

Teaching About Religion

IN NATIONAL AND STATE SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS

Prepared by
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in collaboration with the First Amendment Center



Council on Islamic Education



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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	6
PART 1: INTRODUCTION	8
BACKGROUND OF CURRENT CURRICULUM REFORM AND STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT.....	8
TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS – INDICATORS OF PROGRESS OVER DECADES	9
WHY STUDY RELIGION IN THE STANDARDS DOCUMENTS?	11
PART 2: PARAMETERS AND METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY.....	13
WHICH DOCUMENTS DETERMINE CONTENT ON RELIGIONS UNDER STANDARDS REFORM?	13
OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY	14
COMPILING DATA ON TEACHING ABOUT RELIGIONS IN THE STANDARDS	15
<i>Direct References to Teaching About Religion.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>Indirect References to Teaching About Religion.....</i>	<i>16</i>
GROUPING AND ANALYZING THE DOCUMENTS	17
PART 3: NATIONAL CURRICULUM MODELS IN SOCIAL STUDIES & HISTORY/ SOCIAL SCIENCE.....	19
GENERAL TRENDS REFLECTED IN SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS	20
ANALYSIS OF TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN THE NATIONAL MODELS	22
<i>The National Council for Social Studies Model.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>The National Standards for History Model.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>The Bradley Commission Model: Building a History Curriculum.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>The National Geography Standards</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>National Standards for Civics and Government</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>National Content Standards in Economics</i>	<i>50</i>
HOW NATIONAL STANDARDS DOCUMENTS RELATE TO STATE STANDARDS	53
PART 4: THE STATE STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS.....	55
<i>Typing and Grouping the State Standards</i>	<i>56</i>
TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN STATE STANDARDS ON THE NCSS MODEL	58
<i>Direct references in state documents on the NCSS model</i>	<i>58</i>
<i>Indirect references in state documents on the NCSS model.....</i>	<i>59</i>
STATE STANDARDS FOLLOWING HISTORY AND SOCIAL SCIENCE MODELS	60
<i>Describing Divergent History Models</i>	<i>60</i>
<i>States Incorporating the National Standards for History Model.....</i>	<i>61</i>
<i>State Documents Based on the Building a History Curriculum Model.....</i>	<i>66</i>
<i>Traditional History-Dominant State Documents</i>	<i>70</i>
<i>Geography-dominant States.....</i>	<i>77</i>
<i>States with General Skills Documents or Guidelines.....</i>	<i>83</i>
<i>States with No Social Studies Standards or Frameworks</i>	<i>84</i>
FINE ARTS AND LANGUAGE ARTS STANDARDS	85
PART 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS.....	86
STATUS OF TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN STATE STANDARDS	86
<i>New Authority for State Curricula under Standards Reform.....</i>	<i>86</i>
<i>Patterns of Inclusion for Teaching About Religion.....</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Adherence to the Guidelines for Teaching about Religion</i>	<i>88</i>
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN	90
<i>The Thumbnail Sketch of World Religions.....</i>	<i>91</i>
<i>Contradictions in coverage of religions across historical periods</i>	<i>93</i>
APPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS: PROSPECTS AND OPPORTUNITIES	94
<i>Implementation of Standards Documents</i>	<i>94</i>
<i>How the Various History Models Affect Implementation of Teaching About Religions</i>	<i>99</i>

<i>Other Practical Aspects of Implementing Standards</i>	100
Teacher training	101
<i>Instructional materials</i>	103
<i>Summing Up</i>	104
APPENDIX I: CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS	105
NATIONAL STANDARDS DOCUMENTS AND CURRICULUM MODELS	105
STATE STANDARDS AND FRAMEWORK DOCUMENTS	105
APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS	109
FROM: A TEACHER’S GUIDE TO RELIGION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS, (FIRST AMENDMENT CENTER, 1999).....	109
APPENDIX III: NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES POSITION STATEMENT ON TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION	115
STUDY ABOUT RELIGIONS IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM, (NCSS, 1981).....	115
OTHER REFERENCES	116

Foreword

This important study by the Council on Islamic Education arrives at a critical moment in the history of public education. Over the past decade, religious and educational groups from across the political and religious spectrum have adopted a series of consensus guidelines on the role of religious liberty in schools. The measure of just how far we have come was highlighted in early 2000 when every public-school principal in the United States received a packet of these guides from the U.S. Department of Education.¹ For the first time in our history, school officials have a legal safe harbor for addressing many perennial conflicts over religion in schools, from student religious expression to teaching about religion in the curriculum. Where they are being applied in local school districts, these agreements are enabling a growing number of communities to find common ground on the appropriate role of religion in the public schools.

One of the most important areas of agreement concerns the importance of teaching *about* religion – as distinguished from religious indoctrination – in the curriculum. Guidelines issued by the 18 major organizations explain study about religion is not only constitutional, it is also an important part of a good education:

Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible.

Study about religion is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace.²

Consensus statements resolving contentious issues concerning religion are a major step forward for public schools. But such agreements mean little unless they are translated into real change in the curriculum. That is why the findings of this report are so timely and revealing.

This is the first study to elucidate precisely the nature and scope of the coverage of religion in national and state standards. Since much curriculum reform is tied to the content of standards, it is highly significant that the social-studies standards now include many opportunities to study about religion. At the same time, a closer look uncovers a number of problems, including weaknesses in the treatment of religion in history and the absence of study about religion in some key areas of the social studies. These and other findings will assist curriculum writers in planning for future revisions of state standards, aid publishers in aligning the content of textbooks more closely to the standards, and help educators understand where and how to include study about religion in this era of standards-based education.

¹ A complete set of these guidelines may be obtained from the First Amendment Center. They are also available on-line at www.ed.gov and www.freedomforum.org.

² The full text of “Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers” may be found in *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas (First Amendment Center, 1998).

The collaboration between the Council on Islamic Education and the First Amendment Center represented by this study is based on a shared commitment to encourage accurate and balanced teaching about world religions in public education. We believe that public schools demonstrate fairness under the First Amendment when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education. And we are convinced that learning about the various religious ways of understanding the world, past and present, will help prepare students to be knowledgeable, compassionate, and responsible citizens in a diverse society.

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For a briefer version of this document, the First Amendment Center has facilitated the publication of an Executive Summary of this report. It is available by writing to the Council on Islamic Education or the Freedom Forum First Amendment Center, or it may be viewed on the organizations' web sites at www.freedomforum.org or www.cie.org.

Part 1: Introduction

Background of Current Curriculum Reform and Standards Development

Several strands of educational change have converged in the current national cycle of curriculum reform. The tremendous expansion in knowledge and the technologies through which it is communicated have led leaders in education, business and politics to focus on what students need to learn in order to succeed in higher education and the workplace. The national Goals 2000 initiative and subsequent legislation in the states have produced a multiplicity of standards documents that will play a strong role in determining the form and content of classroom teaching for the foreseeable future. Among the more salutary effects of this movement is the involvement of university scholars. Seeking to bring the fruits of knowledge expansion to the schools, many scholars have contributed to the development of curriculum frameworks, instructional materials and teacher training efforts that reflect recent scholarship in their fields. The Internet has been an active medium of exchange for this revamping of curriculum, creating the most open curriculum reform process ever in the United States.

