

## **Introduction: The Challenge of Citizenship**

After the Constitutional Convention in 1787, someone asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government had been devised for the United States. He replied, “A republic, sir, if you can keep it.” John Dickinson, one of Delaware’s delegates to the convention, agreed with Franklin completely. Earlier he had written: “Every government at some time or other falls into wrong measures...It is the duty of the governed to endeavor to rectify the mistake.” On December 7, 1787, Delaware became the first state to ratify the U.S. Constitution and accept its challenge to ordinary American citizens that they assume the responsibility for the security of personal liberties and the sound functioning of the government.

The republic created at the convention was far from perfect. The framers did not “remember the ladies,” as Abigail Adams had demanded, and the struggle for woman suffrage required more than a century. Nor did the Philadelphia convention manage to reconcile the contradiction of a government based on individual liberty with the existence of African slavery. Sixty years later, Frederick Douglass could still cause an uneasy stir in a holiday crowd when he asked, “What is your fourth of July to the slave?” But the framers committed themselves and future generations to the ideals of 1776: “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,” and by allowing for amendments, Americans of the future were challenged to bring “one nation under God, indivisible,” ever closer to a society which guarantees individual liberty and equal opportunity to all citizens. Today we live in a world of increasing complexity that the founders of the United States could hardly have imagined. Yet the republic endures, and the responsibility for its continued existence still rests in the hands of the citizens. “The glory of the world is the possibilities of the commonplace and America is America because it shows, as never before, the power of the common, ordinary, unlovely man,” wrote W.E.B. DuBois. “This is real democracy...”

Citizens must be educated in order to perform the essential task of maintaining the nation. Thomas Jefferson hoped that “the education of the common people will be attended to; convinced that on their good sense we may rely with the most security for the preservation of a due degree of liberty.” An essential component of public education is the development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary for participatory citizenship. This commission has been charged to define the curriculum framework for schools in Delaware to use in achieving that end.

## **Definitions and Objectives**

Citizenship education in America has traditionally been addressed in the context of social studies in elementary and middle schools, and in courses carrying more formal disciplinary titles – history, geography, etc. – in high schools. The unifying objective of this course of studies is preparing young people to become informed and active citizens, who accept their responsibilities, understand their rights, and participate actively in society and government. Effective citizens must be able to research issues, form reasoned opinions, support their positions, and engage in the political process. We expect that young people will learn a genuine respect for the rights of others, a concern for the common good, and a commitment to such basic democratic principles as equal rights and majority rule. Beyond that, in Delaware and the United States, neither government nor the schools should dictate which opinions should be held, which positions should be advanced, or what role each individual should assume within the civic structure of our country. Those choices are the birthright of individual citizens.

With that guiding philosophy, the teachers, administrators, parents, and other members of the Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks Commission began the process of creating these standards in August, 1992. For several months Delaware teachers showed us what already works in their classrooms, and national experts told us about the specific contributions of different disciplines to citizenship education. The commission then divided into committees based on disciplines and grade level, and each attempted to identify critical skills and content for its area. The consolidated results became our first draft standards in November 1993. The commission reviewed this draft thoroughly and established a writing team to revise it, while other teams tackled the creation of performance assessment tasks and the implementation of standards.

These standards have passed through several drafts, each of which has been closely reviewed. National content-area experts provided detailed feedback during the summer 1994, while representatives from each district met with the commission to provide the first organized teachers responses. During the fall of 1994, commission members met with Delaware teachers around the state at all grade levels. Nearly 200 teachers invested the time to provide thoughtful and incisive written feedback. Dozens more participated in group sessions. In January, 1995, every Delaware teacher received a revised draft, followed by training sessions, public forums, and opportunities for individual review. Hundreds of teachers responded, and many of their suggestions have been incorporated into these standards.

This curriculum framework rests on the foundation of four core disciplines from the social sciences: history, geography, economics, and civics. Each discipline offers a distinct strategy for examining the world, and provides students with specific intellectual conceptual tools for analyzing causes and consequences. A more extensive list of subjects could be suggested, and it is encouraging when any district dedicates the time and resources to expanding this framework beyond the core disciplines. Nothing in this document is intended to discourage such initiatives. We do believe, however, that history, geography, economics, and civics are the essential focus for citizenship education, and that their importance should not be diminished.

## **The Core Disciplines: History, Geography, Economics, and Civics**

How will a coordinated study of these core disciplines contribute to effective citizenship? If all students take history or economics, it is obviously not because all students will become historians or economists. But history, geography, economics, and civics each offer distinct approaches and develop specific skills for examining common subject matter, which can be integrated in addressing a particular issue or event. What follows is a brief explanation of the specific importance of each core discipline.

