

## UNDERSTANDING THE HISTORY STANDARDS

History is the study of the past that affects today. It differs from the more structured social sciences of civics, economics, and geography in that history is a story. But it is more than a pleasant story pleasantly told. Not everything that happened in the past is worthy of our contemplation and reflection. What someone had for breakfast is not history, unless it becomes part of a future story that becomes important. Perhaps it will become apparent years from now that what people ate for breakfast in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century contributed significantly to the slow decline of our society's intelligence capacity. In other words, breakfast made people dumber! Maybe breakfast will become history. Right now it is not, and probably won't become so. History studies what is important. But, *what is important* is the difficulty. Different individuals and different generations and different societies always define and redefine the word "important" according to their ideas, not ours.

History in many ways performs the same function as literature – it helps us to understand life. As much as possible, however, the historian must stick to what actually happened, giving the facts and explaining how and why something happened. That makes history more "scientifically" based than literature. History is based upon facts. But the facts the historian uses are *selected* facts – facts that have been selected from the vast amount of information potentially available. History differs from the sciences in that an event, person, or situation cannot be recreated in a laboratory setting to test if the outcome will be the same. Some revolutions are successful; some are failures. The reasons may be the same or they may be unique to that particular revolution. Historians are interested in both – what about this revolution was similar to other revolutions and what about it was unique? Both the similarities and the differences will teach about the phenomenon of revolutions and equip citizens with the knowledge needed to deal with future revolutions.

The Delaware History standards require a student to become historically minded, to reason, think, and perform as a historian. An understanding of history helps us to predict what will happen in the future based on our understanding of what happened in the past. Both literature and history can be just a good story to pass the time. But both can also add immensely to our ability to understand human beings and how and why they act the way they do in situations. As Mark Twain once said, the cat who jumps on a hot stove never jumps on a hot stove again; it also never jumps on a cold one. Sometimes the lesson we learn is not appropriate. That is why different historians and others offer their knowledge to explain new situations. They believe, sincerely, that they have a clear understanding of the new situation. Sometimes they actually do; other times they do not.

In the study of history, chronology is important. As a concept, chronology does not mean exact dates, overly detailed timelines, and long exercises putting events in order. Instead, it means understanding (*why* and *how*) that one event may or may not lead to subsequent events. The Second World War developed from the inadequate peace following the First World War. It does not necessarily follow that the Third World War will develop from the inadequate peace of the Second World War. One can easily argue that the results of

the two wars differed greatly, especially considering the long time span since the Second World War ended in 1945.

Nothing changes as much as history, because history is not what happened but what historians say happened. Each historian investigates a topic or event by selecting a set of guiding questions and by researching the available records. Please note – *the available records* – some topics cannot be researched. The questions that guide one’s research affect the conclusions. For example, after the Second World War the European powers lost their colonial empires in Africa. One historian may research this series of events by asking, “What in their tribal culture failed to prepare the Africans to take advantage of the economic opportunities that accompanied independence?” A second historian might ask, “How did the colonial European powers fail to prepare the Africans to take advantage of the economic opportunities that accompanied independence?” Beginning from two different viewpoints with two different sets of guiding questions results in two very different answers. And, notice that both historians assumed that the Africans could have easily taken advantage of the economic opportunities. That is, of course, if the economic opportunities even existed. The questions matter as much, if not more, than the answers.

Each person comes from a societal and personal background and lives in a particular time and place. But we share a past together, the history of our state and nation. The history that all of us know, what one historian once called “the history that the ordinary person carries around in his head,” is the glue, the collective memory that holds us together as a people and as a nation. This is one of the reasons for school, to pass society’s values and beliefs on to the next generation. When the public urges the schools to teach more and better history, it is this collective memory that they have in mind. A shared knowledge of history binds together a diverse America and guarantees the continuation of our prevailing values.

But, each historian also comes from a societal and personal background and lives in a particular time and place. These influences sometimes lead individual historians to ask new questions of old events. This rewritten new history, called “revisionist history,” is an effort to “get it right.” For example, the new revisionist Western history emphasizes the cowboys less and the family experiences of farmers more. It is less colorful, but it is closer to the average person’s experience in settling the Great Plains. Over time this revision of the older history may or may not come to be widely accepted. The influence of Hollywood films will probably (incorrectly) continue to cause all of us to think of the cowboy as more important than the farmer in settling the West. With each fresh look, we gain insight into the forces that may have molded and shaped our times. That is why the study of history is so crucial. It enables us to better understand the *now* around us and to hypothesize about the future based on our understanding of similar situations in the past. The dilemma we face is that we can never be absolutely certain about either our understanding of the past nor of the applicability of that understanding to the new situation. In the sciences some “laws” are absolute; in history the “laws” are not absolute.

The standards provide a very broad description of the history content for each grade cluster: K-3, 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12. A student who is answering a question must know something to use to argue with. But, there is no list of specific events everyone must know to use in asserting one's position in a written response. Indeed, part of the challenge of history is that two people cite different facts and ideas to argue their position. Someone listening to a debate or reading a history book must decide not only who argued their position better, but also who selected the most appropriate and relevant facts. Since it is impossible for a curriculum to cover everything that has happened, as a textbook will try to do, in a limited frame of time, decisions must be made about which ideas, trends, and patterns in history should be studied in classrooms. Teachers and other local decision-makers should choose historical content based on its relevance to contemporary issues, its importance, its relationship to the big ideas of social studies, and its transferability. For example, immigration -- whom, from where, and how many -- was as important, relevant, and controversial one hundred years ago as it is now. Understanding immigration's causes, effects, and importance to the American culture is necessary for contemporary citizens to reach decisions about how to handle it. Teachers might ask students: How is today's immigration like or unlike past migrations?

**Goal statements for the Delaware History Standards:**

- Students will organize events through chronologies to suggest and evaluate cause-and-effect relationships among those events.
- Students will study the ways in which individuals and societies have changed and interacted over time.
- Students will acquire the skills of gathering, examining, analyzing, and interpreting data.
- Students will understand that, before choosing a position or acting, research needs to be accomplished in order to understand the effect of historical developments and trends on subsequent events.

**HISTORY STANDARD ONE: Students will employ chronological concepts in analyzing historical phenomena [Chronology].**

**Enduring Understandings:**

- History is often messy, yet a historian must logically organize events, recognize patterns and trends, explain cause and effect, make inferences, and draw conclusions from those sources which are available at the time.
- The questions a historian chooses to guide historical research that creates accurate chronologies will affect which events will go into the chronology and which will be left out. Competing chronologies can both be accurate, yet may not be equally relevant to the specific topic at hand.