A second strand of change driving curriculum reform is the result of changing demographic, economic and social profiles in the United States. In an effort to meet the needs of a global economy and a diverse student body, educators are placing increased emphasis on knowledge of history, geography, economics and civics. These burdens fall mainly upon public school social studies programs. These two strands of change have in common the belief that students will be better equipped to succeed in jobs if they acquire certain types of knowledge, and that the national economy will be able to better maintain a high level of prosperity in the new global economy if the workforce is capable in these areas. Maintenance of social cohesion, cultural integrity and effective civic participation are widely viewed as additional benefits of a well educated citizenry that is historically as well as geographically literate. These education issues have spawned intense debate and controversy, particularly surrounding the issue of multiculturalism in the curriculum and how to foster the development of civic and social values and a sense of national identity.

The third strand of change, perhaps resulting from the others, is the movement toward standards-based education. The rationale for setting standards and holding the public school system and students accountable for meeting them is based, in principle, on a very democratic impulse. All students should be guaranteed a high-quality education based not on mere exposure to specific content, but on ascertaining that students who graduate have actually acquired a specific level of skills and knowledge. The main thrust of standards-based education is setting a floor below which achievement in no public school should sink. To the degree that standards help disseminate new scholarship, however, they may benefit even top schools and students about which educators are not really worried. In the social studies, particularly in history and geography, integration of new scholarship into K-12 instruction is a major benefit of the standards movement. This will be discussed in connection with the national models.

While there have been many milestones in the standards-setting process, several have been significant for social studies education. In 1988, the *Bradley Commission Report on History in the Schools* published a set of guidelines on structuring a history curriculum around a sequence of courses, themes and skill sets. Activity concerning more effective and widespread geography education has been ongoing throughout the decade of the 1980s. The

federal Goals 2000 legislation funded the writing of national standards in core subject areas, most of which were published in 1994. National Standards for Geography, Civics/Government and Economics passed without significant controversy into the education arena, where they have become the most influential models for drafting state social studies standards in those disciplines. Publication of the National Standards for History spawned heated debate, but following a review and revision process supported by the Rockefeller Foundation, a basic version of the National Standards for History was published by the National Center for History in the Schools, without the controversial teaching exemplars. This version largely won approval for the history standards, which now form the basis of numerous states' history standards and assessment programs. The World History standards are also becoming very influential among leading educators as an innovative model for developing new world history courses. A new Advanced Placement World History course has been developed along similar lines.

Development of state standards has followed publication of national standards and curriculum models in most states. Backed by state legislation that requires various forms of accountability, state standards and framework documents will constitute the most important determinants of classroom content during the coming decade. Until a few years ago, toothless instructional guidelines issued by state departments of education might have elicited yawns from classroom teachers, as did curriculum developed at the district level. Commercially produced textbooks, selected from a list of adopted volumes, have often been more significant determinants of instruction. Mass testing of specific content at the district or state level was rare, as opposed to standardized testing focused on general competencies.

The shift toward standards-based education has changed all that during the 1990s, making standards the talk of nearly every gathering of educators across the nation: how to meet their requirements, guarantee fair testing, resolve glitches in implementing them, reap their promised benefits, and fend off their potentially adverse consequences for students, teachers and schools. During the latter half of the 1990s, nearly all of the states produced academic standards documents, with many states also requiring assessment programs of varying content and rigor to determine if the standards are being met.

Teaching About Religion in Public Schools – Indicators of Progress Over Decades

The current cycle of curriculum reform embraces an additional strand of change: inclusion of teaching about religion. While teaching about religion has not been a prominent topic of controversy in the often rancorous debates over social studies standards, it forms an important subtext in standards development. Despite sharp disagreement over what and how students should learn in core subject areas, particularly in history, progress toward increasing and improving teaching about religion can be measured by its presence in the current standards documents.

The history of this quiet sea change goes back almost 40 years, but has gained significant ground recently. Over the past two decades, school leaders, religious studies specialists, and sectarian and civic organizations have developed a legal and social framework for teaching about religion that honors diversity of belief and worship. A new consensus has largely supplanted the post-World War II sentiment among educators that teaching about religion in schools would lead to social disharmony.

Textbooks and other instructional material in the 1960s, 1970s and early 1980s reflected a secular tone to such a degree that any discussion of religion was nearly written out of social studies programs altogether. Students received virtually no information about world religions, and specialized electives on religions were rare. On the other hand, a few public schools gave preferential treatment to particular religious traditions. Led by a handful of theologians and educators, public discontent over this state of affairs began to surface in the 1970s. Critics pointed out that school policies designed to avoid discussion of religion in public schools were based on faulty interpretation of the First Amendment and that Supreme Court decisions of the 1960s, which seemed to exclude religion from the classroom, should be revisited. A number of additional decisions during the 1970s, '80s and '90s added support to the arguments that religious accommodation may be offered by school administrators so that students are not forced to leave their religious beliefs at the schoolhouse door, and that discussion of religion without promoting a particular religion is a valid and constitutional teaching activity. Over the course of the 1980s, historians, theologians and educators began to successfully disseminate the view that study of religions is not only constitutional but highly desirable: it promotes understanding of peoples whose faith and ethics are different from one's own, and it takes account of the significance of religion in history and culture.

The biggest challenge to achieving consensus on inclusion of content on religion was to develop a set of criteria that clearly differentiated between "teaching religion" and "teaching about religion." Such guidelines were developed in the late 1980s by a coalition of 18 educational and religious organizations chaired by Charles Haynes and Oliver Thomas. [See summary of guidelines in Appendix II.] Since the guidelines were released in 1988, they have been expanded and disseminated throughout the nation. The First Amendment Center now offers programs in many school districts that prepare teachers to teach about religions in ways that are constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.³

The new consensus on how to teach about religion has become widely accepted in public education as a guide for assessing and developing educational materials in history, geography, literature and other subjects. Through the manuscript review and development process, major publishing companies are now familiar with the guidelines for teaching about religions. During the 1990s, the First Amendment Center, the, and other organizations have worked with numerous publishers to encourage appropriate and accurate material about religion. Council on Islamic Education reviewers assisted in the development or revision of many elementary and secondary world history textbooks, interacting extensively with textbook publishers on how to use the guidelines in covering Islam and other world religions.⁴

Considerable evidence from across the United States demonstrates not only the acceptance in principle of teaching about religion, but also a broad trend toward increasing both the depth of such content and the disciplinary focus within which it is taught. Growing emphasis on the importance of history education over a decade or so has resulted in expanded curriculum and textbook coverage of each of the five major world religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism and Buddhism). In little more than a decade, coverage has

³ Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas, eds., *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education* (Nashville: First Amendment Center, 1998).

⁴ See Council on Islamic Education publications on the implications of the guidelines for teaching about Islam, such as S. Douglass, *Strategies and Structures for Presenting World History, with Islam and Muslim History as a Case Study* (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publications, 1994), Part III, pp. 79-106; and Douglass, "God Spoke: Guidelines and Coverage of Abrahamic Religions in World History Textbooks," *Religion and Education*, 25: 1 & 2 (Winter 1998).

grown from a few paragraphs to a full lesson or chapter on each major world religion. These texts provide information on their origins, their basic beliefs and practices and their spread, as well as the history of societies associated with the major world faiths. Other religions frequently mentioned include Shintoism, Taoism, and Zoroastrianism, as well as indigenous religious traditions from Asia, Africa and the Americas. Information on the social and political influence of religions is usually included in such lessons, with excerpts from scripture, religious writing, art and architecture adorning the pages.

