



Memorandum
Report on Civics and the Newly Adopted
Alaska Social Studies Standards
March 15, 2025

Context

On December 9, 2024, the Alaska Board of Education adopted the revised Alaska Social Studies Standards¹ following a revision process begun by DEED in February of 2021.

The previous Alaska Social Studies Standards were adopted in 1998². To support the standards revision work, DEED formed three working groups of diverse education professionals and/or leaders. These working groups crafted guiding principles that underpinned the standards revision; Civics features explicitly in two key areas of the guiding principles:

Content Guiding Principle G: Civics content should incorporate different systems of government (local, state, federal, sovereign tribal) and an analysis of politics and procedures in order for students to become meaningfully engaged citizens in a representative democracy.

Structure Guiding Principle E: Standards incorporate and connect to the dimensions and indicators in the College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards (C3 Framework³) throughout K–12.

The new Alaska Social Studies Standards are aligned closely with the National Standards for Civics and Government (NSCG); the NSCG served as a foundational document in the design and drafting process⁴.

¹ Alaska Department of Education & Early Development. "Alaska Social Studies Standards (Adopted December 2024)". <https://education.alaska.gov/akstandards/Adopted-AK-SS-Standards-2024.pdf>.

² The original, 1998 Alaska Social Studies Standards are no longer available to the public.

³ The National Council for the Social Studies. "College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards" 2013. <https://www.socialstudies.org/system/files/2022/c3-framework-for-social-studies-rev0617.2.pdf>.

⁴ The National Council for the Social Studies. "National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: Introduction," <https://www.socialstudies.org/standards/national-curriculum-standards-social-studies-introduction>.

New Alaska Standards & Civics: Changes, Extensions

Considering Civics, the current, newly adopted Alaska Social Studies Standards feature significant changes in structure, quantity, and frequency as compared to the 1998 Standards. The current standards are published in a unified, 129-page document, organized by grade levels and grade bands. The 1998 standards were published in short, separate documents for three content areas: History, Geography, and Government and Citizenship. The 1998 standards for Government and Citizenship were six pages long, and did not include grade subdivisions.

The new standards explicitly feature Civics in the following anchor standards:

- Civics Anchor Standard 6: Civic and Political Institutions and Systems
- Civics Anchor Standard 7: Participation and Deliberation
- Civics Anchor Standard 8: Process, Rules, and Laws
- Civics Anchor Standard 9: Alaska's Governments
- Civics Anchor Standard 10: Rights, Roles, and Responsibilities of Citizens
- Inquiry Anchor Standard 5: Informed Civic Discourse and Engagement

The Civics anchor standards are embedded in every grade level of the newly adopted AK Social Studies Standards. This means that students will encounter the Civics anchor standards recursively throughout their Alaska classroom experience, K-12. In the 1998 standards there are no grade levels, and there is no guidance for differentiation of content standards based on grade levels. Prior to the 2024 standards adoption, the same content standards for Government and citizenship were being used by lower grades and upper grades, K-12.

There is a significant increase in the quantity and frequency of references to Civics between the old and new standards. In the 1998 Government and Citizenship Standards document, the words “civic” and “civics” do not appear. The word “citizenship” appears twice, once in the title. In the new standards document, the word “civics” occurs 100 times. Also, the word “civic” occurs 77 times, and the word “citizenship” occurs seven times.

The newly adopted standards are rich with detail. Clear definitions are included for each set of anchor standards, including the Civics anchor standards. Civics standards in primary grade bands (K-2 and grades 3-5) include grade band standards and leveled content standards for each Civics Anchor standard. Leveled content standards give teachers clear descriptions of performance benchmarks students should meet by the end of a given grade level. The depth of detail extends the depth of coverage of Civics standards at all grade levels, K-12. See Figure 1 for an example from the K-2 grade-band.

Anchor Standard <i>The student demonstrates an understanding of...</i>	Grade-Band Standard	Leveled Content Standard <i>Therefore, the student is able to...</i>
Civics Anchor Standard 6 Civic and Political Institutions and Systems	SS.K-2.6.3 Explain the need for and purposes of rules in various settings inside and outside of school.	By the end of 2: SS.2.3.6.1 Explain the need for and purposes of rules in various settings inside and outside of school.
	SS.K-2.6.4 Explain what governments are and some of their functions.	By the end of K: [standard not addressed at this grade]
		By the end of 1: [standard not addressed at this grade]
		By the end of 2: SS.2.4.6.1 Explain what governments are and some of their functions.

Figure 1: Civic anchor standard with related grade-band and leveled content standards.

In grades 6-8, Civics anchor standards are embedded in themes, which include grade-leveled content standards. In grades 9-12, Civics anchor standards are listed with 9-12 content standards, and Civics anchor standards with related content standards are embedded in course themes for each course included in the document: U.S. History, World History, Alaska History.

Support for Civics in New Standards Implementation

To support implementation of the newly adopted Alaska Social Studies Standards, including the Civics Anchor Standards, DEED and the ELA / Social Studies Content Specialist have:

- Followed the State Administrator Implementation Plan⁵ included with the Social Studies Toolkit materials
- Built a communication network of district staff, teachers, and tribal partners to support rollout
- Developed and shared PD materials
- Collected district needs assessment data
- Attended in-person events to promote toolkit materials
- Revamped the DEED Social Studies website to include toolkit materials and resources
- Cultivated relationships with the Alaska Council for the Social Studies and the Alaska Humanities Forum
- Created Standards Overview Webinars for district staff and teachers (March 18)
- Developed, in collaboration with AIR, three professional learning modules (Civics and the Civic anchor and content standards are addressed specifically in PD Module 1: Instructional Shifts)
- Provided guidance and tools to support implementation
- Created and curated lists of resources to share with teachers and districts

⁵ The AK DEED [State Administrator Implementation Plan](#) is included with the toolkit materials posted on the [Alaska Social Studies Hub](#) of the DEED Standards and Assessment website.