The study of history is grounded in chronology. Historians rely on chronology to arrange events and ideas in history and to analyze and to explain change or lack of change over space and time. **Chronology** is the main way historians arrange events and trends in history to see patterns of continuity and change in history. Historical events happen at a specific time and location, and reflect the history, culture, and geography of the time and

place in which they occur. Although each society is unique, certain trends and ideas recur across time and space. In addition, understanding the order of events is crucial if one is to understand the importance and meaning of those events.

**Time** is a concept that must be taught to students. Students must recognize the application of time to prediction; cause and effect; change; and drawing inferences. The concept is introduced in grades K-3, while the 4-5, 6-8, and 9-12 clusters require an advancing and deeper understanding of the results and consequences of schedules and chronologies, such as cause and effect and change over time (while drawing logical inferences). Students who fully master this standard are ready to apply it in daily adult life as a citizen by analyzing contemporary issues; by researching or hypothesizing how that particular situation came to exist or how that particular policy came to be; and, demonstrating the ability to determine consequences. Records can be lost, altered, damaged or destroyed.

Students need to learn how to organize what looks like a mess of historical records and information. Chronology is one tool, easily the most frequently used tool, to accomplish this end. But sometimes chronology does not help us as much as we would like. For example, mail service between the colonies and Europe was very undependable. Shipwrecks were fairly common, and many letters never arrived. A historian using correspondence between the colonies and England needs to be aware that the surviving letters probably are not all the letters that were sent.

Students can learn the concept of chronology (and its limitations) from all types of puzzles or situations. A teacher might take a paragraph out of a favorite book students use and give them the sentences all scrambled, simply a listing of sentences. Or, give them four or five paragraphs out of order. Challenge students to put the sentences and paragraphs in logical order. That is what historians do; they create a chronology, a logical sequence, out of chaos. Dates help in doing this, but many times the pictures or documents or artifacts are undated. The limitations of chronology come from its seamlessness. When is it possible to link events in a cause and effect relationship? Where do we begin to claim that an event caused or affected a later situation – ten years ago, a hundred years ago, five hundred years ago? And what do we put into our chronology and what do we leave out? Both questions are part of the judgments a historian makes while researching a topic, judgments that by definition are imperfect.

**History Standard One K-3a: Students will use clocks, calendars, schedules, and written records to record or locate events in time.**

**Essential Question:**

- Why does *when* matter?

The best way to approach any standard is to read the standard benchmarks by grade levels. The standards spiral upward toward a deeper understanding of how to use that particular concept. What is the goal of the standard? Ultimately, what are students expected to know and understand at the 9-12 level? We live our lives chronologically.

At the K-3 level, History Standard One asks a student to be able to do more than just tell time or read a calendar. They must be able to use a clock or calendar or schedule. They master time as a concept in order to be able to do the reverse at the higher grades, to apply time as a conceptual tool in the study of history.

We all think we understand what we mean by “time.” But the concept of time is an invention. All the terms we use in referring to time are definitions that we have all come to agree upon and accept in order to make life easier. Our agreement about the definitions creates common reference points, keys to locating events and ourselves in time. Without these common reference points we would never understand one another. Day begins when the sun rises and night begins when the sun sets. Simple enough. Long ago everyone agreed that since the sun’s rising (the beginning of “day”) varied we would begin the new day at midnight. But “everyone” in this case means everyone who lived in Europe and occupied positions of power and influence. The traditional Jewish and Muslim calendars begin the next day at sunset. Until a few hundred years ago, the new year always began on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Prior to that period, Easter began the new year for some calendars. Without commonly agreed upon reference points for clocks and calendars, we would have trouble communicating with one another. There is no need to try to explain to students at the K-3 level how complex time is. It is sufficient for them to understand that a schedule and a clock and a calendar are *creations* that we find useful.

Students at the K-3 level need to know time concepts – what is a minute, hour, day, month, year, decade, or century? What is beginning, middle, or end? What is long ago, colonial, or nineteenth or twentieth century? What is the order of the days of the week and the months of the year? Now they can use these chronological tools to arrange events in a schedule or to look at events in a schedule and draw conclusions. At the K-3 level, students use clocks and calendars and schedules to ask questions. What came first and why? How do you know that? What changed and what didn’t change? What came before and what came after? How can you tell from comparing four pictures what is the correct chronological order? What differences in the pictures are clues? Children are already familiar with the activity of comparing two pictures to find the differences. Now it is an academic exercise in the sense that we carry the thinking beyond mere recognition of differences. They should be familiar with daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly schedules and how to rearrange activities within those schedules while thinking logically about chronology. Ask them to retell a story with the correct chronology. Have them trace the weather over a month or daily temperatures at the beginning or ending of school. Give them a television schedule and ask them which programs they would not watch in order to do another activity.

Teachers should reinforce the students’ understanding by allowing the students to actively take part in creating chronological tools in the classroom. In addition to those above, following are sample activities and questions a teacher might use to strengthen understanding:

1. A student might use a weekly schedule to explain events in time or predict outcomes. When given a new schedule, a student should be able to see what days

- or periods of time are available to add a new activity, or explain why one can't be added.
2. Teachers might show a video backwards. How do you know it is backwards? Surprisingly, some parts of a backwards video look the same. Why? (Lack of motion, usually.)
  3. Look at a story and try to select references in the story that date the event. Were the farmers going to market? What were the traditional market days? Were the farmers harvesting crops? Are the trees bare in a picture? Are there references to a person or event that you already know about?
  4. What different routines do students follow in the morning before everyone has the same experience of walking in the door of the classroom?

**History Standard One 4-5a: Students will study historical events and persons within a given time-frame in order to create a chronology and identify related cause-and-effect factors.**

**Essential Question:**

- To what extent does one event *always* lead to another event?

In the 4-5 cluster, students add two new features: students learn how to create a chronology based on information given to them, using time frame devices. Secondly, the student uses the chronology to begin to apply the concept of cause and effect.

For example: Create a chronology of events leading up to the American Revolution and identify logical cause and effect, using time lines and time frames. Did the Boston Massacre cause the Revolutionary War? It happened five years before the war began, but anger over the massacre could have contributed to the ill feeling that eventually did lead to the war. Just because an event precedes another event does not mean that there has to be a relationship between them. Events in history can be like a TV schedule: there may be no connection between a program and the preceding program.

