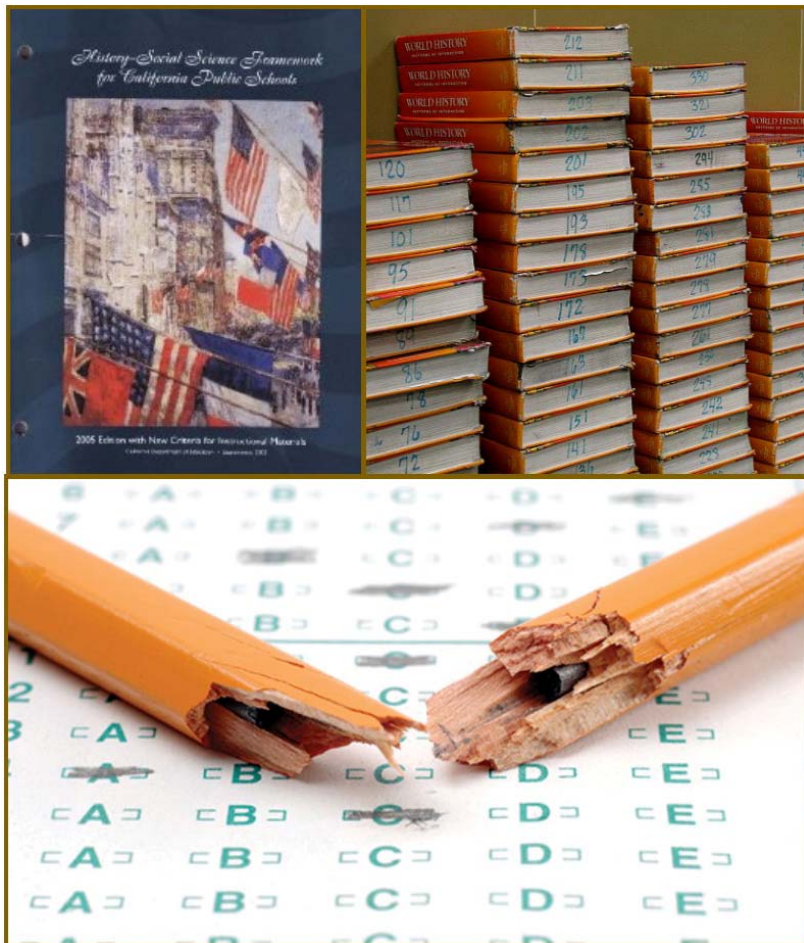


6 Things You Need to Know Now about History-Social Science in California

The Latest Information on the New Framework, Textbooks, and Testing

By Nancy McTygue

We've been fielding a lot of questions lately from teachers and administrators. With a new Framework on the horizon, they ask, does that mean we're getting new standards? What about instructional materials? And what about assessments in history-social science? Is it finally time to buy new books and should we start preparing for a test? Although I can't speak for either the Department of Education or the State Board, I do feel really comfortable saying, "We're making progress, but we're not there yet."



In 2012, I was appointed to the Instructional Quality Commission, and one of my responsibilities there was to oversee the revision of the History-Social Science Framework, serving as Co-Chair (along with Bill Honig) of the History-Social Science Subject Matter Committee. One of the many things I learned as a member of the Commission (and now as one of the primary writers of the draft), is how Frameworks get revised, textbooks get adopted, and just how difficult it is to seriously assess what students know and can do on a statewide level in any subject. For those of you not deeply versed in educational policy development (and really, you have to teach every day – why would you be?), I've put together the following list to hopefully clarify a few things. I hope this helps inform your conversations with your colleagues; write to us at chssp@ucdavis.edu if you still have questions or want to share your own impressions.

1. **There is a new Framework, but California's History-Social Science Standards haven't changed.** Although everybody seems to agree that our content standards need to be updated, neither the State Board of Education or the California Department of Education have the authority to update them. In order to update the Standards, the state legislature would need to pass a bill authorizing and funding their revision and the governor would have to sign it. And given the fact that the new Framework is scheduled to be adopted this spring, I think it's unlikely that many of our state leaders will sign onto this effort any time soon.
2. **Neither the Common Core Literacy in History/ Social Studies or the C3 Framework have replaced the History-Social Science Content Standards.** Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010, the *Common Core State Standards in English / Language Arts* do include an important section detailing student literacy development in history-social science. And these

literacy standards do complement *California's History-Social Science Analysis Standards* (which remain in effect). But the *Common Core Literacy in History / Social Studies Standards* do not detail particular content to be taught at a given grade level, and they do not replace the existing *History-Social Science Standards*, adopted in 1998.

