

## **Arizona Draft Social Studies State Standards**

There is very little in these Draft Standards that will ensure American school children when the graduate will have an affinity and appreciation for American Constitutional Principles, our shared Western Heritage, or a deep fundamental understanding of our nation's Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as originally defined and understood by our nation's Founders.

A small section of the 5th grade Standards has been highlighted by Diane Douglas's office as evidence that the teaching of Constitutional American Civics has been addressed. However, an 11 year old does not have the intellectual maturity to grasp the arguments for economic and political liberty as articulated by John Lock and the Founders in primary source documents like The Federalist Papers. The Draft Standards pick up a bit of logistic civics based on naturalization testing concepts in the 8th grade. However, the high school Draft Standards do not require high school students to delve deeply in their understanding of the rationale behind our nation's Constitution. During the high school years, these Draft Standards direct students instead to learn more about social topics and current events and focus on social justice literature.

Diane Douglas and her office has made the claim in the Arizona Daily Independent paper that "Hillsdale College was a key organization in the draft standards' development" and that "Hillsdale College personnel, including President Arnn extended complete support in assisting Arizona with its standards."

(<https://arizonadailyindependent.com/2018/04/03/douglas-calls-on-public-to-offer-feedback-on-science-social-studies-history-standards/>)

This is a bold claim and difficult to believe considering Hillsdale is known for proudly defending foundational American principals and values, Western Heritage, and the United States Constitution as it was originally understood, and these Draft Social Studies Standards do not do that.

In fact, I've been in contact with Hillsdale representatives over the last few days and they've communicated that their involvement with Arizona Social

Studies Standards has been limited to merely providing access to their classical charter school curriculum and a few conversations about this material. Hillsdale has no knowledge of how and to what extent Diane Douglas and her Arizona Department of Education Standards Committee utilized any of this information, and Hillsdale has not read nor reviewed these Draft Standards.

So let's be clear: These are not Hillsdale approved State Standards and any attempt by Diane Douglas to use Hillsdale as a rubber stamp for these Common Core Standards is disingenuous and misleading.

### **C3 Framework**

Arizona's Draft Social Studies Standards are based on a framework developed by the National Social Studies Council called the C3 Framework (<https://www.socialstudies.org/resources>). This framework is aligned with Common Core and recommends utilizing public schools for "Social Education" and pays homage to John Dewey as this organization believes "teachers can educate for social transformation." They see education as a weapon for social change, not a tool for success. (<https://www.socialstudies.org/node/50751>). Let's remember who John Dewey was... a Socialist who said, *"You can't make Socialists out of individualists. Children who know how to think for themselves spoil the harmony of the collective society which is coming, where everyone is interdependent."*

Diane Douglas has maintained for quite some time that Common Core has been stripped from our State's Standards, yet this appears not to be the case. <http://www.azed.gov/>

Why is Douglas and the Department of Education using a problematic Social Studies Framework to develop Arizona's new State Standards, a framework that recommends teaching controversial topics related to social, economic, and political issues that adults cannot even agree on? From many parents' perspective, this is completely outside the scope and mandate of a publicly funded academically oriented education. The narratives can be controlled by activist teachers and administrators, rather than the parents. This is an incredible abuse of power and tantamount to indoctrination.

Great Hearts Charter school has a policy to not include “pop culture”, and these students all learn about American principals and values much more deeply and read significant literary primary source documents to reinforce the concepts than do public school children. My daughter just graduated from Scottsdale Prep so we have a clear understanding of what that charter network does in contrast to the public school...and it is superior by far.

Why would our children’s limited educational time and our limited taxpayer funding be squandered on non-academic controversial topics during class time when the demonstrated competencies of Arizona’s children related to reading, writing, and math scores are so abysmally low?

This is exactly why parents and community members are pushing for school vouchers and charter schools.

### **Broad Nature Invites Ideological Driven Narratives**

Again, I want to point out that these Draft Standards are so broad that just about any social justice topic or any controversial economic, political, or social theory could be justified as legally acceptable based on state law. Why would Diane Douglas and the Department of Education want to provide more latitude for educational activists to promote their adult agendas and prey upon our children?

For example, these Draft Standards would allow for the social teaching theory of Herbert Marcuse’s Socialist Humanism and John Dewey, Paul Kurtz and Edwin Wilson’s Humanist Manifesto in that it would satisfy the high school State Standard of “HUMANISM.”

- <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/1965/socialist-humanism.htm>
- <http://files.meetup.com/1494713/Three%20Humanist%20Manifestos.pdf>

If this is truly the best that Diane Douglas and the Arizona Department of Education can come up with, then she’s not a strong enough leader and the Department of Education is showing its stripes. The broad nature of these Draft Standards must be by design.

## **Community Committee Cancelled**

The Community Committee that was instituted to read, review, discuss, and properly vet these Draft Standards has suddenly and unexpectedly been canceled for both Social Studies and Science Standards. Now there is only one public meeting with oral arguments allowed. The public can provide comments to the Arizona Department of Education's hand selected Draft Committee, yet these are the same individuals who created these Draft Standards in the first place. There is no sincere attempt to include the public in the conversation.