Events have two types of causes - immediate and underlying or long-range causes. The immediate is easier to identify. The assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand led to the outbreak of the First World War. But what was the role of the arms race, the competition for colonies in Asia and Africa, the naval race between England and Germany, the alliance system, and nationalism in the Balkans? It is the long-range causes that usually occupy the interest of historians, because we can never say definitively. And, in another country, their historians will have the list in a different order or even a different list.

**History Standard One 6-8a: Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; analyze change over time, and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect.**

**Essential Questions:**

- Is change inevitable?

- To what extent does the past predict the future?
- What's the evidence for my conclusion?

In the 6-8 cluster, students learn how to analyze long-term change and to draw logical inferences concerning cause and effect over time. Students should study trends and themes. After gathering, examining and analyzing data, students will develop inferences and cause and effect relationships.

For example: using a chronology of events leading up to the American Revolution students will explain why and how one specific event led to subsequent events, logically drawing inferences based on historical understanding. Would it have been likely that war with Great Britain could have been avoided after the initial battles of Lexington and Concord? A teacher might give the students facts from the time period and let them brainstorm through the facts, arranging them in their order of importance. This requires that a student studying the American Revolution knows some events or trends that can be used to analyze what was happening in this period and can draw conclusions that explain cause-and-effect with factual support.

Themes over the long run of colonial history illustrate this standard very well. In many of the American colonies, religion played a crucial role. Nine of the thirteen had an official church; either you attended your own church regularly or you paid taxes to support the official church. So why does the U.S. not have an official national church? The answer to this question is extremely complex, but one clear factor was the sheer number of different religions throughout the colonies. We will never know how many people attended which church, but we do know how many church buildings there were in 1776. A historian counted them using old maps as evidence. There were 3,142. The largest denomination, the Congregational (Puritan) Church, had only 668 buildings. The complete list is as follows: Presbyterian, 588; Anglican (modern Episcopal), 495; Quaker, 310; Lutheran, 150; Methodist, 65; Catholic, 56; Moravian, 31; Dunker, 24; Mennonite, 16; Huguenot, 7; and Jewish synagogues, 5 (plus some isolated others). What conclusion can be drawn? The Founding Fathers wanted an official church, but each wanted his church, not someone else's. So, they finally went to the next best solution, no official church. Over time, early Americans came to regard the absence of an official church as a good thing, leaving everyone to privately practice (or not) his or her own religion. Diversity prevented conformity.

Another trend during the colonial era concerns the slow expansion of the powers of the lower house, the branch of the colonial assemblies based on population. Over time they asserted themselves and gained powers such as the right to select their speaker, the right to control the budget and taxes, and the right to introduce legislation. By the time the relationship with England soured in the 1760s, the lower houses had become hotbeds of opposition. The rise of the lower house, an almost imperceptible shift in power, was not apparent until it was too late for England to regain control, a control which the mother country was unaware up to that point that it had lost.

One of the most difficult questions to answer in American history is why the abolitionists failed politically in elections before the Civil War, but lived to see the Thirteenth Amendment adopted through the political process. Events during the war changed both the popular voters and the politicians. Historians have argued the relative weight of the factors involved for years. The real lesson, and one that is transferable to any time period, is that war often causes unforeseen effects.

**History Standard One 9-12a: Students will analyze historical materials to trace the development of an idea or trend across space or over a prolonged period of time in order to explain patterns of historical continuity and change.**

**Essential Questions:**

- Were contemporary issues also problematic for past societies? Why are those issues difficult? Is there a pattern of continuity or change?
- To what extent can we learn from studying historical responses to societal problems?

In the 9-12 cluster, students continue deeper into the understanding of the results and consequences of chronologies by analyzing how some things change in history, and how some don't. They also are ready to apply it to daily adult life as a citizen by analyzing contemporary issues.

This standard provides teachers and students with a great opportunity to research their local communities. Both schools and local communities have a wealth of unmined documents available for research. Look at old yearbooks with a purpose in mind. What clothing styles were fashionable? What hair styles? How do the advertisements reflect the community at that time? How many of these businesses are still in existence? What happened to the others, particularly in the context of historical events? Does the local newspaper have a file of old newspaper clippings? When was a particular neighborhood built? Can you interview the older residents about that experience? Tracing an idea or trend over a time span or over a space is easier than explaining the resulting pattern of continuity and change. Students should take any topic selected for teaching this standard to the conclusion of the explanation of the pattern. And, try the reverse: show the pattern and have the students explain how it sheds light on the evolution of that trend or idea.

A student could research the spread of women's suffrage around the world. Why did women's suffrage trail behind male suffrage? Why did women in the U.S. receive the vote after minority males? What ideas or trends or patterns of continuity explain the chronology of women's suffrage, both in America and in other regions? Some historians see Manifest Destiny before the Civil War and the imperialism of the Spanish-American War as two versions of the same thrust, the American desire to grab territory at the expense of weaker nations. Or were the two periods different? Or, were neither one primarily characterized by territory grabbing? Some ideas seem to only fit into a particular time or are only applicable to a particular place, such as imperialism or the Enlightenment or the Reformation. Further complicating this standard is the possibility that continuity is more present than change. A Roman Catholic visiting a Lutheran

Church will see much that is familiar. Martin Luther kept more than he changed. So, how “revolutionary” was the Reformation?

Other examples of this benchmark in history are the following:

1. What factors explain the migration within the United States of population from the Frostbelt or Rustbelt to the Sunbelt? Were the attractions of retirement communities the only explanation?
2. In the years prior to the Civil War, industrialization created a separation between work and the home. Increasingly one worked away from where one lived. As incomes rose for a segment of the population, a self-identified grouping emerged, the middle class, with created cultural and social and family characteristics. This gradual change in social status has long captivated historians because it requires research in non-traditional records. One does not go to the national archives to research family history on a large scale.
3. Notice also the slow emergence of new consumer groups. Teenagers did not suddenly appear in the 1950s. What happened was that business (Hollywood and the record industry, primarily) discovered the existence of a new and large group of consumers and catered to, or created, depending on how cynical your viewpoint is, their subculture, sometimes reflecting their culture and sometimes creating their culture. American Bandstand was the forerunner of MTV, from one show in the afternoon to whole channels now!