Reflecting both the broad acceptance of teaching about religions and the desire to enhance and deepen its role in education, national education organizations also have given some attention to teaching about religion. The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), for example, issued a position statement in 1981 calling attention to the importance of including study about religion in the social studies. [See Appendix III.] In the late 1980s, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) published "Religion in the Public School Curriculum," a report that recommended fuller treatment of religion in the curriculum. In 1998, ASCD and the First Amendment Center published *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* by Warren Nord and Charles Haynes, and disseminated the book to many of its members. These steps by ASCD, one of the nation's most influential educational leadership organizations, signaled to many in public education that teaching about religion is an essential part of a good education and of civic importance in our religiously diverse society.

In their book, Nord and Haynes lay out a convincing argument for the need to redress the narrow, one-sided focus on secular ways of thinking about all core subjects in the K-12 public school curriculum. They argue that teaching about religion in history is important, and that providing a basic thumbnail sketch of religions is admirable as a first step, but this sharply constrained approach is inadequate to achieving a truly educated citizenry. Rather, a liberal education should include exposure not merely to the basic beliefs and practices of the great religions, but exposure to religious ways of viewing many disciplines such as economics, social issues, and other areas of life. Just as teaching about religion has become integrated into teaching about the arts, literature and other fields in the humanities, the academic study of religion should extend across the curriculum. An emphasis on secular ways of viewing the world provides an education that is neither liberal nor adequate. The authors maintain, however, that teaching religion seriously across the curriculum does not mean tacking on another set of topics. It means integrating information about religious perspectives into the discussion of subjects and topics already taught in the curriculum.⁵

Why Study Religion in the Standards Documents?

The current cycle of reform is in many ways unprecedented in scope. It has involved all of the core subject areas in the school curriculum. It was stimulated by a combination of grassroots pressure, involvement of influential forces such as business interests and universities, and support from federal and state governments as well as national professional and citizen organizations. It is taking place in the full light of electronic communication within a relatively short period of time. As noted above, what sets it apart from earlier, more gradual and piecemeal reform periods is that its driving force is the need to ensure that not just

⁵ Warren A. Nord and Charles C. Haynes, *Taking Religion Seriously Across the Curriculum* (Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998).

teaching, but also *learning*, takes place, through school, teacher and student accountability and testing. Perhaps the most important and lasting aspect of the educational standards movement is the attempt to come to grips with an enormously expanded base of knowledge and an economic and social imperative to absorb it effectively. It is also significant that the process is taking place at all levels of education from K-12 schools to universities. Across the disciplines, there is a search for integrative responses to problems associated with the steady growth of content over decades.

This is not to say that the system created by standards-based reform will achieve its goals. There is no assurance that it will improve teaching or learning in the long run, and it may do some damage to both. It is not the purpose of this study to draw conclusions for or against standard setting, accountability or centralized curriculum decision-making, although a number of cautionary observations are made and assessment of specific models and documents is undertaken.

Despite the magnitude of the ongoing curriculum reform process and its implications, the premise of this study of religion in standards is fairly modest. The basic assumption is that the various learning and performance standards documents developed at the national and state level over the past decade offer a snapshot of current thinking about content, the way in which that content is structured within programs and courses, and what specific topics and interpretations are taught in the classroom. Whether one agrees or disagrees with the proposition that standards can raise the level of education, it is clear that at this moment in US education history we are experiencing a rare peak in the trend toward centralized curriculum decision-making, enabling researchers to gauge what is being taught in the schools more reliably than in periods of more decentralized curriculum development.

Practically speaking, state standards documents in each subject area will determine content in teaching, textbooks and testing over the next several years. States have appointed commissions to decide what content students should learn. Legislation includes the requirement that students pass exams on that content for graduation or promotion, and therefore textbooks and lesson plans will be aligned with that content over the next few years. This set of circumstances, which had not pertained in most states before standards, means that to a significant degree, researchers who study state standards and the national models on which they are based will have an unusually open view of what will be taught in the near term in US schools and, consequently, what will likely appear in textbooks and other instructional materials designed to support those standards. Furthermore, for the first time in history, these documents have become readily accessible, since nearly every state has established Department of Education web sites and published the newly minted standards documents on the Internet, along with a wealth of related information.

Part 2: Parameters and Methodology of the Study

There has been a great deal of controversy over standards generally, and over social studies standards in particular. A mixture of optimistic and pessimistic commentary has emanated from proponents and critics concerning the academic standards and framework documents, the concept of standards-based education and the prospects for mass standardized testing. Textbook publishers, teacher training institutions, school administrators, parents and teachers can be forgiven for their confusion over what must actually be taught and how it will be measured under the standards system. Some documents have been blamed for requiring too much or too little content; other documents have been ridiculed for being inadequate and vague in setting expectations. Some states have instituted high-stakes testing that determines the type of diploma students receive, schools' accreditation and teachers' job security. Other states view testing as a tool for targeting remedial programs but impose no major consequences on students, schools or teachers for failing to meet their goals. Debate about these systems roiled mainly among academics, education advocacy groups and education professionals while the systems were being designed. Modifications, refinements and adjustments belonging to the implementation phase are still ongoing. As the consequences of standards and testing begin to hit the classroom and rebound in US living rooms, debate is also stirring at the popular level.

Which Documents Determine Content on Religions under Standards Reform?

How can an observer of the education scene make sense out of the many national documents and guidelines, state standards and frameworks documents and district programs in terms of the likely results for instructional content? How are the national documents related to the state standards, and how might both affect what children in classrooms learn about religion in history, human culture and other fields? Do the new mandates meet the guidelines for teaching about religion in a fair, balanced and constitutional manner?

This study assesses the degree to which teaching about religion will be included under standards-based education reform, assesses the quantity and quality of the language in which this requirement is formulated and analyzes its placement in the scope and sequence of instruction and learning. The study focuses mainly on the national and state documents in the social studies, also called history/social science in some states, since this subject area is the most natural vessel for inclusion of teaching about religions across the grade levels. It is here that the most references and the most systematic treatment of the topic are found. In addition, history and the other branches of social studies overlap with subject areas in which some content on religions may be found, such as in literature, the arts and sciences, which are often included in multi-disciplinary lessons on historical and cultural studies. For this reason, state standards in language arts and fine arts were included in this study in a general way, although the national models in those subject areas are not studied. Religion-related content may be found in a few science standards documents, but direct references are so few and far between that including them in this study would add tremendous bulk with little return for the effort. The issue of religion in science teaching is one requiring a great deal of interpretation and entailing tremendous controversy, so any mention of science in this study is confined to national and state references to the history of science, which has in fact been included quite liberally in this round of curriculum reform. The integrative role that social studies plays in the

curriculum makes it a good subject area around which to group discussion of teaching about religion in public school instruction as a whole.

The first group of documents to be analyzed is the national curriculum documents, both standards and program frameworks, which were developed and published from the late 1980s to the first half of the 1990s. The national documents included in this study are:

- *Building a United States History Curriculum: Guides for Implementing the History Curriculum Recommended by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools* (National Council for History Education, 1997) [first edition 1988]
- *Building a World History Curriculum: Guides for Implementing the History Curriculum Recommended by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools* (National Council for History Education, 1997) [first edition 1988]
- *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (National Council for Social Studies, 1994)
- *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards* (National Geographic Research and Exploration, 1994)
- *National Standards for Civics and Government* (Center for Civic Education, 1994)
- *National Standards for History, Basic Edition* (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996)
- *Voluntary Standards for Teaching Economics* (The National Council on Economic Education, 1994)

The second group of documents to be analyzed is the academic standards documents and curriculum frameworks developed and adopted (or undergoing adoption) by the states. The main focus of this study is the subject area called social studies, or history and social science.

