



## What You Need to Know about California's New History–Social Science Framework

By Nancy McTygue, CHSSP Executive Director



Today was a momentous day for history education in California. For the first time in more than a decade, the State Board of Education adopted a new History-Social Science Framework. In the coming weeks and months we will be sharing what this means for different classrooms, but for now, here is a short breakdown of what's really changed.

### **Has California adopted new History-Social Science (HSS) Standards?**

No. Although everybody seems to agree that our content standards need to be updated, neither the State Board of Education (SBE) or the California Department of Education (CDE) have the authority to update them.

A number of bills have been introduced in the legislature over the years to give the SBE the authority to update standards. Some have passed and become law, such as SB X5 1 (2010) and SB 300 (2011) which gave the State Board the authority to update specific standards in ELA/ELD and mathematics (California's Common Core Standards), and science (the Next Generation Science Standards), but those bills

that proposed to update *all content standards* on a regular basis have yet to become law.

In order to update the History-Social Science Standards, the state legislature would need to pass a bill authorizing and funding their revision and the governor would have to sign it, either as part of a larger effort to establish a regular update process for all standards, or as a separate HSS-only bill, like those passed to update ELA/ELD, mathematics, and science, something that seems very unlikely in the near future.

### **Have the Common Core State Standards or the C3 Framework replaced the HSS Standards?**

Again, No. Adopted by the State Board of Education in 2010, the *Common Core State Standards in English / Language Arts* do include an important section detailing student literacy development in history-social science. And these literacy standards do complement *California's History-Social Science Analysis Standards* (which remain in effect). But the *Common Core Literacy in History / Social Studies Standards* do not detail particular content to be taught at a given grade level, and they do not replace the existing *History-Social Science Standards*, adopted in 1998.

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

### **If the HSS Standards haven't changed, why do we need a new HSS Framework and how is it different from the last version?**

Much has changed from the most recent version of the HSS Framework, adopted in 2005. While we were required to maintain alignment to the Standards (the Civil War is still supposed to be taught in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, for example), we were empowered, and in some cases, required, to go beyond the Standards' outline.

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

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

contributions in WWII, and the Armenian Genocide.

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

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

### **What "instructional shifts" are incorporated in the new Framework?**

The new Framework emphasizes the development of student content knowledge, discipline-specific inquiry, student literacy, and citizenship. In the grade-level course descriptions, for example, content is organized around student-centered questions of significance, and includes discipline-specific support for student reading, writing and oral discourse, aligned to the ELD standards. For more details on each of these areas, check out our "Shifting Instruction" blog.

**Given the Framework’s emphasis on literacy and inquiry, does this mean we should focus more on the how than the what?**

No. The Framework outlines an integrated approach that recognizes the importance of both content and skill development. Students need to learn content. They also need to learn how to think, read, write, and argue in English. And they need to be prepared and willing to participate in the American democratic system. This Framework offers teachers strategies to do all of these things in a coherent and organized fashion.

**Will there be statewide tests in HSS?**

Currently, there are no state-administered assessments in history-social science. In March of 2016, State Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI) Tom Torlakson released his required report to the State Board on Education, detailing his recommendations for expanding California’s Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CASSPP). His first recommendation, based upon input from a number of stakeholder meetings held in 2015, was to develop and administer three summative assessments in history-social science. For those members of our community who felt that the end of testing in history-social science would further marginalize the discipline, Torlakson’s recommendations were welcome news. However, some members of the State Board of Education seemed less enthusiastic, citing the state’s decision (informed by public interest) to scale back testing from the CST-era, according to news reports. Given that, and the fact that the SPI’s recommendation would need support (and substantial funding) from both the state legislature and the Governor, it seems unlikely to me that any statewide testing will happen, and

even if it does, it really won’t be any time soon; even those who think we will get a statewide test in HSS think we’re at least five years away from it becoming a reality.

**Given the recent marginalization of history-social science, I doubt my administrators will support the implementation of the new HSS Framework. What accountability do schools and districts face?**

As I detailed above, it seems unlikely that testing in HSS will return to the state level anytime soon. It is also unclear how, if at all, HSS will be factored into the state’s developing accountability system. Moreover, with the state’s current emphasis on local control, it seems that any accountability for implementation of the new Framework lies at the local level, with a district’s Local Control Accountability Plan, or LCAP. Updated annually, the LCAP details both the district’s efforts to meet the eight SBE-identified priorities, as well as funds allocated in support of those priorities. The State Priorities for Funding could be seen as important levers to support implementation of the new Framework. Schools must provide all students with access to the broad course of study (Priority 7), with coursework aligned to the state standards (Priority 7) to improve pupil outcomes (Priority 8). Designed to allow schools and districts the flexibility they need to address the particular needs of their communities, Local Control funding necessarily reduced state-level oversight. To increase the likelihood of implementation of the new Framework, advocating for its use to support your district’s plan and involving parents and other stakeholders in the discussion is probably the best advice we can give.