**HISTORY STANDARD TWO: Students will gather, examine, and analyze historical data [Analysis].**

**Enduring Understandings:**

- Many different types of sources exist to help us gather information about the past, such as artifacts and documents. Sources about the past need to be critically analyzed and categorized as they are used.
- Critical investigation demands constant reassessment of one’s research strategies.
- A historian must prove where the information can be found that is the basis for historical conclusions.

Standard Two deals with the building blocks of history, the documents and artifacts that historians rely upon to systematically investigate and construct the story of the past. Ultimately the historian ranks the different sources in terms of their credibility and usefulness to the specific argument he or she is making.

One obstacle that appears in this task is the key question of what documents or artifacts are available. Not all documents are saved. Sometimes there never were documents. Why would someone doing something bad write down all his plans? Even love letters may be eventually (or quickly) tossed. Sometimes new documents are discovered, but this is unlikely if the event being researched is far back in history. Sometimes new techniques enable historians to get answers to formerly unanswerable questions, such as DNA establishing paternity. For example, a breakthrough in deciphering Mayan hieroglyphics and modern forensic medical techniques revealed that the Mayan Indians

were more violent than previously thought. Some documents were intended to be seen by many others and some documents were meant to be seen by very few people, such as a written copy of a speech or a private letter. Obviously documents have limitations. That is why historians doing research keep looking for documents longer than it seems necessary. After decades, a historian still has much to learn. One must accept the fact that you can never, even as a dedicated student of history, know all the nuances. A field that studies human beings and their actions has unattainable levels of understanding.

At the higher grades, the use of evidence requires the skills a historian uses. A researcher needs a healthy skepticism to guard against easily believing that one has found all the answers. They may not have asked the right questions. Critical investigation demands constant reassessment of one's research strategies. The search for an absolutely foolproof definitive answer is unending. And, it is generally unachievable.

The study of history depends upon evidence. In our daily lives we all too often hear comments based solely upon opinion. Good history writing rests securely upon a base of factual information and artifacts that another researcher may re-examine. That is why a historian must prove, with footnotes, endnotes, or other forms of documentation, where the information that is the basis for the historical conclusions can be found. There are guidelines as to how to do research, how to analyze a document, and how to inspect an artifact. Since learning can occur from a fresh look with a new perspective and new questions, historians seem to go over the same ground again and again. They are asking new or different questions. Ultimately every conclusion by a historian rests upon the documentary evidence; if it doesn't, it is fiction.

**History Standard Two K-3a: Students will use artifacts and documents to gather information about the past.**

**Essential Questions:**

- What can I learn about the past from studying artifacts and documents? What can't I learn?

The K-3 cluster introduces students to the concept that documents and artifacts give us information about the past. A student will have mastered this concept when that student can respond to a new document or artifact by giving a written explanation that clearly displays an understanding of the concept. An **artifact** is simply a thing, any thing, made by human hands. A piece of physical evidence (referred to as **material culture** by historians) from a time period or an event is a **primary source**. So, both a document and an artifact may be a primary source. Sometimes we learn more from touching artifacts than we learn from reading about them. A student's book bag contains artifacts that historians could use to describe that student. Is he or she neat, organized, prepared for trouble (two pencils?), or occasionally hungry (filled with snacks)?

For example: When given a picture of a colonial fireplace, a picture of a pioneer family in a covered wagon, or a picture of a family in an automobile, the student would describe the family and their activity. An old map shows what people knew, and perhaps more

importantly, didn't know at that time. Students might examine a map that locates China close to Europe, without the two continents of North and South America, to gain an appreciation for the difficulties faced by early explorers. Birth certificates tell where and when you were born, who your parents are, but not anything about your grades in school.

**History Standard Two 4-5a: Students will identify artifacts and documents as either primary or secondary sources of historical data from which historical accounts are constructed.**

**Essential Question:**

- How do artifacts and documents influence how history is written?
- Which historical source is best?

In the 4-5 cluster, students are introduced to two types of documents. A primary source gives an eyewitness account of an event, while a secondary source is written after the event or from information reported. Students should be exposed to both types of documents and asked to differentiate between them and to discuss the value of each. A teacher might present a historical conclusion to students and ask what kind of evidence would lead to that conclusion. Where might you find the evidence? What kind of primary or secondary source? A letter? A ship's record of cargo carried from one port to another? A personal diary or government document?

Historical sources, both primary and secondary, have limitations. Some primary sources are more reliable and credible than others. A marriage certificate is usually filled out and signed at the marriage ceremony or right afterwards. Someone later describing a wedding in a letter may mistakenly give an incorrect date for the wedding. If the wedding certificate has a different date, it is more trustworthy. That is, unless further research indicates that many wedding certificates from that church have the wrong wedding date on them. Now a historian might lean toward trusting the letter. In another example, historians have found two letters describing the weather at George Washington's first inauguration. One said it was sunny; the second said it rained. Since neither letter is more reliable than the other, we will never know for certain what the weather was. Logic, however, suggests that others would have commented on the weather if it had been miserable. But, history rests upon proof. Either documents support a conclusion or it is someone's guess or fiction. There is an old saying among historians – "No documents, no proof, no history."

A primary source is not the best or most important source available to support a description of an event; it is any source from the time period being studied – a firsthand account such as a diary, a newspaper, a letter, a government report, a photograph, a birth record, a deed, a marriage certificate, or an artifact. Think of a primary source as an eyewitness to an event or time period, something contemporary with the event, a piece of the past. It is usually a document, simply because our society generates so many pieces of paper (documents) that historians can use.

But an eyewitness is more than a piece of paper. A brief walk across the site of Pickett's charge at Gettysburg enables a historian to sense the feel of that fateful day. Any student lifting a rifle used in the Revolutionary or Civil War will certainly appreciate how heavy it was to carry and to use. Riding in a covered wagon for a few hundred yards can make you realize how much the hope for a better future must have motivated many pioneers. It certainly wasn't the comfortable ride in a bouncing covered wagon! Modern researchers literally digging into outhouse pits near slave quarters have discovered that slaves ate much better than previously believed. The prevailing belief was that slaves were poorly fed, an accusation that often appeared in antislavery writings. Obviously, a slave owner's assertions that slaves were well fed was not thought to be reliable, since it seemed self-serving. Maybe neither source is perfectly reliable, the antislavery advocate nor the slave owner. The microscopic evidence from outhouse pits indicates that the typical slave's diet was more varied than previously thought. That is not the same as saying slavery was good or that it wasn't too bad. We still must weigh *all* the evidence about slavery, including how we would feel in that status.

