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Jewish Federation

OF GREATER NEW ORLEANS

BY EMAIL

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RE: Public comment on Louisiana Social Studies Standards

Dear Ms. Buckle,

On behalf of the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans, we are pleased to submit our recommendations on the draft of our state's new social studies standards for K-12. We thank the committee for its efforts to continuously improve the draft, and we hope they will take these suggested edits into consideration.

We greatly appreciate the State's process to improve social studies standards for Louisiana students, the hard work of the committee on this draft, and the opportunity to comment. The coverage of Holocaust in eighth grade, high school civics, and high school U.S. history, and the coverage of genocide in high school world history is strong and an important addition to this draft. We strongly advocate for this important coverage to be retained, alongside a number of other strong standards in the attached review.

Thank you very much in advance for sharing the attached review with the writing committee and for your consideration of these suggestions.

Sincerely,

Arnie Fielkow
CEO, Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans

Brian Katz
Board Chair, Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans

Jacquelyn Ungt
Chair, Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans

**Institute for Curriculum Services' (ICS) Review on behalf of
the Jewish Federation of Greater New Orleans of the
Louisiana Social Studies Standards 2022
Draft released for public comment February 8, 2022
February 2022**

Review Legend:

~~Strikethrough~~ = recommended deletion

Underline = recommended addition

Comments = explanation and rationale provided to support recommendations

General Comments:

We appreciate the Department of Education's efforts to create strong standards for Louisiana's K-12 students.

The coverage of the Holocaust in eighth grade, high school civics, and high school U.S. history, and the coverage of genocide in high school world history is strong and an important addition to this draft. We strongly advocate for this important coverage to be retained. In the comments that follow, we have indicated a number of strong standards that should be retained.

We noticed that the names of centuries are inconsistent in the document with some being spelled out as "nineteenth century," and many others as "19th century. We imagine that these will be presented consistently when the standards are copy edited.

We thank the Department of Education for its commitment to creating strong standards for the students of Louisiana. We share the goal of seeing standards adopted that help all students achieve high expectations, and, to that end, we appreciate consideration of the comments that follow.

Grade 2, Civics, p. 10, 2.10 a., **Add:** "Identify reasons for the settlement of the thirteen colonies and the founding of the United States, including the search for religious freedom and a new life."

Comments: The term "religious" should be added to specify the types of freedoms which motivated the settling of the colonies. Some of the earliest settlers of the American colonies were fleeing religious persecution in their home countries. This includes the Puritans who established the Plymouth colony. As Puritans, their faith barred them from participation in civic life in their native England, where the Anglican church was officially sanctioned by the government. It also included Sephardic Jews leaving Brazil after the establishment of the Portuguese Inquisition there. This history of seeking religious freedom deeply influenced protections in the founding documents of the United States, which guaranteed citizens the right to practice the religion of their choice. In addition, this edit will bring this standard into alignment with standards 6.9.b., and 6.12.h.

Grade 4 The Ancient World, p. 15, introduction, **Retain:** "After building knowledge about their community, parish, state, and nation in grades K-3, students are ready to expand their historical horizons and begin an exploration of the ancient and classical

world. In grade 4, students are introduced to the story of human civilization and will examine key characteristics of society, government, and culture in ancient Mesopotamia, Israel, Northern Africa, India, Greece, Rome, China, and the Americas.”

Comments: This strong standard should be retained as it provides students with foundational historical knowledge to approach subjects influenced by the ideas rooted in these ancient civilizations as they move through higher grades.

Grade 4 The Ancient World, p. 15, 4.5, **Retain:** “Describe the origin and spread of major world religions as they developed throughout history.”

Comments: This strong fourth grade standard should be retained because it supports student understanding of the role major world religions have played in world history.

Grade 4 The Ancient World, p. 16, 4.10, **Retain:** “Describe the geographic, political, economic, and cultural structures of ancient Mesopotamia and Israel.”

Comments: This standard should be retained, given how influential the cultural achievements of these two civilizations have been on Western history. The legacies of ancient Mesopotamia and Israel can still be seen in literature, law, and ethics, as well as in the religions of Judaism and Christianity whose origins are located in the region in which the civilization of Israel flourished. One of the most lasting legacies of 1,000 years of ancient Israelite civilization is the Hebrew Bible, which greatly influences world art, history, literature, music, and culture.