The C3 Framework, an instructional tool developed and disseminated by the National Council for the Social Studies, has never been adopted by California, but its inquiry arc and disciplinary expectations also align with California's *History-Social Science Analysis Skill Standards*. The new Framework both incorporates language from the C3 (primarily in the new introduction), and aligns its instructional approach to the C3's inquiry arc (for example, in the questions incorporated in each grade level chapter).

- 3. Although the Standards haven't changed, the new Framework is substantially different.** Much has changed from the most recent version, adopted in 2005. While we were required to maintain alignment to the Standards (the Civil War is still supposed to be taught in 8th grade, for example), we were empowered, and in some cases, required, to go beyond the Standards' outline.

One of the most significant additions to this Framework was the integration of both the *Common Core* (adopted in 2010) and *English Language Development Standards* (adopted in 2012). We not only referenced these documents throughout the draft; we included a variety of "classroom examples" in each chapter that provide concrete examples of how to incorporate these new standards into everyday instruction.

More changes came from legislative mandate – laws passed since the last Framework was adopted that required us to either add new content, or expand what was already there. Teachers will notice, for example, that we've included substantive new content about the history of LGBTQ citizens, Filipino-American contributions in WWII, and the Armenian Genocide.

Still more changes came from our mandate from the State Board of Education – to update the document to reflect "current and confirmed research." This meant new content that reflected the latest historiography and disciplinary research, for example, as well as events that occurred since the last time the Framework was adopted, such as the election of Barack Obama in 2008.

Finally, the revised Framework incorporates a new and explicit emphasis on the use of inquiry instruction from Kindergarten through 12th grade. Each grade level chapter is organized around large questions of significance, supplemented with questions to organize instruction around more discrete eras, movements, or periods. The chapters also include a number of possible sources that can be used to help students investigate these questions in depth, and a variety of strategies for teachers to assess student learning.

- 4. The new Framework hasn't been adopted yet, but we're getting close.** I'm writing this in mid-March, 2016, approximately one week before the Framework's last hearing before the Instructional Quality Commission. From December, 2015 – February, 2016, the Department of Education conducted its final public review of the document. Next week, the History-Social Science Subject Matter Committee will consider the comments received in this last review before sending it on to the State Board of Education, who are currently scheduled to review the draft at their May, 2016 meeting. Should they adopt the draft, the current schedule calls for publication in winter of 2016.

5. **Textbook adoption now is premature.** Given the fact that the Framework is still in draft form and that even if everything goes as planned, adoption won't happen until late spring, buying textbooks now doesn't make much sense. According to California's Education Code, textbooks must be aligned to the appropriate curriculum framework. Given the fact that the new framework isn't complete yet, no publisher could possibly have developed instructional materials that are in alignment with it. And while California allows high schools to make adoption decisions at the local level, K-8 textbooks must be adopted at the state level and the current plan does not envision State Board adoption of K-8 history-social science materials until November, 2017.

This delay doesn't make anyone happy, especially those in districts that last adopted textbooks before the turn of the century. However, I can't recommend schools spend money on books now that don't align with the new framework. Instead, many of the teachers we work with are making strategic investments in collections of primary and secondary sources, working together to design interdisciplinary units of instruction, and collaborating with our local CHSSP sites to develop both an interim collection of resources and priorities for their future adoption activities.

6. **Statewide assessments in history-social science may or may not happen.** Earlier this month, State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) Tom Torlakson released his required report to the State Board on Education, detailing his recommendations for expanding California's Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASSPP). His first recommendation, based upon input from a number of stakeholder meetings held in 2015, was to develop and administer three summative assessments in history-social science. For those members of our community who felt that the end of testing in history-social science would further marginalize the discipline, Torlakson's recommendations were welcome news. However, some members of the State Board of Education seemed less enthusiastic, citing the state's decision (informed by public interest) to scale back testing from the CST-era, according to news reports. Given that, and the fact that the SPI's recommendation would need support (and substantial funding) from both the state legislature and the Governor, it seems unlikely to me that any statewide testing will happen, and even if it does, it won't be anytime soon.