Full citations on the state and national documents used in this study are listed in Appendix I. The text of these documents can be found on state education department web pages, all of which have been linked and indexed, along with a great deal of other information about academic standards, on a Putnam Valley, New York public school system web page called “Developing Educational Standards” by Charles Hill, at the Internet address <http://PutnamValleySchools.org/Standards.html>

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify and quantify direct and indirect references to teaching about religion in the national and state social studies standards documents.
2. To determine what content on religion is directly and indirectly mandated in the core and auxiliary disciplines of the social studies.
3. To determine whether the language of mandated content meets recognized guidelines for teaching about religion.
4. To identify topics of study where references to religion are lacking, inappropriate or ineffective as they appear in mandated content or in the structure of the overall program.
5. To compare the amount and placement of content in the various states and to assess how the curriculum models in the state and national documents differ both in content and in their approach to teaching about religions.
4. To analyze direct and indirect references to religion in terms of their potential for further

development of teaching about religion and religious thought beyond a basic introduction to world religions.

Compiling Data on Teaching About Religions in the Standards

The starting point for the study was to identify references to religion in each document. The study used the most recent draft or adopted version of documents in the core subject area of Social Studies or History/ Social Science as posted on the states' department of education web sites, and the full versions of the national standards or curriculum guides published by the national organizations. It must be noted that in the interim between the writing and publication of this document several states have posted revised standards or auxiliary documents, and a few have posted documents for the first time. As this report moved toward publication, every attempt was made to incorporate updates, but it should be noted that the new or revised documents appearing from 2000 on do not substantially alter the patterns of coverage and approach either individually or in the aggregate.

References to religion may be found in these parts of state and national curriculum standards:

- Introductions that lay out the philosophy and scope of the discipline and its instructional methodology,
- Brief, general statements that define the basic structure and rubrics under which the subject matter is taught,
- Content-specific knowledge and performance standards or benchmarks that express skills, concepts and topics to be covered, and sometimes specific interpretations of that content
- Exemplars that illustrate possible ways to teach the material, refer to current research and scholarly thinking, offer creative ideas and activities, and point to methods for implementing the standards.

Direct References to Teaching About Religion

The documents were searched for direct references that include keywords such as *religion, religious, faith, beliefs, belief systems, and worship*, which are discussed in the study as “general references.” Direct references to specific religions or religious institutions, teachings and their adherents, such as *Christianity* and its various denominations, *Christian, church and clergy, Islam, Muslim, mosque, Judaism, Jewish, Hebrew, synagogue, temple, Judeo-Christian, Buddhism, Hinduism, Hindu, Native American tradition or belief system*, as well as *Confucianism, Shintoism and Taoism* are counted in the study as direct, specific references to teaching about religion.

In most cases, inclusion of references to these keywords was limited to actual teaching mandates, as opposed to introductory material or statements of philosophy and goals, which appear in most of these documents. In some cases, however, citations in introductory material were included in the study, especially in order to clarify the meaning of indirect references to religious topics. In order to obtain a fair indication of content about religion, each national or state standards or curriculum document was analyzed to locate references to religion in various courses, topics and grade levels.

Indirect References to Teaching About Religion

Indirect references to religion include words such as *culture*, *tradition*, and *ideals*. The word *value* was considered, but it was found to appear together with the other keywords or to be accompanied by a defining adjective that classified its source as religious or secular. *Ethics* was also considered as a keyword, but apart from the relative infrequency of its appearance in state standards documents, it was usually found to appear together with direct references, so it is already included in the study. These indirect references were charted and used in the analysis of each document. When the direct references mentioned above were lacking, but it was believed that these terms were used to imply incorporation of teaching about religion, such indirect references were the only ones that could be subjected to analysis.

In addition to identifying such citations, internal and external evidence was sought in support of the inference that teaching about religion is strongly implied or naturally included within such language. Though making such inferences is a somewhat risky enterprise, it is both necessary and justified. While some of the state documents contain no or very few direct references to religion, we would not be justified in concluding that teaching about religion is completely excluded from certain states and teaching models. Use of indirect references also provides a better basis for comparison among the documents, since such secondary references are found in documents containing many direct references and also in those with few or no direct references.

The best evidence for the validity of interpretations about indirect references is found in the glossaries that accompany many of the state documents and national models, which often define terms such as *culture*, *tradition*, *ideal*, *values* and *belief systems*. Where glossaries are lacking, standard dictionary definitions provide evidence for inclusion of religion where it seems to be only indirectly mentioned. Of course, the lack of any specific or direct mention of religion in a given document is also indicative of the value placed on study of the topic by its framers. What is not specifically mentioned may be excluded or shortchanged by districts or teachers as readily as its inclusion may be inferred. At the very least, one can bemoan the fact that little guidance or assurance has been given by those states concerning coverage of teaching about religion.

Tables of Citations on Religion in National and State Standards Documents

The citations were copied into a table where they could be analyzed and compared with the other documents according to various criteria. Both state and national documents are compared in terms of the grade levels, type of course and topic related to references to teaching about religion. These references are also discussed in terms of their distribution in courses and subject areas and the manner in which they are integrated into the flow of instruction across various disciplines. Then, each document is analyzed in terms of the quantity, type and general intent of references to religion that appear in knowledge standards, outlines, course descriptions and topical outlines at various grade levels.

The data were gathered on a simple, uniform chart prepared for each national and state document, in the following format:

Title of National Model or State Standards Document:

TYPE OF REFERENCE	# of References	Level/course Quote of reference	Level/course Quote of reference	Level/course Quote of reference
religion, religious				
beliefs, belief system				
Buddhism + related terms				
Christianity + related terms				
Hinduism + related terms				
Islam + related terms				
Judaism + related terms				
other specific religion				
ideals, morals, values, ethics				
Culture				
Traditions				

Grouping and Analyzing the Documents

Equitable assessment of the state and national standards documents requires analysis and comparison of the documents’ overall structure. The national curriculum and standards models resemble each other most in size, intent and scope. Accordingly, this study includes close comparison among the national models in terms of the quantity and quality of references to religions. State documents differ more widely.

Some state documents consist of a short list of skills, attitudes and general knowledge that students should acquire and be able to demonstrate. Some documents describe only general content requirements in broad categories. The most elaborate documents have long preambles with statements of philosophy and goals that justify their approach to teaching social studies. They provide highly detailed, content-specific outlines of topics, knowledge standards, thematic strands, skills and teaching examples that suggest practical or imaginative ways to convey the content. Others cite specific classroom activities as an accompaniment to knowledge standards, skills, and benchmarks in a manner that seems more prescriptive than suggestive. These may appear as evaluation tools such as this citation from the Kansas document: *“Produce a map, titled and keyed, indicating the location of the following information: (1) democracies of the world, (2) major world religions, (3) per capital [sic] gross national product,”* or *“...prepare charts that depict the similarities and differences of ten countries, such as in religion, government, physical features, per capital [sic] gross national product.”*

In short, comparing these state documents is not like comparing apples and oranges but more like comparing the contents of a fruit basket. For the reasons noted above, it would be wrong-headed to tally up the references to religion, praising the states that have many and giving low grades to those with few. Inferences can be drawn about the frequency with which religion is mentioned in specific documents or in the aggregate, but this study is not intended as a definitive scorecard on the matter of quantity alone. Such an approach obscures the fact that general and specific references are drawn from different levels of the standards documents, which impact actual instruction to varying degrees.