Grade 4 The Ancient World, p. 16, 4.10.h. **Change:** “Describe the origins, development, and contributions of the ancient Israelites, and explain the reasons for their movements from Mesopotamia to Canaan the emergence of ethical monotheism and its relationship to justice.”

Comments: As currently worded, what the standard asks students to explain is vague and is not representative of the historical contributions of the ancient Israelites. The recommended edits would help clarify the standard and highlight aspects of ancient Israelite civilization that are much more relevant to what students will be expected to learn in later grades. Concepts fundamental to our modern legal system - including the universal applicability of the law, the importance of impartiality in the administration of justice, provisions for fair trials, and establishing reliable witnesses - are all based in ancient Israel’s conception of ethical monotheism and justice, and should therefore be the focus of this standard. Specifically, ethical monotheism (the belief in one God who set down moral laws for humanity), should be added to this standard.

If one goal of the standard is to highlight the connections between Mesopotamia and Israel, adding the word “origins” accomplishes this in a more concise manner.

The standards on the other seven civilizations in this grade ask for coverage of “accomplishments” or “achievements,” and this standard on Israel should similarly address the contributions of ancient Israelite civilization to the world and later cultures. See Mesopotamia 4.10.f, Egypt 4.11.d, India 4.12.b and 4.12.d, Greece 4.13.i, Rome 4.14.g, China 4.15.f, and Mayans 4.16.f. Other contributions of Israel include: belief in individual worth and responsibility, an emphasis on loving your neighbor, human rights, justice, charity, and the concept of a day of rest. As noted above, the Hebrew Bible

remains a lasting legacy that continues to influence art, history, literature, music, and culture.

Grade 5 The Medieval to the Early Modern World, p. 20, 5.5, **Retain:** “Describe the origin and spread of major world religions as they developed throughout history.”

Comments: This strong fifth grade standard should be retained because it supports student understanding of the role major world religions have played in world history.

Grade 5 The Medieval to the Early Modern World, p. 21, 5.6.f., **Retain:** “Explain how the Crusades affected Christian, Muslim, and Jewish populations in Europe.”

Comments: This strong standard should be retained because it directs students' attention to the effects of the Crusades on various populations in Europe. The effects for Jewish communities were immense. During the First Crusade, crusaders attacked and massacred entire Jewish communities on their way to Jerusalem. Anti-Jewish violence and economic changes over the course of the Crusades ultimately helped create a Jewish population shift from Western to Eastern Europe. These demographic shifts had profound ramifications for European Jews and for Europe more generally.

Grade 6, The United States and Louisiana: Beginnings through Ratification, p. 25, 6.9

Retain: “Analyze the development of the settlements and colonies in the late sixteenth century through the seventeenth century. a. Explain the importance of the founding and development of Jamestown, including representative government established through the House of Burgesses, private ownership of land, introduction of slavery, and arrival of women and families. b. Explain the importance of the founding and development of the Plymouth settlement, including practice of self-government established by the Mayflower Compact, religious freedom, and contributions of Native Americans, including Chief Massasoit and Squanto, and the leadership of William Bradford. c. Compare and contrast the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, including their physical geography, religion, education, economy, and government.”

Comments: This thorough standard includes the pursuit of religious freedom as a central concept when studying the settlement of the colonies in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and should be retained. Religion is an important aspect of life in the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies, and a key aspect of culture and government in the colonies.

Grade 6 The United States and Louisiana: Beginnings through Ratification, p. 27, 6.12

Analyze the development of the U.S. political system through the ratification of the U.S. Constitution. **Retain:** “6.12.h. Explain how and why the Constitution of the United States was amended to include the Bill of Rights, and analyze the guarantees of civil rights and individual liberties protected in each of the ten amendments.”

Comments: This important standard on the fundamental rights guaranteed by the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights, including the First Amendment's protection of the freedom of religion, should be retained.

Grade 8 The United States and Louisiana: Industrial Age through the Modern Era, p. 38, 8.14, Describe the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. **Retain:** “8.14.a. Explain the rise and spread of militarism and totalitarianism internationally, examining the similarities and differences between the ideologies of Imperial Japan, fascist Italy and Nazi Germany, and the communist Soviet Union, as well as the origins and effects of violence and mass murder in the 1930s and 1940s as demonstrated by the Nanjing Massacre, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, and treatment of political opponents and prisoners of war during World War II.”