A secondary source or document is one that someone has put together from primary sources to tell a story. A description of weddings in the colonial period would help a student understand weddings in colonial New Castle or Dover or Georgetown. That assumes weddings in Delaware were typical of those throughout the colonies. In combination with some primary documents, a secondary document will illustrate the larger picture, permitting a clearer understanding of the topic. After studying the life of soldiers in General George Washington's Revolutionary War army, a student would better understand a letter written in 1780 by a Delaware soldier to someone back home.

A tertiary source is a general book, like a textbook, put together after consulting both primary and secondary sources or after using just secondary sources. It tends to be very general and superficial to knowledgeable historians. A history teacher reading a tertiary textbook reads a paragraph and probably mutters, "It's not that simple." But publishing companies cannot afford to put everything into a textbook to write the complete story. It would be too long, the school would not buy it, and the students could not lift it! Textbooks, in an effort to "cover" everything, make every event seem just as important as any other event; students and teachers should be able to judge what is important for themselves. Textbooks should be used as a resource, not as *the* curriculum and not relied upon for day-to-day lesson plans. You should always bear in mind that even a textbook is the result of decisions about what to put in and what to leave out and what will be the overarching concepts or interpretations in which the selected facts will be presented. For example, the story of the American Revolution in a British textbook might be only two paragraphs!

**History Standard Two 4-5b: Students will examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme; chronologically arrange them, and analyze change over time.**

**Essential Question:**

- How should historical sources be used to look for change?

History Standard Two 4-5a requires students to identify sources as primary or secondary and to differentiate between them. History Standard Two 4-5b asks students to go one more step to apply that understanding in order to analyze and to explain historical sources. Students are now expected to be able to arrange sources chronologically and to explain change over time. What changed? What did not change? Why? How do you know? What patterns are there? What links the documents together?

Historical sources can be arranged many different ways. This standard asks students to become familiar with using a particular region or society or theme as an organizing scheme to explain change. They trace an activity or idea over a long period and explain why changes took place. How did women dress in different periods of our history? Look at pictures of houses or schools built in Delaware over a long period of time. How can you tell which are the most recently built? Size is certainly a factor. The cost of building a school is another. The changing activities in school are another factor. Years ago there were no gym classes nor sports nor driver education. If an addition was ever built to your school, have the students analyze why it was needed. Look at pictures of methods of transportation. What changed? Why? How do you explain the changes illustrated by the documents?

**History Standard Two 6-8a: Students will master the basic research skills necessary to conduct an independent investigation of historical phenomena.**

**History Standard Two 6-8b: Students will examine historical documents, artifacts, and other materials, and analyze them in terms of credibility, as well as the purpose, perspective, or point of view for which they were constructed.**

**Essential Questions:**

- Is this source credible? How do I know?
- What questions should I ask before I use this source? After I use it?

The benchmarks in the 6-8 cluster are closely linked. Students are exposed to research skills that need to be learned and used to guide historical research. Secondly, the students are exposed to a set of questions about every document a researcher uses when encountering a source.

Historians write books describing the essential research skills in history. A student undertaking research should begin with who, what, where, how, and why. Students should be advised and encouraged to continually investigate: become like detectives, keep asking questions; brainstorm new questions to ask, especially as answers are learned to the first few questions. The first thing to do is to get the simple facts straight. Use a dictionary or a biographic dictionary or documents to establish a date, such as a person's life span or to discover elementary information, such as he attended William and Mary College in the 1760s. Now ask new questions. Did he graduate? What major? (They didn't have majors back then!) Even asking a wrong question gets closer to what actually happened. Now more is understood about attending a college in that period. Students

should think about what questions a historian might ask when researching a given topic. Students should formulate questions as often as try to find answers.

Modern technology has given us new weapons to use in research. The Federalist Papers is a collection of essays written by Alexander Hamilton, James Madison, and John Jay to convince the states to ratify the Constitution. All the eighty-five essays are unsigned so we can't be certain who wrote which essay. After they were all typed into a computer along with known works by each author, an analysis of the frequency of certain words clearly identified the author of each essay, at least with a very high degree of statistical reliability.

Future historians will use the same sources, but will ask new questions from the old sources. Teachers and students should try not to become discouraged at the roadblocks encountered along the way – unanswerable questions and seemingly impossible difficulties. Sometimes the answers to particular questions must wait for future historians. For example, during the Reagan administration, American political observers and historians were already convinced that the president's advocacy of "star wars," the space-based antimissile defense system, was the final push that forced the Soviet Union to declare an end to the Cold War. Since then, the Russian governmental archives have been increasingly opened and former officials have become available for interviews. Nothing, not a document nor an interview, from the Russian perspective indicates that "star wars" was a factor in their thinking. The history of the end of the Cold War already is being "revised," a term historians use to refer to the rewriting of the history of an event or idea. The truth will never be reached because history is partly interpretation. At best, historians get closer to the truth, to what actually happened. The interpretative part of questions in history means that historical conclusions will likely be challenged sometime in the future as different historians ask different questions or find different sources.

Historical sources all mislead to a certain extent because they tell only part of the story from one perspective. As long as human beings generate documents, there will never be an unbiased document. When a historian encounters any document, questions must be raised. Sometimes a document will seem perfect, but caution students to not get so thrilled about the contents of a document that you overlook necessary questions. What is the genealogy of this document? How did it come to be located in this archive or collection? Is the path from its creation to its location believable? Could it have been planted? Is the document out of character with other documents?

For years, late 19<sup>th</sup> century Lincoln scholars were perplexed by the widespread use of a Lincoln quote praising the virtues of the free enterprise system. They could not locate any copy of that quote in Lincoln's papers. Finally, researchers tracked down the distributor. When confronted with a request to provide the source document, the businessman admitted that he made it up. But, he still defended his action by claiming it was what Lincoln would have said if he had said anything about the free enterprise system! Could your document source be forged? How would you know? This particular quote is still being used; to those using it, usefulness is more important than honesty.