A fair assessment must take a variety of factors into account, including the apparent intent of the documents themselves, or how groups of documents compare in relation to the

national models on which they are based. With this in mind, inferences can be made about the practical effect of the implementation process at the county, school and classroom level. In many cases, what the documents do not state may be as important a determinant of teaching about religion as what they do state, both on the positive and negative sides.

Analysis and Comparison of Data

In order to provide a basis for analysis, the national documents are first described in terms of their structure, organization and content to give the reader an overview of these voluminous, multi-level frameworks. The national models are then analyzed for the quantity, quality and placement of references to teaching about religion.

The state documents are grouped as nearly as possible according to their adherence to the national curriculum models. Variations within the model are described, and typical as well as unusual references to teaching about religion are cited. Finally, observations are made on each group of documents with regard to teaching about religions within the overall social studies program.

By viewing the documents from these multiple perspectives, it becomes more feasible to assess how much instruction about religion is foreseen in the national and state documents, at which grade levels it is to be taught and how it fits within the overall course sequence and program structure. In the case of content-specific standards, it is possible to learn more about the approach and balance of instruction among religions and across historical periods and disciplines than in more rudimentary documents.

The study provides analysis of the appropriateness of language used in references to religion in the national and state documents. The criteria for assessment are the guidelines for teaching about religion published in *Finding Common Ground*. References to teaching about specific religions are also compared, as gross imbalances within survey courses are viewed as falling short of the guidelines. Other attributes of references to religion are analyzed such as their integration into the study of history, geography, civics or other disciplines and the degree to which the course framework and overall approach to the subject provide an effective vehicle for achieving the stated mandates. Attention is paid, for example, to whether the course is overloaded with content, the approach obstructs clear understanding of the religious topic, or the material is inappropriate to the grade level. Finally, observations on cross-curricular inclusion of teaching about religion are made, such as references to teaching about religion in language arts, fine arts and music education standards documents.

Part 3: National Curriculum Models in Social Studies & History/ Social Science

Among the national curriculum and standards documents published to guide state standards-writing projects, those that fall within the social studies clearly contain the majority of references to teaching about religion. Other subject area standards and frameworks, such as language arts and fine arts were scanned for content on religions, but these subject areas are considered on an anecdotal basis.

“Social studies” is more a rubric than a specific discipline, and during the past several decades it has come to include a broad spectrum of subject areas. The core disciplines embraced within the social studies standards documents are history, geography, civics/government and economics. Other social sciences that appear in the standards include sociology, anthropology, sociology and psychology. These latter are usually integrated into general social studies courses as topics and only appear as distinct bodies of knowledge in electives—usually one-semester courses offered in high school.

The broadest mix of disciplines might be integrated into a social studies course at any level. In practice, national, state and local curriculum guides, textbooks and other instructional materials may include just about any topic under the sun. Geography often entails scientific content from geology to astronomy. Economics often involves statistical and other forms of mathematical analysis, but it may also include discussion of beliefs and values. History includes discussion about recent scientific forms of historical evidence as well as content on the history of science and technology; social studies skills include reading of maps, charts and graphs. The entire spectrum of the social sciences and humanities enters into the study of history and culture, especially visual arts and literature. The academic study of religion as an aspect of culture and a major influence in history may appear in any of these core or secondary topics in the social studies.

Social studies programs bear the weight of many other expectations. Civics and national history are invested with responsibility for developing future citizens who will contribute to the stability and growth of democratic government and society. Acquisition of historical thinking skills, or habits of mind, are highly valued as an aspect of general academic training. Instruction in psychology, anthropology, sociology and history often includes decision-making skills, psychological health issues, and tolerance toward those who think and act differently. Improving geographic and economic knowledge has been cited as a key to the nation’s future prosperity. In short, the entire human experience – past, present and future – comes under the rubric of social studies education.

A major challenge facing social studies curriculum developers is to balance coverage of this incredibly broad, diverse body of information with meaningfully focused instruction. Finding the “right” social studies content to teach is much more difficult and controversial than agreeing on a math or science curriculum, for example. Even with agreement on a focus for a history or geography program, combining and integrating the mass of material is still a difficult balancing act. Several recognizable models have emerged, however, on which state curriculum designers have based their current state standard documents and social studies frameworks. The national standards curriculum documents lay out models based on different approaches and explain how they can be implemented in classroom teaching. Each of these documents is included in this study.

Despite their remarkable diversity in extent, scope and approach, the state standards and framework documents can be organized into several useful categories based on their adherence to one or more of these national models. The major difference is in approach: either the K-12 program is focused around history as the integrating discipline, or a broader social sciences approach is used, which attempts to balance the various subject areas and give them more or less equal time throughout. Integration of geography was also found to be important in the overall approach.

General Trends Reflected in Social Studies Standards

Since at least the mid-1980s, history has been gaining ground as the preferred focus for social studies programs. One of the most important innovations that has come to fruition in the standards movement is the trend toward sequential, or draped, US and world history courses which extend from elementary grades across middle school into the high school years. "Draped" history courses are becoming an important tool for managing the explosion of content and the integration of disciplines across social studies programs.

Since the experiment with two- or three-year sequential survey courses in US and world history began in California early in the decade, many states have incorporated sequential courses in history or world studies into their standards. As will be seen below, this innovation has important benefits for teaching about religion. The most prominent argument for emphasizing history over a contemporary studies approach is probably the intellectual legacy that the study has enjoyed in all literate cultures, particularly among the ruling classes, for thousands of years. The role of history in education is viewed as a noble and ennobling one, forging links with the national, ethnic and cultural past of humankind, teaching lessons on the best and worst of humanity's works, inspiring through heroes and great deeds, humbling by the mere scope of events and telling stories that have animated generations with the thrill and gravity of being real.

As a focus for the social studies curriculum, history is viewed as an adequate vessel for integrating the broad array of topics from the sciences and technology, humanities, geography, economics and the social science disciplines. The great strides made in historical research over the past fifty years have given impetus to this trend. . Global armies of researchers, employing a multiplicity of disciplines and techniques, have contributed to discoveries from the most remote and the most familiar individuals and cultures. The burgeoning market in electronic media, books and tourism has raised the awareness of a mass audience that never before had such access to historical information.

Deciding which morsels from this feast should be served to public school students is an extremely contentious process. National history, firmly ensconced in the social studies curriculum of every modern country, is invested with the task of forging future citizens by building a strong sense of identity and belonging, as well as a firm grounding in the framework of government and social norms. There has often been tension between strengthening society's backbone through emphasis on an inspiring national story and the positive role of government, leadership and civic ideals, and strengthening a diverse nation by opening an honest discourse among future citizens on the broadest possible basis, including a critical look at past injustices. Study of social history that includes lesser-known groups, the poor and disenfranchised offers a critical look at the past and fosters the desire to seek justice in the future. The gradual change in topics and emphasis in US history courses over the years makes an interesting history in itself. World history has been somewhat less hotly disputed in public debates. It is a newly

emerging field at universities, deeply involved in a paradigm shift from a view of the past centered on the story of Western culture to a view of human history structured around a more universal framework of world chronology and geography.

Two important hallmarks of the trend toward history in the standards movement were the *Bradley Commission Report* in 1989, and the publication of the *National Standards for History* in 1994. The model and the state programs based on this model are the product of a gradual but significant evolution in history teaching in the US over the past twenty or thirty years. Over the decades, more social and cultural history has been added to the traditional mix of political and military history in addition to coverage of groups previously left out of the story. It is well known, for example, how historical study of women, African Americans, immigrant groups and Native Americans has increased in curricula and textbooks since the 1950s in response to protests that these groups had been ignored and excluded. Urgent claims were made that without this information the story of America was incomplete and dishonest.