History organizes events and phenomena in terms of *when* they occurred, examining where, how, and why they took place. Students study how individuals and societies have changed and interacted over time. They gather historical data, then examine, analyze, and interpret this data, presenting their results in a clear, critical manner. They organize events through chronologies, and evaluate cause-and-effect relationships among them. Citizens need to be able to research issues in order to understand the effect of historical developments and trends on contemporary events. They need the ability to examine the actions of other people faced with similar choices in different times. Studying history empowers students to form conclusions about the potential consequences of available options.

Geography organizes life situations in terms of where they occur. People interact with the natural world in culturally distinct ways to produce unique places, and those places change over time. The methods and perspectives of geography give students a spatial understanding of the world, and the ability to evaluate information in spatial terms. Citizens need to be able to examine the varying ways that peoples interact with their environments, and appreciate the diversity of the places those interactions create. They need to understand that the different ways in which people view places and conceptualize regions will affect their actions. Studying geography increases students' ability to analyze complex situations, events, and trends, and draw logical inferences from them.

Economics analyzes the production, allocation, distribution, and use of resources. Students examine the inherent relationship between costs and benefits, and the values associated with them. Understanding economic principles, whole economies, and the interactions between different types of economies helps students comprehend the exchange of information, capital, and products across the globe. Citizens need to be able to assess the impact of market influences and governmental actions on the economy in which they live. They need to understand the relation of economic systems and values to cultural values. Studying economics better equips students to make sound personal economic choices, and to participate effectively in social decision making as citizens in an increasingly competitive and interdependent global economy.

Civics directly addresses citizenship education in the context of political systems. Students study the assumptions upon which governments are founded, and the strategies governments employ to achieve their goals. With respect to the United States, students learn the underlying principles of representative democracy, the constitutional separation of powers, and the rule of law. Citizens need to comprehend that an essential premise of representative democracy is the willingness to place a premium on personal participation in social decision-making. Studying civics prepares students to translate beliefs into actions and ideas into policies, to discharge their responsibilities while protecting their rights and the rights of others.

### **Additional Perspectives for a Complex World**

Creating separate content standards for each discipline is not intended to imply that they should be taught in isolation but to suggest each discipline's unique contribution to an understanding of the world. Very few lessons will consist only of history, for example, without reference to geography or economics; interdisciplinary approaches are essential to reinforce students' comprehension. The commission considered two interdisciplinary approaches – cultural contexts and contemporary issues – important enough to emphasize as additional perspectives through which to view the standards. We have attempted to utilize some sample activities accompanying the standards to suggest possibilities for integrating them.

Understanding cultural contexts is critical to preparation for citizenship because the United States has always been composed of an extraordinarily diverse population. Our citizens hail from all corners of the earth, espouse the tenets of every religion, and carry on the traditions of hundreds of different cultures. This has resulted in the creation of a uniquely American culture, flavored and enhanced by

those retained traditions. One of the more fundamental American ideals is that, in a nation of immigrants, citizens are not asked to divorce themselves from their heritage but to contribute it to the national milieu, and that American culture forms the essential social context of our society. “A social culture is an organized way of life which is based on a common tradition and conditioned by a common environment,” observes historian Christopher Dawson, and “a common way of life involves a common view of life, common standards of behavior and common standards of value.” Exploring that American context helps students appreciate the contribution of various cultures to the diversity from which we all draw strength. Further, understanding the importance of cultural context to all societies is a powerful tool for students to use in examining both positive and negative consequences which occur when cultures interact.

Delaware schools are preparing our students to live in the twenty-first century, and while it is not possible to predict with certainty the issues which will concern Americans in the future, we can prepare them by teaching the skills necessary to analyze contemporary issues. Some of these issues represent threats to our society: wars, drugs or ecological disasters. Some affect the way we view ourselves: immigration, civil rights, and women's rights. Others suggest possible solutions to our most bedeviling problems: information technology, conservation efforts, or volunteer organizations tackling social concerns. By applying skills gained in the study of the core disciplines to contemporary issues, teachers prepare their students to deal with future challenges in their adult lives. Students learn that events are subject to different interpretations, and that they have to be capable of analyzing competing positions before making a decision. This also instills the expectation that every American citizen has both the responsibility and the right to take part in the decision-making process.

Cultural contexts and contemporary issues serve as significant unifying themes for interdisciplinary instruction. For middle-school students studying the colonial period, the concept of multiple cultural contexts in North America provides a useful focus for eighth graders examining the interaction of European, African, and Native American cultures. Students might begin by studying the histories of each major culture prior to contact in the New World. Geographic skills would allow them to map settlement patterns or the flow of trade between Scotch-Irish Presbyterians, English Anglicans, and Cherokee Indians. They could employ cost-benefit analysis from economics to examine the implications of Hurons exchanging furs for manufactured goods with French traders, or the forces driving English, Portuguese, and Dutch mariners in the Atlantic slave trade. This investigation might lead to an appreciation of the struggles of uprooted Africans to preserve their culture

in a hostile environment. Finally, students might look at the governments which emerged in the eighteenth century, and how they reflected the process by which immigrants to North America adapted their political, social, and religious heritage to the demands of a new land.