Suppose a student found a newspaper clipping that featured a headline quoting Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., as saying the “segregation of the races is a good thing.” This doesn’t sound like something he would say, ever. By attempting to verify the source, the student discovers that the quote was edited and shortened from “Some politicians believe that segregation of the races is a good thing.” Now the student knows to ignore that newspaper clipping. (Unless, of course, the research is focusing on attempts to discredit Martin Luther King or the civil rights movement. In that case the student found a gem!) Documents can also be misquoted accidentally by mistakes in transcription and by mistakes in typing. For whom was the document intended? How many eyes were meant to see it? The smaller the number, the closer it may be to revealing the truth, at least as seen by the author of the document. Are there any corroborating documents or sources? Just as in a court trial, multiple witnesses seem to cement the case. Students should continually question the trustworthiness and credibility of sources, particularly for online research. Anyone can start a website to say almost anything. Students at this grade level tend to trust or use the first site to appear in a search engine. A good rule of thumb for academic research would be to use websites from educational institutions -- universities, museums, archives, etc.

Students should learn to question everything about a time period and not assume that the way they do something today is similar to what was done. In the early colonial era, for example, children did not eat with their parents; they waited until the parents had finished, then ate. Another trap for researchers is how words are used. Definitions change over the years. A waterfall was called a fountain in the 1500s and 1600s. Now Ponce de Leon’s search in Florida for the “fountain of youth” makes more sense. Suppose a student reads a primary source in which a historical figure was described as “nice.” This sounds straightforward, and a student might begin to form a mental picture of the historical figure’s character, but “nice” meant the opposite hundreds of years ago!

One way to get students to see the need for asking exhaustive questions about a topic at this grade level is a classroom exercise involving coins. Give each student a coin and have each one explain what they could learn from that coin about the United States in the year 2000 if they found this coin five thousand years from now, in the year 7000. The penny will tell you everyone wore beards. The older quarters with the eagle on the back show a society’s preoccupation with birds. The various state quarters could either give accurate information or confuse us. The Vermont quarter shows buckets hanging from a tree; a student might know that is how sap is collected. The New Hampshire quarter has the words “Old Man of the Mountain” on one side. Is the “Old Man” the guy on the other side? The Tennessee state quarter shows that the state makes guitars (or, does it?). Unless they find another source to confirm the name of the rider on the horse or what is happening, the Delaware quarter is baffling. Remember, it must be a logical inference based only on the coin, which incorporates the ability to draw conclusions (Standard One) at this grade level, and, by keeping the focus on the questions asked, allows the learners to increase the complexity of their thinking from Standard Two at the 4-5 grade cluster. This will show students how information may be misinterpreted, even by people trying to do a good job.

A Delaware historian and teacher told this story: “Years ago I used an exercise with early elementary grade kids. I brought a bag into the room. I told them that the bag contained stuff that belonged to my two children when they were that age. Immediately (those of you who teach the early grades know this) they asked if the children were boys or girls. I told them I would let them guess. As I pulled boy-type toys out, the whole class in unison agreed it was boys. (My daughter played Little League.) When I got to the dolls, they switched. The lesson was keep asking questions, even when you think you know the answers.” This is also a good lesson for the hazards of stereotyping, which is really nothing more than an illogical inference.

**History Standard Two 9-12a: Students will develop and implement effective research strategies for investigating a given historical topic.**

**History Standard Two 9-12b: Students will examine and analyze primary and secondary sources in order to differentiate between historical facts and historical interpretations.**

**Essential Questions:**

- What is the evidence for this argument? Is that *all* the evidence, or just what the author wanted me to read?
- Does differentiating between fact and interpretation matter?

Like the previous grade cluster, these benchmarks are also closely linked. Students continue to master a deeper understanding of the use of documents and artifacts and how historians use them to conduct research and to draw conclusions. The individual questions a researcher asks become part of an overall strategy of research -- the problem of where and how to find the answers. Teachers should ask students to develop research strategies, given a particular historical problem, and examine the difficulties inherent in some research. Sources have to exist to be researched; dialogue between two historical figures can't be replayed without someone present recording what was said.

When this standard is fully mastered, a student is ready to apply it in his/her daily adult life as a citizen by critically examining the documentary evidence put forth to support a point of view or assertion. In addition, a citizen needs to ask questions of the person who advocates a particular position. Where did they get their information? What factors influenced their point of view? How much is based on facts and how much is based upon interpretation? An understanding of the role of documentary support behind an assertion is essential for future citizenship.

Historical sources can be used to see where a historian strays from his/her sources and injects an interpretation not based upon the sources. By this point, students clearly understand primary and secondary sources and how to critically examine them. Now the standard adds the idea that sources can be used in many ways, some of which, while not strictly dishonest, are clearly opinioned conclusions rather than facts based upon documents. A historian can stray from the sources and interject an interpretation not based upon the sources. At the prior cluster, 6-8, students learned that a researcher needs

to be skeptical of every document. Now students learn that while reading what a historian writes we must be skeptical of his/her *use* of the sources. When does the historian base their argument solidly upon sources and when does the historian express an interpretation based upon their overall research on that topic? One must not be so critical of historians at this point. Sometimes interpretation is the only way to fill in a period or description of something for which there are no documents. But, a person reading the historian's account must be aware that it is interpretation.

### **HISTORY STANDARD THREE: Students will interpret historical data [Interpretation].**

#### **Enduring Understandings:**

- What is written by a historian depends upon that historian's personal background and methods, the questions asked about the sources, and the sources used to find the answers to those questions.
- Historians select important events from the past they consider worthy of being taught to the next generation. That selection process, deciding what to emphasize, and the questions that historians ask of the documents and other evidence, contributes significantly to the conclusions drawn.
- History is what the historian says it is. Historians may collect, use, and emphasize sources in ways that result in differing interpretations as they describe, compare, and interpret historical phenomena. Disagreement between historians about the causes and effects of historical events may result from these differences.

As students mature intellectually, they begin to learn that not everything is true because it appears in a book, on television, or online. Students come to realize that history can be presented from different perspectives. The existence of different viewpoints makes history a lively field. A historian gathers factual information from all kinds of sources and then weaves it into a story, a narrative. Along the way the historian decides what to emphasize, what to minimize, and what is significant. The reader goes along for the ride. But a savvy reader should understand that the historian is giving his/her definitions of significance and emphasis based on their beliefs, their judgment, and their interests. Sometimes interpretation creeps into the narrative and sometimes it roars into the narrative. The latter is obvious; the former is often overlooked. Anyone reading a historical narrative needs to be alert for the author's interpretations, both large and small. It will be there; it always is.

Standard Three deals with what historians do – what influences them, what difficulties they encounter, and how historians look at what other historians write. Two different people may honestly disagree about some event that has already happened. The facts are clear. The team lost the game. Now comes the interpretation. Did the team lose the game because of a weak defense or because of a weak offense? A policeman investigating an accident wants to know all he or she can learn about the drivers, the road conditions, the mechanical status of the cars, whether seatbelts were worn, the weather conditions, the presence of alcohol, and now, sadly, road rage. Historians function in a similar manner.