Comments: This WWII standard is strong and should be retained. The inclusion of major instances of mass murder and genocide in the 1930s and 1940s will provide students with the full story of this era. Studying the legacies of genocides helps students understand human rights, international conventions and law, prevention, and the need for action today.

Grade 8 The United States and Louisiana: Industrial Age through the Modern Era, p. 38, 8.14, Describe the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. **Retain and change spelling:** “8.14.g. Explain the causes and consequences of the Holocaust, including ~~anti-Semitism~~ antisemitism, Nuremberg Laws restricting civil rights, resistance efforts, concentration camp system, liberation of camps by the Allies, and Nuremberg trials.”

Comments: Retaining this standard on the Holocaust’s impact on the Jewish community of Europe will provide coverage in enough detail for students to fully grasp the causes and consequences of the Holocaust. Two-thirds of the Jews of Europe were murdered, including one million children. Tracing the genocide of the Holocaust from earlier antisemitism, to the Nazi’s racist ideology, to the Nuremberg Laws restricting civil rights, to the concentration camp system will show how prejudice can escalate to genocide. This strong U.S. History standard will help 8th grade students understand the dangers and impact of racism, prejudice, and bigotry.

Antisemitism should be spelled as one word, as this is consistent with more recent scholarly practice. More recent state standards including Florida’s social studies standards use this spelling as a single word. See <https://www.adl.org/spelling> accessed 2/16/2022.

High School Civics, p. 42, C.9 Analyze factors that influenced the Founding Fathers and the formation and development of the government of the United States, **Add:** “g. Evaluate the fundamental principles and concepts of the U.S. government including Creator-endowed unalienable rights of the people, due process, equal justice under the law, equal protection, federalism, frequent and free elections in a representative government, individual responsibility; individual rights, limited government, private property rights, popular sovereignty, right to privacy, rule of law, the supremacy clause, separation of church and state, and the separation of powers with checks and balances.”

Comments: The separation of church and state should be added to this list of fundamental principles and concepts of the U.S. government. This principle is not explicitly discussed elsewhere in the standards and it fits nicely in this strong standard.

This idea, innovative in its time, is an idea foundational to the founding of the United States. The separation of church and state is enshrined in the Establishment Clause and Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment, and this principle is reflected in the Bill of Rights' protection of the individual's freedom to practice the religion of their choice.

The oppressive nature of state established churches and religious persecution by dissenters was a major historical factor in the early settlement of the colonies (see standards 6.9.a.-c.). These experiences led the U.S. founders to include the separation of church and state in U.S. law.

The many different religions practiced in Louisiana reflect the separation of church and state and how many groups sought freedom of religion in the state.

Including separation of church and state in this standard helps students understand the important role it played in the experience of the founders, the type of government they went on to create, and the continued importance of the freedom of religion today.

High School Civics, p. 44, C.13 Analyze the issues of foreign and domestic policy of the United States, **Retain:** "f. Describe the development of and challenges to international law after World War II and the Holocaust."

Comments: We strongly recommend retaining this excellent high school civics standard. World War II and the Holocaust were pivotal in the reshaping of international law in the second half of the 20th century and they continue to contribute to contemporary international jurisprudence. As the National Council for the Social Studies notes: "The savagery of two world wars, the atrocities of the Holocaust, and the rising demands for decolonization led to a flowering of human rights and humanitarian standards in the mid-20th century. From the early 1940s, the United States provided leadership in the development of international laws, standards and principles for the protection of human rights and codification of humanitarian standards in armed conflict."

High School United States History, p. 47, US.10, **Retain:** "Explain the founding and development of the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.....c. Analyze the religious, philosophical, and historical factors that influenced life in the colonies during the 1700s and the development of colonial governments and the United States of America, including Ancient Greece, the Roman Republic, ~~the~~ Judeo-Christian traditions, English tradition of rule of law including the Magna Carta, the Enlightenment movement, including the ideas of John Locke such as rights to life, liberty, and property, and the Great Awakening."

Comments: This excellent high school history standard should be retained as it offers strong support for student understanding how ideas shaped the founding and development of the American colonial world.