Throughout this process, however, the calculus of limited classroom time has meant that for every addition, something else must be subtracted—a view of curriculum as a zero-sum game. The standard-setting process has brought these arguments into even sharper relief. Many critics believed that traditional heroes, valiant national struggles and other content vital to national unity were falling by the wayside. In world history, this same critique has implied that the story of Western civilization’s origins and rise to world dominance, the core narrative of survey courses for over a century, has been steadily supplemented by the material on non-Western civilizations in Asia, Africa and the Americas that has now become standard fare in world history curriculum and textbooks. The traditional focus on the history of great men, wars for empire, and leading institutions has also been broadened to include women, literature, the arts and common folk. Cultural interactions, a growing area of coverage, includes the diffusion of ideas, technology and religions. Multiculturalism has also been viewed as a source of fragmentation in the curriculum and loss of focus in content. Opponents would like to restore much of the traditional content of US and world history, or at least avoid further slippage. Historians also view multiculturalism as problematic, not because they object to diversity and breadth in the curriculum, but because multiculturalism in itself does not provide a scholarly foundation for including content.

Until very recently, these additions to the curriculum had taken place under an additive, multicultural model that recognized demographic diversity by including the history and cultures of minorities alongside the majority group. Public education curriculum development has become a highly politicized process. On the negative side, the discussion has become more polarized in recent years, with calls on one hand for a spectrum of alternative, non-Western “centric” histories, and on the other for a rollback of multiculturalism and return to focus on Western civilization and more traditional US history with only a smattering of content on minorities and non-Western cultures. On the positive side, curriculum development has succeeded in changing social studies content and curriculum, adding needed breadth, moving toward global coverage, and offering a demonstration of democracy and civic consensus-building. As a result, recent generations of Americans have left high school a great deal better informed about the diverse cultures of the nation and the world than their predecessors.

Neither politics nor demographics, however, offer an adequate justification for broad coverage of US and world history. It has long been recognized that not only students in communities or states with many African Americans should learn about the African American experience in US history. To the contrary, the history of minorities is now accepted as part and

parcel of the American experience. In a similar example, the fact that there were few Muslims in the US before 1970 was not a valid reason for the widespread omission of teaching about Islam in world history courses. It may be more important to Hispanic students in Los Angeles to study Latin America, to Arabs in Detroit to study the Middle East, or to Asian Americans in Seattle to study East Asian cultures and civilizations, but this does not imply that any of these topics should be excluded from the curriculum presented to Anglo-American students in Westchester County, or to any and all groups named above. The effect of this knowledge upon each constituency will differ, but an understanding of world or US history would be incomplete without it.

Thus, the shift in paradigm involves broad acceptance of the need not only to balance traditional with more globally inclusive content, but to seek a more academically sound formula for deciding what all students should learn and integrating this content into the social studies program. Standards-based instruction is proving a positive force for solving these issues. It will be seen below how the various national models and state standards documents address the concerns and priorities just described.

Analysis of Teaching about Religion in the National Models

In the following section, national standards documents and curriculum models are analyzed for the amount, placement and approach to teaching about religion. These documents include the basic social studies model published by the National Council for Social Studies, the framework published by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools, and four commissioned national standards documents in the social studies, namely those for History (K-4, US and World), Geography, Economics and Civics/Government. Each is first described in terms of its basic organization, components and scope, followed by identification of references to religion and analysis of the context in which they appear.

By way of overview, it was found that nearly all of the national standards and curriculum framework documents contain references to religion and that they recommend inclusion of religion from a variety of perspectives. The lengthy and comprehensive National Council for Social Studies framework document is found to contain relatively few direct references, but its definitions of culture and other concepts allow the inference that the copious indirect references imply more discussion of religion than it would seem at first glance. Economics standards contain virtually no references to religion.

The National Council for Social Studies Model

In 1994, the National Council for Social Studies published its curriculum framework document, *Expectations of Excellence*, to coincide with the appearance of national standards documents in history, geography, civics and economics. Though it is one of the national models, it was not commissioned by an external body but was produced by the premier professional organization for social studies educators. It was featured prominently, as were the other freshly minted social studies documents, at the November 1994 NCSS Convention in Phoenix, Arizona.

It is useful to think of *Expectations of Excellence* as a traffic control system for social studies curriculum planning. The organization states that it was not designed to supplant or compete with any of the other documents, but rather to provide a framework for the integration of all of them throughout the K-12 social studies program. The executive summary of *Expectations* explains the relationship among the various sets of standards thus: “...the social



studies standards address overall curriculum design and comprehensive student performance expectations, while the individual discipline standards (civics and government, economics, geography and history) provide focused and enhanced content detail.” They also address social science disciplines that are not covered under the national standard-setting process such as sociology, anthropology, psychology and political science. The summary further states: “*Teachers and curriculum designers are encouraged first to establish their program frameworks using the social studies standards as a guide, and then to use the standards from history, geography, civics, economics and others to guide the development of grade-level strands and courses.*” The process

might be likened to scoring music for an orchestra in which various instruments figure more prominently in some parts of the composition than others, but all contribute to the overall effect.

Expectations of Excellence outlines an approach to K-12 social studies education based on ten thematic strands. They include all disciplines and subject areas in the social studies and provide guidelines for inclusion in each year’s study. The themes are:

- I. Culture
- II. Time, Continuity and Change
- III. People, Places and Environments
- IV. Individual Development and Identity
- V. Individuals, Groups and Institutions
- VI. Power, Authority and Governance
- VII. Production, Distribution and Consumption
- VIII. Science, Technology and Society
- IX. Global Connections
- X. Civic Ideals and Practices

The actual social studies curriculum standards consist of ten “statements of what should occur programmatically in the formal schooling process; it provides a guiding vision of content and purpose.”

The next level consists of several performance expectations or benchmarks that demonstrate students’ acquisition of “*knowledge, skills, scholarly perspectives, and commitments to American democratic ideals.*” Benchmarks are identified for early, middle, and high school grade levels. One to three examples of activities or classroom scenarios accompany each thematic strand. An appendix on scope and sequence identifies categories of “*essential skills for social studies,*” including acquiring, organizing, and using information, interpersonal relationships, and social participation. Each of these is broken down into reading, study, reference, research, technical and thinking skills, as well as personal, group interaction, social and political participation skills.

References to religions in the NCSS standards

As an omnibus subject area, social studies is a natural repository for teaching about religion as an aspect of the human experience. The NCSS has published numerous statements in support

of teaching about religion and has signed on to several First Amendment Center statements of principle (*See Appendix II.*). The NCSS curriculum standards, however, contain only about 15 direct references to religion or belief systems, in addition to four or five mentions of “churches” as religious institutions. All of these references are concentrated in the descriptions of the strands and their elaboration. Two additional references to religion and four to members of specific religious groups are found in the teaching examples. Indirect or implied references are quite plentiful, but they fall within the extremely broad rubrics of *culture* and *tradition*, in which religious influences are only one facet, difficult to separate out from others for specific study. The following section provides analysis of opportunities for teaching about religion in the NCSS curriculum model.

Introductory Statements

The first indication that religion is to be included is in the definition of social studies adopted in 1992 by the NCSS Board of Directors and reproduced at the head of the curriculum guide. It states that the social studies is “*an integrated study of the social sciences [listed individually] and humanities,*” also drawing upon “*appropriate content from...mathematics and natural sciences,*” Its central purpose is promotion of civic competence, “*to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world.*” Every core subject area in the school curriculum is listed in the definition, in addition to specialized studies such as law, philosophy and religion. At the end of the curriculum guide, an appendix lists “*democratic beliefs and values,*” among which is freedom of worship, thought and conscience, as well as the individual’s right to dignity and the responsibility to be tolerant. Other human rights, responsibilities and civic duties which have been associated with various religious traditions are listed.