What are often believed to be every day, easily defined words instead have specific meaning to practitioners of that academic discipline. Two terms that may cause trouble are “historic” and “historical.” *Historic* means important or well known in history. A historic account is an event in history that is worth remembering. The standards use “historical” and the phrase “historical accounts.” This is not the same as a “historic account.” *Historical* means relating to or connected with history as a discipline or events in history as a historian deals with them. A historical narrative is a history-based story, not just any old story. A *narrative* is not simply a story; as the standards use the term it is a historian’s written account.

Comparing two different accounts of the same event involves skills that a student should internalize in order to be able to apply them as a citizen, every time he or she encounters a written account about current events or historical events. Teachers should bear that purpose in mind when constructing a lesson plan for a topic.

At the higher level for Standard Three, it is not just that history is interpretation; it is how a student can discover for himself that history is interpretation by assessing a historian’s choice of questions, his choice of sources, his point of view, etc. It is not *what* is the point of view, but *how* does a narrative show a point of view. Students are not expected to become knowledgeable about historiography. Standard Three is not an exercise in historiography, which is the study by professional historians of how different historians’ interpretations conflict with one another. Standard Three does not measure, ask for, or expect this level of knowledge, just an awareness that historians sometimes disagree and the reasons why they disagree. The key question is: “What factors contributed to this historian’s conclusion and how did these factors contribute to this historian’s conclusions?” It is the *process* – not the end conclusion – measured in Standard Three. The following illustrates history as interpretation.

No student of history can possibly be absolutely neutral evaluating a historical event. Even professional historians bring values and moral judgments to their investigation of a topic in history. Students need to be alert to pre-existing factors that mold and shape the writing of history. Sometimes bias is obvious in the questions posed. Consider these questions:

- a) Why did the United States drop the atomic bomb on innocent, unsuspecting civilians at Hiroshima on August 6, 1945?
- b) Why did the United States choose to drop the atomic bomb?
- c) Would the United States have used the atomic bomb on a white nation like Germany if it had been developed earlier?

Statement “a” implies that the atomic bomb should have been used only on a military target. This comment might have struck a more responsive chord in the generation that lived in the 1940s because people could remember the years prior to the Second World War when no city had yet been bombed from the air. Behind this wording is the assumption that using the atomic bomb was a mistake. The historian researching this

question focuses on the target decision-making process. How and why did Hiroshima come to be the first atomic victim? Could the United States have merely demonstrated the bomb for Japanese observers? Teachers might ask students how the questions a historian asks reveal or reflect the historian's point of view or potential bias.

Statement "b" suggests that there were alternative policies, other than the bomb, which could have been selected. It raises a question by inference. What were those alternative policies and why were they rejected, if they were even considered at all? Historians writing during the Cold War lived with the daily threat of atomic annihilation. Some historians felt that the atomic bomb ushered in a new era in the world's history, a dangerous era. They regretted its initial use. These historians sometimes assume that it was unnecessary to drop the atomic bomb because victory was easily within our grasp. Or was it? Do we know how much longer the war could have gone on? What did American decision-makers know and when did they know it? Historians call the "what if" judgments "counterfactual history." It is great fun to rewrite history for a different ending, but can we be sure?

Statement "c" approaches history from what is sometimes called "a grand theory." This historian apparently believes that race so dominates history that behind every decision must be a racial basis. In the Second World War, the United States acted out of racial motives, as it always does, according to this perspective.

Never read a historical narrative without asking, what did this observer bring to his or her writing – what attitudes, what judgments, what background, what values? All these factors contribute to differing interpretations of historical events, making life more difficult for students. A **point of view** is not a viewpoint expressed by a historian; that is a simplistic popular definition. As used by historians, point of view has a specific meaning. If two historians disagree, they do not have two different points of view. Point of view asks the question – where is this historian coming from? What is the historian's nationality, race, gender, age, and personal background? How might these factors have played a role in determining that historian's conclusions or the research questions that guided historical investigation? An Arabic historian would certainly write a history of the Crusades that differed from one written by a Western European historian (assuming he or she is not of Arabic descent!). Each historian selects events from past experiences that he or she labels as important and therefore worthy of being taught to the next generation. That selection process, deciding what to emphasize, and the questions that historian asks of the documents and other evidence, contributes significantly to the conclusions drawn.

History Standard Three takes students through a process by which they come to realize that ultimately all history is what the historian says it is. What is written about and what is remembered is passed on to the next generation. One constant dispute involving the teaching of history is the criticism by some of the public that the wrong content is being taught. This assumes that there is a body of knowledge that all might agree upon. It is not so. The same event can be presented from many different perspectives. Certainly the American Revolution must be viewed differently in a British textbook. If current events

are depicted differently in different newscasts and newspapers, then surely this was done in the past and surely it will continue in the future.

When this standard is fully mastered, a student is ready to apply it in his/her daily adult life as a citizen by being aware that all written accounts flow from a person who sat down to write that account and brought with him/her a collection of personal influences and perspectives. Nothing is absolutely neutral. Students must have an understanding of how a historian goes about writing. An awareness of this process arms students when they encounter what others write. This skill and awareness is essential for future citizenship.

**History Standard Three K-3a: Students will understand that historical accounts are constructed by drawing logical inferences from artifacts and documents.**

**Essential Question:**

- How are artifacts and documents used to write the story of the past?

In the K-3 cluster, History Standard Three introduces students to the concept that historical accounts are created from logical inferences based upon documents and artifacts. If students see an old toothbrush they may wonder how it was used. Colonial toothbrushes did not have the plastic bristles we have. Their toothbrushes used natural bristles, such as stiff plant material or fibers. The colonial toothbrushes in museums have no bristles because they rotted away. Upon close inspection, and an awareness of the fact that the bristles rotted, students can now draw a logical inference that colonial children brushed their teeth, just as we do. Historical documents and artifacts speak to us in a way, but we have to coax out some information through logical inferences.

Teachers in these grades should take opportunities to show students how to draw logical conclusions. Students can learn this skill by applying it repeatedly throughout the day, without realizing it is a history standard. Why is it difficult to pay attention right before lunch? Why did you bring your umbrella today if it is not raining? (The weatherperson says it will.) Hold up an artifact: What was this used for? Why do you think so?