We recommend using the plural "Judeo-Christian traditions" in order to acknowledge that Judaism and Christianity are two different traditions, and that within each religion there are multiple traditions. As currently written in the singular, the term ignores important theological differences between the two traditions and might lead students to think of Judaism as a complement to Christianity, rather than a rich and

living religion in its own right. Alternatively, the standard could be worded “Jewish and Christian traditions”.

High School United States History, p. 50, US.17, **Retain**: “Describe the economic and social development of the United States in the late 19th and early 20th centuryies and its emergence as a major world power. c. Explain push and pull factors for people who immigrated to America in the late 19th and early 20th centuryies and the extent to which they assimilated including their challenges and contributions.”

Comments: Retain this strong standard on the “New Immigration” of the era 1880-1924. The mass migration to and industrialization of the United States in this period propelled America into its role as the world’s preeminent democracy. Studying turn-of-the-20th-century mass migration will also help support student understanding of the evolution of American culture to the present so it should be retained.

Since the standard is referring to two centuries (19th and 20th), the change to plural would improve the grammar and readability of these sentences.

High School United States History, p. 52, US.21, Explain the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. **Retain**: “US.21.j Explain the use of violence and mass murder as demonstrated by the Nanjing Massacre, the Holodomor, the Holocaust, and the Bataan Death March and the treatment of U.S. prisoners of war.”

Comments: This high school U.S. History standard on WWII is strong and should be retained. The coverage of major instances of mass murder and genocide in the 1930s and 1940s will provide students with the full story of this era. Studying the legacies of genocides helps students understand human rights, international conventions and law, conventions on the treatment of prisoners of war, genocide prevention, and the need for action today.

High School United States History, p. 52, US.21, Explain the causes, course, and consequences of World War II. **Retain and change spelling**: “US.21.k Analyze the Holocaust, including the suspension of basic civil rights by the Third Reich, concentration camp system, ~~anti-Semitism~~ antisemitism, persecution of Jews and non-Jews, Jewish and non-Jewish resistance, the role played by the United States in liberating Nazi concentration camps, immigration of Holocaust survivors, and the Nuremberg trials.”

Comments: This excellent standard covers the causes, course, and consequences the Holocaust and should be retained. Tracing the genocide of the Holocaust from earlier antisemitism, to the Nazis’ racist ideology, to the Nuremberg Laws restricting civil rights, to the concentration camp system will show how prejudice can escalate to genocide. This strong U.S. History standard will help students understand the dangers and impact of racism, prejudice, and bigotry.

Antisemitism should be spelled as one word, as this is consistent with more recent scholarly practice. As noted above, more recent state standards including Florida’s social studies standards use this spelling as a single word. See <https://www.adl.org/spelling> accessed 2/16/2022.

High School World History, p. 56, WH.11 **Retain:** “Analyze the development of political and social structures throughout the world from 1300 to 1600. a. Analyze how various religious philosophies have influenced government institutions and policies from 1300 to 2010.”

Comments: The wording of this strong high school world history standard should be retained because religious philosophies played a large role in the development of Western political thought and jurisprudence. For example, Judaism’s legal traditions left a lasting impact on government institutions and policies by spreading the ideas of the rule of law, trial by jury, the need for witnesses, and equality before the law.

High School World History, p. 56, WH.13, **Retain:** “Analyze the origins, consequences, and legacies of genocides that occurred in world history from 1914 to 2010.”

Comments: This important standard covering genocide broadly should be retained as it encourages the coverage of the Armenian genocide, the Holodomor in Ukraine, the Holocaust, and the genocides in Cambodia, Serbia, and Rwanda. Studying the legacies of genocides, helps students understand human rights, international conventions on human rights, prevention, and the need for action today.

High School World History, p. 56, WH.14, **Retain:** “Analyze the causes of decolonization, methods of gaining independence, and geopolitical impacts of new nation-states from 1945 to 2010.”

Comments: This strong standard should be retained because the major topic of post-World War II independence movements should be covered in world history. About three dozen new states became independent between 1945 and 1960, with more in the following decades.

High School World History, p. 57, WH.26, **Retain:** “Analyze the causes and effects of the movement of people, culture, religion, goods, diseases, and technologies through established systems of connection.”

Comments: This clear and concise world history standard covers the movement and diffusion of people, culture, and ideas, and includes the important aspect of religion. The academic study of the history and movement of religions is central in world history, and provides context and background for many world history events and trends, therefore this standard should be retained.