## **Analysis of Draft Standards**

What this Standards Writing Committee appears to have done is try to be clever and put the teaching about foundational American principals, the Constitution, and the arguments for liberty at the elementary level when they're too young to understand any of it, and then shift towards Progressive themes as they get to high school.

I would question whether the Committee Members have deep knowledge about American foundational principals, values, and ideas and truly deep knowledge about the arguments for economic and political liberty as Hillsdale would explain it. They might have educational credentials, but all do not possess deep subject matter knowledge. They do not have extensive knowledge about the Constitution and the ideas embraced by our Founders in the Declaration of Independence. If they did, this would have come through in the Draft Standards.

In fact, one of the members who works in the Scottsdale District as the Director of Curriculum has made verbal representations that our nation's Constitution is a "Living" document—Progressive left code words, rather than an enduring document that is final. Many in academia subscribe to the Howard Zinn A People's History of the United States philosophy, whereby they see America as a oppressor and imperial power, an evil force in the world rather than a great nation. Most coming from teaching colleges these days are taught by the required text Pedagogy of the Oppressed by Paulo Freire which is evident in the writing of these Standards.

## **Analysis of Draft Standards**

The Draft Standards particularly when you get to the high school verbiage (p. 45), you begin to see the Progressive themes coming through - the global focus and global citizenship, climate change, revolutionary movements, equating Western and Eastern traditions and cultures, downplaying Christian-Judeo values and teaching other world religions as well as humanism, atheism, secularism, political correctness, etc. There is significant emphasis on current pop culture topics rather than enduring concepts and historical knowledge, which obviously can be extremely opinion based. And who controls the narrative? — often times activist teachers. In fact, the Draft Standards state, *“It is recommended that this course maximize time in a manner to allow for depth of content and connection to current issues and events.”*

The openings for teaching about America as an imperialist, oppressive nation come through quite clearly. Without question there is much emphasis on the “common good” (Social Marxism ideas) and openings for discussions on the popular vote versus the electoral college, which is done in many public school textbooks and classes these days. Students are to focus on collective rights (again, Social Marxism) rather than individual rights (American principals) by way of studying social movements throughout history.

The guidance in these Draft Standards is that Civics should be “a comprehensive study of civics can be approached from many angles and perspectives with a focus on inquiry” which will leave Progressive teachers quite a bit of wiggle room to explain America as they perceive it, which likely will not be a positive light.

Based on these standards, American school children when they graduate will not have an affinity and appreciation for American values, Western Heritage, nor the deep fundamental understanding of the US Constitution and the Declaration of Independence as Hillsdale would explain it. This apparently was by design or the Draft Committee would have placed significantly more emphasis on a foundational understanding of American principals, values, and ideas as well as a deep study of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence at the 10th -12th grade years. If the Draft Committee were serious about ensuring American school children

internalized the blessings of liberty as understood and explained by our nation's Founders, the advantages of our form of government and free market economic system over that of socialist and communist societies, that would have accomplished this by way of better standards with emphasis on these concepts at the high school level.

There is way too much latitude to accomplish the polar opposite teaching if a teacher is so inclined. It is quite evident that the Standards Committee intentionally designed into the Draft Standards the freedom for teachers to teach according to their personal worldview.

### **Excellence in Civic Engagement Program**

In fact, the Standards Committee has even codified its "Excellence in Civic Engagement Program" by including "Service Learning" during class time whereby activist causes are tied to curriculum and teaching instruction, rather than in an after school club that focuses on "volunteerism" as has been historically done by students in selfless service to others. Arizona's Department of Education research documents now discourage volunteerism, and instead promotes youth activism tied to economic, social, and political causes as their "Civics" initiative. Here is an example of Arizona's "Service Learning Project" --children out on the streets demanding their collective rights:

<https://www.mikvachallenge.org/programs/the-mikva-model/>

*8.C1.4 Engage in projects to help or inform others such as community service and **service learning projects**.*

THIS "EXCELLENCE IN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM" IS INCREDIBLY DEVIIOUS. It's been well strategized in attempt to create school children to be foot soldiers for political causes.

This is what is linked in Arizona Department of Education "research" documents as a "service learning project" --students out on the streets demanding a "Bailout" from their legislators. Does anyone think these children have any idea what a "Bailout" is? More importantly, why are our public schools promoting children getting out on the streets in the form of youth street activism (mobocracy) screaming and demanding anything of

adults? They should be in schools learning to read, write, understand factually based science and math concepts. This is nothing more than social engineering and indoctrination by the public schools.

## **Summary**

Again, the Arizona Department of Education and Diane Douglas are trying to make it seem that these are Hillsdale approved State Standards and use Hillsdale as a rubber stamp for these Common Core aligned and Progressive themed Standards which is disingenuous and misleading.

I have communications from Hillsdale evidencing their limited involvement. I also have tape recorded segments of the Department of Education's Civic Engagement "ECEP" activist training sessions. It was eye-opening to say the least!