**History Standard Three 4-5a: Students will explain why historical accounts of the same event sometimes differ and will relate this explanation to the evidence presented or the point-of-view of the author.**

**Essential Question:**

- How could there be different explanations of the same event in history?

In the 4-5 cluster, History Standard Three introduces students to the concept that historical accounts of the same event may differ because of either the differences in the evidence cited to support that historian or because different historians are different people with different ways of looking at something. A historian's point of view influences the sources used to answer questions, which in turn affects conclusions. Students at this level will quickly get the point if you ask them if parents ever get the same story from two siblings about what started an argument. Who was the last person to use the milk and

why is it sitting out on the counter? Or, who left the toothpaste out? Whose turn is it to take the trash out?

The American Revolution provides many possible opportunities to illustrate this aspect of history. On numerous occasions the British and the Americans disagreed. An account of an event that happened before or during the war would be different depending on which side of the ocean the author lived on. Or, which side the author preferred to emerge victorious, the British or the rebels. The vocabulary used in different accounts often betrays the author's feelings and personal bias. Alert students to look for such words. Historians may try to write unbiased history, but they can never be completely free of the personal factors that influenced their lives.

**History Standard Three 6-8a: Students will compare different historians' descriptions of the same societies in order to examine how the choice of questions and use of sources may affect their conclusions.**

**Essential Questions:**

- Why might historians disagree about the same historical event?
- To what extent does history change?

In the 6-8 cluster, History Standard Three introduces students to the concept that historical accounts of the same event may differ because historians have asked different questions of the same sources or because they have used the sources differently. Historical records just lie there. The factual information in them does not jump out without questions being asked. The questions help to determine the answers and therefore the conclusions. At this time historians are not likely to discover a trunk full of new documents explaining the origins of the slave trade. But, two different historians can phrase their questions differently while investigating the early slave trade. The first may ask, "Why did Europeans begin enslaving Africans?" Seems like a straightforward question. The second may ask, "Why were Africans unable to prevent the slave trade?" This also seems like a straightforward question. Upon closer scrutiny neither one is.

The first rests upon the assumption that Europeans alone began the slave trade. Historical research does not support that. Africans sold Africans to the Europeans, who could not go far into the African interior because of their vulnerability to diseases. The second phrasing shifts the responsibility, although it is not clear how much, for the slave trade to Africans themselves rather than to Europeans. It also seems to suggest that the slave trade could have been prevented, if only Africans had wanted to prevent it. Each of these questions as guides to research will certainly lead to two very different books on the origins of the slave trade. Now comes the hard part for the student. Which sheds the most light on the subject, given the limited documents available? The well-armed student is aware that the phrasing of the questions underlying a research design influences the conclusions. After a few pages of a historical narrative, it is obvious usually where that historian's methods and original questions will lead. Now the student can assess how persuasive the argument is while realizing it is that historian's argument, not the last word on the topic.

**History Standard Three 9-12a: Students will compare competing historical narratives, by contrasting different historian’s choice of questions, use and choice of sources, perspectives, beliefs, and points of view, in order to demonstrate how these factors contribute to different interpretations.**

**Essential Questions:**

- Does the way research is conducted matter?
- To what degree is historical investigation about the historian as much as the history? Is it necessary to include an investigation of the writer in regard to what we read?
- Is there such a thing as completely unbiased history?

In the 9-12 cluster, History Standard Three introduces students to the concept that historical accounts of the same event may differ because of research design decisions made by a historian and because of a historian’s personal background. In cluster 6-8, students learned that the questions asked and how sources were used greatly influenced the historian’s perspective. But there is more. What forces molded and shaped that historian? What did he/she live through? What were the major ideas floating in the air when they grew to intellectual maturity? It is almost impossible for us to imagine today, but in the Great Depression of the 1930s many people came to believe that capitalism had failed and could never be revived. Therefore, modern man faced two choices, fascism or communism, the only two -isms that had a chance to continue. Many intellectuals acquired a bias in favor of fascism or communism during the 1930s which influenced their later research and writing. For example, since communism was considered such a horrible threat to our society, leaders were justified in restricting civil liberties to make certain we will win in the long run. A historian writing about McCarthyism might approach it from either side -- in favor of restricting or defending those civil liberties. The student gains great insight from becoming aware of what could have influenced that historian. Another example: Historians’ accounts of slavery and the antebellum South that were written during the 1950s and 1960s were greatly shaped by the civil rights movement and the perspectives acquired by it.

**History Standard Four: Students will develop historical knowledge of major events and phenomena in world, United States, and Delaware history [Content].**

In a strict sense, Standard Four [Content] is not tested by the Delaware Student Testing Program. The students will not be expected to recall any particular *specific* event or person in history. But, they will need to know chronology in broad outlines, and enough trends in history that they have a reservoir of information that they can use to provide factual support and examples in their short answers. In short, students have to have an understanding of trends and patterns in order to use that understanding as evidence when drawing conclusions or making inferences. For example, a student responding to a historian’s writing published in the 1950s should be aware that the 1950s came after the Second World War or during the Cold War or during the beginning of a Civil Rights movement. Consider these two sentences the student might write: “He wrote this

because Americans were angry at Russia” or “This historian was influenced by the Cold War then taking place between the United States and the Soviet Union.” Obviously the second sentence is much stronger and reflects more understanding.

Teachers should not be concerned as they examine the content descriptions in Standard Four for each grade cluster and think, “That’s too much. I could never do that in a school year.” Actually, it is too much to cover, and becomes more ponderous with each passing year. What teachers, schools, and districts must learn to do is selectively abandon certain topics in the course of history. Don’t try to cover everything. It is impossible. Adopt an approach that could be called “post-holing.” Dig deeply into some topics rather than trying to “cover” everything. It is better for a student to clearly understand a concept and to be able to use *something* in history in an explanation than it is to have a limited understanding of a concept and know a lot of “*somethings*” in history. Students understand a standard when they can apply it in a new or different situation. The teacher does not have to “cover” every potential situation for the student to be prepared. The student who can apply understanding to a new situation is well equipped for the DSTP, and for life after school.

Social Studies content should be about:

- Themes, broad historical trends, and topics that allow the four strands of the social studies to be integrated and provide a cultural context for the student;
- Relevant and important contemporary issues;
- Resources for education and not the scope and sequence contained in a textbook.

Select historical topics which are transferable, relevant, integrated, contemporary, and important. Students should study what resonates throughout history and prepares them for decisions they will face as adult citizens.