Thematic Strands

The first section of the guide is an explanation of each thematic strand. These ten explanations contain only two direct references to teaching about religion, one asking, under “*Culture*” how belief systems “*such as religion or political ideals of the culture, influence the other parts of the culture,*” and how culture changes “*to accommodate different ideas and beliefs.*” Under “*Science, Technology, and Society,*” educators are enjoined to provide “*opportunities to confront such issues as*” mechanization of production, protection of privacy “*and medical technology with all their implications for longevity and quality of life and religious beliefs.*”

Theme I includes acknowledgement that “*we all...have systems of beliefs, knowledge, values and traditions.*” A discussion of teaching about culture in the middle grades mentions that “*students begin to explore and ask questions about the nature of culture and specific aspects of culture, such as language and beliefs...*”

Under **Theme II**, which is the usual vessel for history studies, direct citations on religion are lacking. The only indirect reference is the statement that middle school students should understand and appreciate differences in historical perspectives, including “*individual experiences, societal values, and cultural traditions.*”

An indirect reference in **Theme III** mentions geographic understanding in connection with “*knowledge of diverse cultures.*” Under **Theme IV**, the only indirect reference concerns teaching about “*various forms of human behavior*” which include “*the ethical principles underlying individual action.*” Societies and cultures are mentioned; religion is not singled out as a component of culture.

Theme V, on groups and institutions, mentions “*churches*” twice in a short list of institutions that “*play an integral role in our lives*” or “*are created to respond to changing individual or group needs.*” Behavioral science approaches to the study of institutions include indirect references to “*the ways people and groups organize themselves around common needs, beliefs and interests,*” and how institutions “*change over time, promote social conformity, and influence culture.*”

Theme VI contains no direct or indirect mention of religion in connection with power, authority and governance except a recommendation to “*study the various systems that have been developed over the centuries to allocate and employ power and authority in the governing process.*”

Theme VII, on economics, contains no direct or indirect references to religion.

Theme VIII mentions “*complex relationships among technology, human values and behavior*” and how “*science and technology bring changes that surprise us and even challenge our beliefs*” and on the issue of managing science, the example of medical technologies “*with all their implications for longevity and quality of life and religious beliefs.*”

Theme IX, on global linkages, mentions “*patterns and relationships within and among world cultures*” with a list of several such instances that does not include religion or beliefs but cites “*age-old ethnic enmities.*” “*Culture,*” “*cultural complexities*” “*universal human rights,*” and “*peace*” are the only other close matches under this topic.

The civics strand, **Theme X**, contains no references to religion or religious contributions in the civic arena but addresses issues concerning ideals and principles, rights and responsibilities, and human dignity.

In light of the above analysis, it bears repeating that the NCSS recommends use of national standards in the core subject areas under the appropriate thematic strands. Those documents may not adequately cover all of the themes except in combination. It is also worth noting that several state documents are modeled on the NCSS framework with little additional content described under these themes. Unless the districts fill in specific references to teaching about religion, teachers will receive little guidance on how to integrate teaching about religion, or indeed whether they are required to do so at all.

Themes and Performance Expectations

The next section of the NCSS framework document contains performance expectations, for early, middle and high school grades. Each column lists between five and ten “*experiences [that] social studies programs should include.*”

Under **Theme I**, there are seventeen references to *culture* relating to its diversity, unity, expressions, societies, patterns, transmission, understanding and so on. Another definition of culture is offered, requiring high school students to “*apply an understanding of culture as an integrated whole that explains the functions and interactions of language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs and values and behavior patterns.*” This definition appears verbatim in a number of state social studies standards documents. Terms such as *beliefs*, *traditions*, *values* and *shared assumptions* appear in three performance standards.

Theme II emphasizes historical skills more than specific content, but one item each at the middle and high school levels requires students to “*identify and describe selected historical periods and patterns of change within and across cultures,*” mentioning as examples “*the rise of civilizations,*” transportation, colonialism, the rise of nation-states and revolutions as specific examples. There is no mention of religion or belief systems of any kind.

Theme III, geography, mentions “*cultural values and ideas,*” “*cultural patterns,*” “*cultural transmission of customs and ideas,*” and “*how people create places that reflect culture.*” Other than the general reference to human geography, however, the rest of the performance standards mention nothing even vaguely related to teaching about religion.

The first direct reference to religion occurs in the performance standards for **Theme IV** which require that high school students “*describe the ways family, religion, gender, ethnicity, nationality, socioeconomic status and other group and cultural influences contribute to the development of a sense of self.*” Two other performance standards for middle and high school refer to identifying the influence of “*perception, attitudes, values, and beliefs on personal identity.*” Altruism is mentioned as one among several influences on individual and group behavior. Religion is mainly discussed as a component of group and individual identity in the early grades, but also in world geography/cultures.

In **Theme V** one early grade performance standard includes the reference to “*group and institutional influences such as religious beliefs, laws and peer pressure on people, events and elements of culture.*” Three additional performance standards for each grade level mention “*tension between an individual’s beliefs [middle grades: belief systems; high school: belief systems basic to specific traditions] and government policies and laws.*” Also, “*the role of institutions in furthering both continuity and change*” is to be evaluated, and all three levels require investigation of “*how groups and institutions work to meet individual needs and promote the common good.*”

Theme VI discusses the justification, acquisition, and use of power and authority, as well as the ideologies, forces of unity and diversity related to various political systems, but makes no direct references to religion or beliefs, although principles such as justice, equality and fairness, as well as “*stated ideals*” are considered.

Theme VII, on economics, has a standard for each grade level that requires students to explain, describe, illustrate or compare “*how values and beliefs influence different economic decisions*” or “*decisions in different societies.*”

Interestingly, performance standards under **Theme VIII**, on science and society address “*instances in which changes in values, beliefs, and attitudes have resulted from new scientific and technological knowledge,*” and the high school version of this standard also acknowledges the reverse—“*how core values, beliefs, and attitudes of society help shape scientific and technological change.*” As part of their learning, the NCSS document recommends that students “*seek reasonable and ethical solutions to problems that arise when scientific advancements and social norms or values come into conflict,*” while high school students should “*recognize and interpret varied perspectives about human societies and the physical world using scientific knowledge, ethical standards, and technologies from diverse world cultures.*”

Theme IX lists “*belief systems and other cultural elements*” among global linkages, as well as “*conditions and motivations that contribute to conflict, cooperation, and interdependence among groups, societies, and nations.*” Universal human rights are mentioned

in connection with “*treatment of children, religious groups, and the effects of war*” as examples.

Finally, **Theme X** performance standards require that students identify and “*examine the origins and continuing influence of*” key ideals of the democratic republican form” and principles such as justice, equality and human dignity, but no other direct or indirect references to religion are present.

