african-american-studies.htm>



Include: Black, Chicana, and Asian American feminist scholars and thought leaders such as Alice Walker, Audre Lorde, Dolores Huerta, Angela Davis, and Yuri Kochiyama.

- US2.Inq.DP.65 Analyze the writings of different perspectives of the Women's liberation movement from women from diverse backgrounds, such as, but not limited to, Gloria Steinem, Elaine Brown, Phyllis Schlafly, and Gloria Anzaldúa

Include: Movements against police brutality.

- 5.Hist.DHC.52 Evaluate the impact and influence of historical movements on modern social movements and organizations.
- US2.Civ.CE.72 Evaluate the tactics of modern social, labor, political, and environmental activist movements in America, measuring their success.

Further, I encourage the SBOE to take action to improve transparency in AP data and exam passage rates. I testified about a few issues, and provided solutions in my testimony before the D.C. Council on this issue last September.⁹

Lastly, I recommend that the D.C. State Board of Education and OSSE review education standards every ten years, at the minimum. Thank you for allowing me to testify.

⁹ The Committee of the Whole Public Hearing on: B24-0665 – Access to Advanced Placement Exams Amendment Act of 2022.
<https://edreformnow.org/2022/09/27/ern-dc-testifies-on-the-access-to-advanced-placement-exams-amendment-act-of-2022/>