## **Recommendations**

It is one of the first duties of our educational system to create a framework by which American school children would understand and develop a love of America's version of liberty, justice, patriotism, constitutional government, federalism/separation of powers, and free market principals as originally defined. **This has not been accomplished by way of these Draft Standards.**

If the Arizona Department of Education and the Draft Standards Committee wanted to accomplish this, they should consider the following:

1. Rather than allowing high school history classes to evolve into opinion based controversial chit chat with the narrative controlled by activist teachers in many cases, the Arizona Department of Education should create a policy whereby no academic time be spent on opinions, conjecture, or theory related to current controversial political, social, or economic topics. Academic classroom time should be focused entirely on the transfer of undisputed facts and the practice and mastery of scholarly competencies and technical skills (math and science

problems, reading and annotation challenging texts, improving writing technique, etc.).

- Note: The only appropriate forum for these types of opinion-based conversations should be a well-monitored, senior level Civil Debate course, IF the child's parents approve. It should be mandated that this Civil Debate class would be taught in a responsible, disciplined manner with students shown how to make oral and written arguments supported by evidence and fact. If teachers from other classes would like to submit a paper or present an argument, the class could invite this teacher to participate. Parents would also be welcomed to hear the arguments presented and witness the debates to ensure the narrative was not controlled by activist educators. These debate sessions could be videotaped as an example to others of proper civil discourse within K-12 education. The Governing Board should allow absolutely no deviation by District personnel from this policy. Teachers, administrators, parents, and students should be required to sign a form acknowledging their awareness of this policy and the corresponding disciplinary action for teachers or administrative personnel if they choose to defy this policy. Penalties for teachers and administrative personnel would include deficiencies on their employee records, financial penalties, and/or immediate dismissal as appropriate. **Any material or discussions that seek to undermine who we are as a nation is not at all appropriate in publicly funded schools.**
2. The Arizona Department of Education also needs a policy whereby any English Language Arts incorporated into the History curriculum is precluded from utilizing "Social Justice" themed literature, so that Districts are required to maintain high literary standards focused on texts selected for their mastery of the English language, beautifully crafted prose, uplifting and enduring themes rather than a constant focus on dark and depressing themes, revolutionary movements, and various versions of "oppression", sexually explicit, vulgar language and immoral content. This is much of what English literature texts include in the public schools these days, whether that is in English class or a "Social Studies" class.
  3. The Arizona Department of Education also needs a policy that explicitly disallows sexually explicit and "pop culture" content like the



one recently exposed in the Flagstaff schools. These type of “teaching unit” could easily be incorporated into lessons as it is a “current issue or event” which these Draft Standards recommend to be taught. Again, it leaves the door wide open for similar content in all of our public schools which obviously is by design. (Similar things have happened at my son’s school, yet the Governing Board has taken no corrective action. Parents are not adequately informed regarding the recourse against Governing Boards who refuse to take common sense action and discipline teachers when appropriate.)

4. Create a policy whereby the Constitution cannot be referred to as a “Living” Document in an attempt to downgrade its importance and its enduring nature as is seen in the public schools. This would apply for textbooks, classroom materials, internet sits, as well as teaching instruction. History teachers often speak of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, but do so in a derogatory manner. This demonstrates schools are not in compliance with state law according to provisions requiring teachers to be deeply knowledgable about the Constitution. (This was done by two of my son’s teachers yet the Principal, Superintendent, and Governing Board took no action despite being informed.)
5. The activist “Excellence in Civic Engagement Program” should be dismantled as its political focus is illegal in the state of Arizona. Traditional volunteerism via selfless service should once again be reinstated in its stead, again as a family or club effort outside of school hours. (I have significant documentation and information about this politically driven initiative.)
6. If this State Standards Committee truly seeks to imbue American school children with a deep understanding and appreciation for American principals, values, and the ideas of economic and political liberty embraced by our nation’s Declaration of Independence and Constitution, they will consider utilizing the concepts described in the **Heritage Foundation** National Best Selling book We STILL Hold These Truths: Rediscovering Our Principals, Reclaiming Our Future written by Matthew Spalding, along with its companion Teacher’s Guide. The forward of this book was written by **Bill Bennett, former United States Secretary of Education**, and is consistent with the teachings that Hillsdale College supports which Diane Douglas claims she

likewise is in agreement with. The book also provides a vast array of outside resources suggestions to incorporate various primary source documents into the students' learning. This book mentions all of the critical reading documents like The Federalist Papers by America's Founders, Thomas Paine's Common Sense, Discourses Concerning Government, Two Treaties of Government by John Locke, Democracy in America by Tocqeville, Commentaries on the Laws of England by Blackstone, etc. and reaches back to our nation's Grecco/Roman roots. It's a solid text for understanding American first principals and should be utilized when crafting American History State High School Standards.

I have contacts at both **Hillsdale College** and the **Heritage Foundation** so to the extent that Diane Douglas would like further support in modifying these Draft Standards, I can arrange that. I am also happy to provide you a copy of this excellent text, We Still Hold These Truths, as well as the companion Teacher's Guide.

**Video of What American Public Schools Should Teach in History Classes:**

<https://youtu.be/GaF1cpsDjf0>