Employing contemporary issues, a class of seniors might explore alternative plans for a proposed bypass highway, by examining maps and relevant geographic data to determine different routes which could connect two major cities, analyzing potential environmental impact and the changes each would make for land use in the area. Students could research the region's history to see if historical sites existed which would need protection from development, including old buildings, bridges, or potential archaeological sites. Economic analysis could project the ways in which better access to transportation might reduce costs and improve profits for some businesses (resulting in more jobs), balancing this potential gain against the increased cost of taxes to construct the highway. The civics portion of the unit could include considerations of the rights of the landowners whose property was condemned, possible changes in political boundaries, and an investigation of the process by which a development plan was created and approved. Real-life experts might be invited into the classroom to share their expertise and views. A final student project might result in a group presentation before the appropriate city or county government, laying out costs and options for legislators to consider.

The potential of such integrated learning experiences is enormous because they help students conceptualize both the boundaries and the relationships between the four core disciplines. Thus we have attempted to highlight specific standards or activities which cross over disciplinary lines, and even on occasion to suggest integration with science, math, and language arts. We encourage teachers, students, and parents to view the individual standards as building blocks which can be combined in any number of ways to create a solid foundation for effective citizenship.

## **How is This Document Organized?**

This document represents the framework upon which districts and teachers will build a comprehensive Social Studies curriculum. For each grade cluster, we have clearly identified in the content standards what students should know and be able to do by the time they have completed the highest grade in the cluster. Each core discipline is first presented on a summary page, giving the specific rationale for its inclusion, which is followed by the four standards for that discipline, each with an explanation and cluster-by-cluster progression of specific expectations. For example, History Standard One revolves around the concept of chronology-measuring time. Beneath the standard are found the expectations of students at each grade cluster. All history standards are grouped together so that the reader can gain a quick appreciation for the skills and content emphasized and understanding of the progression through which they will be taught.

Following these summaries, the specific standards for the core disciplines are repeated in their appropriate grade clusters. Thus, in several successive pages you will be able to view the entire history, geography, economics, and civics standards for grades K-3. As the standards themselves are presented, sample activities accompany them. The purpose of these activities is to give readers a better feeling for how this particular standard might appear when taught in the classroom. These examples do not represent complete lessons or assessments, and certainly do not exhaust the possibilities for instruction. After many of these examples connection boxes are included, highlighting integration possibilities, so that readers can appreciate the potential interaction between the standards. For many of the standards, there are also examples of "Parent Partnership Projects", which are specifically focused on increasing parental involvement.

Following the standards are sample performance assessment tasks. These tasks illustrate in detail how the standards are applied and assessed, and include samples of actual student work at several levels of ability, so that readers can appreciate what these standards look like in the classroom. The commission felt that it was essential not only to show that it will be feasible for teachers to begin with these standards and develop new units and new assessments, but also to indicate the kinds of tasks which might be expected in a future state assessment.

## **The Continuing Challenge**

“How does it happen that every one takes so zealous an interest in the affairs of his township, his county, and the whole state as if they were his own?” asked the French traveler Alexis de Tocqueville during his celebrated visit to America in the nineteenth century. He answered himself by observing that “it is because every one, in his sphere, takes an active part in the government of society.” Our commitment to democratic ideals and our common identity are being more stringently tested each year. Facing the twenty-first century, Americans must be prepared to deal with increasingly complex issues at home and across a rapidly changing world. For more than 200 years, skeptics have suggested that our experiment in entrusting the care of the republic to our citizens is foredoomed to failure, and that our differences too heavily outweigh our common bonds, but American citizens have repeatedly proven those skeptics wrong.

The republic is still not perfect; we have much yet to do, as will our children in their time. Citizenship education through the social studies curriculum in our public schools remain a critical element in preparing them to assume their responsibilities. These standards represent a beginning rather than an end. Several years of investigation have led us to this initial identification of what students should know and be able to do in order to meet the challenge laid down by Benjamin Franklin. The commission is now relying on teachers, parents, and citizens of Delaware to join us in implementing them. If we are successful, the process of implementation will be dynamic rather than static, cooperative rather than dictated from above. As Arthur Schlesinger Jr. recently suggested, “the American identity will never be fixed and final; it will always be in the making.” The same conclusion applies to these standards.