Exemplars

The third level of content in the NCSS curriculum framework is the exemplars or scenarios describing classroom practice. One exemplar on history at the middle school level mentions teaching about religion in a lesson on Thomas à Becket’s conflict with the King of England. Another example, on abolition, and several more on moral dilemmas like the death penalty would certainly involve religion, but the exemplars do not refer to this dimension. At the high school level, brief simulation of a discussion among a Christian, a Buddhist and a Muslim about school prayer and freedom of religion is moderated by the teacher in a government class, while another portrays a lesson on the Holocaust that mentions “*Jews and other groups,*” another mentions “*religious leaders*” as stakeholders in “*the encounters between Europeans and indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere,*” and another simulates a teacher who “*facilitates a student discussion about whether restrictions against homosexuals are the same as discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, ethnic background, and race.*” The emphasis is on modeling the conduct of such a controversial discussion by “*maintaining order and courtesy*” but “*allowing students to share their thoughts and feelings in an academic setting.*” Several other legal, ethical and moral issues are the topic of additional exemplars, but only one specifically mentions religion along with ethnicity and gender as attributes that should not disqualify one from obtaining universal human rights.

Findings

In summary, the National Council for Social Studies’ 175-page curriculum framework *Expectations of Excellence* is found to contain few direct references to teaching about religion, beliefs or belief systems. These few references occur mainly in lists of attributes belonging to groups and individuals. Most of the references are indirect, meaning that they are implied within instruction in references to *culture, tradition, or custom*, with a few seeming to fall under the study of *civilizations*, and some others in connection with the history of science and technology.

The fact that only a few exemplars mention religion at all, however, is a further indication that the topic of religion, while present, is not a significant element in the NCSS social studies framework. Even if the inference under culture and other rubrics is valid, teachers and curriculum developers receive from this document little guidance or encouragement about including religion in the various subject areas covered in social studies programs. As will be seen, the frequency, language and general deficiency in support for teaching about religions is mirrored in state standards documents that are based on the NCSS model.

The National Standards for History Model

The version of the *National Standards for History* discussed in this study is the Basic Edition published in 1996. The original document, published in 1994 at the same time as the other social science documents, appeared as three separate volumes for grades K-4, grades 5-12 United States and World History. These volumes contained an additional level of content that is missing from the 1996 Basic Edition, which now comprises a single volume. Like the geography, civics, economics and NCSS standards, the *National Standards for History* illustrated its knowledge, performance and skills statements with lists of suggested exemplars



or “Examples of Student Achievement” that showed how students might meet the standard by interacting with historical material. These exemplars were excised from the document in the wake of the political tempest that greeted publication of the history standards. Some opponents had singled out the teaching suggestions for criticism as though they were intended to be comprehensive rather than illustrative. Using the exemplars as evidence, a scorecard approach was employed to argue that the document was biased against traditional history content. The Basic Edition represents a minor revision of the original skills; knowledge and performance standards by a blue-ribbon committee and the exemplars have been published for teachers and curriculum planners in separate volumes entitled *Bring History Alive!*

Organization of the National History Standards

The *National Standards for History* is a document of just over 200 pages including introductions and acknowledgements. Part One, for grades K-4, consists of a rationale, a skill set entitled “*Standards in Historical Thinking*,” and a set of standards arranged around four topics:

- I. Living and Working Together in Families and Communities, Now and Long Ago
- II. The History of Students’ Own State or Region
- III. The History of the United States
- IV. The History of Peoples of Many Cultures Around the World

The skills component lists five standards: chronological thinking, historical comprehension, analysis and interpretation, research, and analysis of issues and decision-making. These basic skills are broken down into four to eight components each accompanied by explanations and performance standards that demonstrate attainment of the skill. Under each topic of study for grades K-4, two or three standards are given as sub-topics. Under each of the eight resulting knowledge standards, two-three performance standards describe what students should be able to do, accompanied by three to eight ways students can demonstrate attainment of this knowledge, each keyed to a grade-level and a specific skill.

Part Two follows a similar framework for US History, grades 5-12. Instead of topics and subtopics, however, the US history standards have been divided according to ten eras, or historical periods, each designated by a theme. They are:

- 1: Three Worlds Meet (beginnings to 1620)
- 2: Colonization and Settlement (1585 – 1763)

- 3: Revolution and the New Nation (1754 – 1820s)
- 4: Expansion and Reform (1801-1861)
- 5: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850-1877)
- 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900)
- 7: The Emergence of Modern America (1890-1930)
- 8: The Great Depression and World War II (1929-1945)
- 9: Postwar United States (1945-early 1970s)
- 10: Contemporary United States (1968-present)

The Standards in Historical Thinking preface the US history standards, with four-ten performance standards, explanation, and five-ten ways to demonstrate attainment appropriate to grades 5 through 12. For each of the ten historical eras, between two and four standards or “*statements of historical understanding*” are given for a total of 31 US history standards, each with two-four components and three-six performance standards, which elaborate on the content and provide benchmarks for assessment. Each standard is keyed to historical thinking skills. The document also provides brief essays by prominent scholars that introduce each historical era and explain why it should be studied.

The final section of Part Two contains the World History Standards. They are organized in the same manner as the US History guide. An introduction discusses approaches to the complex topic of world history. The world history standards are arranged into nine eras, or historical periods, each characterized by a theme. They are:

1. The Beginnings of Human Society
2. Early Civilizations and the Emergence of Pastoral Peoples, 4000-1000 BCE
3. Classical Traditions, Major Religions and Giant Empires, 1000 BCE-300 CE
4. Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter, 300-1000 CE
5. Intensified Hemispheric Interactions, 1000-1500 CE
6. The Emergence of the First Global Age, 1450-1770
7. An Age of Revolutions, 1750-1914
8. A Half-Century of Crisis and Achievement, 1900-1945
9. The 20th Century Since 1945: Promises and Paradoxes
10. Concluding Section: World History Across the Eras

For each era, two-seven content standards or topics of study are presented, making 46 standards in all. Between two and four components for each standard are elaborated into three-six performance standards keyed to grade level groupings and specific skills. The final standard item for each era describes major trends and historical processes that characterize the era, drawing attention to overarching concepts, legacies and comparisons among geographic regions and societies.

The World History Model: Graphing Time and Place

Since the National Standards for History exemplifies a new way of teaching world history that is unfamiliar to many people, additional explanation of the model is required. The media uproar that ensued upon publication of the document in 1994 makes it all the more beneficial to provide the reader of this study with some insight into the structure and significance of this instructional model.

The *National Standards for History* is based on a simple chronological and geographic scheme analogous to a graph, which provides a method and criteria for organizing coverage of world history content. The division of history into thematic, sequentially presented historical periods provides the chronological framework of the content. This could be termed the vertical axis of the graph. The horizontal axis is coverage of geographic regions, civilizations and societies during specific eras. [See Diagram of Coverage under the World History Model.] This structure is quite different from the traditional method of covering a sequence of discrete civilizations that are viewed as the main antecedents of Western civilization. Under the traditional scheme, non-Western societies were added into the sequence as multiculturalism gained acceptance, but not always in accurate chronological order. [See Diagram of Coverage under Traditional History Model.] Another drawback to the traditional model is that its discussion of tightly-bounded entities called civilizations makes it very difficult to teach about cultural interactions and historical processes, or about vast stretches of geographic space that extends beyond the boundaries of these few civilizations. The spread of religions is a good example of such a cross-cultural process.

In contrast, the new world history model takes the hemisphere or the globe in a given era as its canvas. Major civilizations and regional cultures alike are placed in their full geographic context, and significant historical relationships among them are discussed. Larger regions defined not by their inclusion in an empire but by their importance as zones of intercommunication may be studied within this model, whereas they have often escaped notice in traditional world history presentations. Such zones are often very important in the spread of religions. The Mediterranean region, the Indian Ocean basin and the Central Asian silk routes, for example, are three zones that figure prominently in the spread of religions during more than one era.

Diagram of Traditional Manner of Covering World History

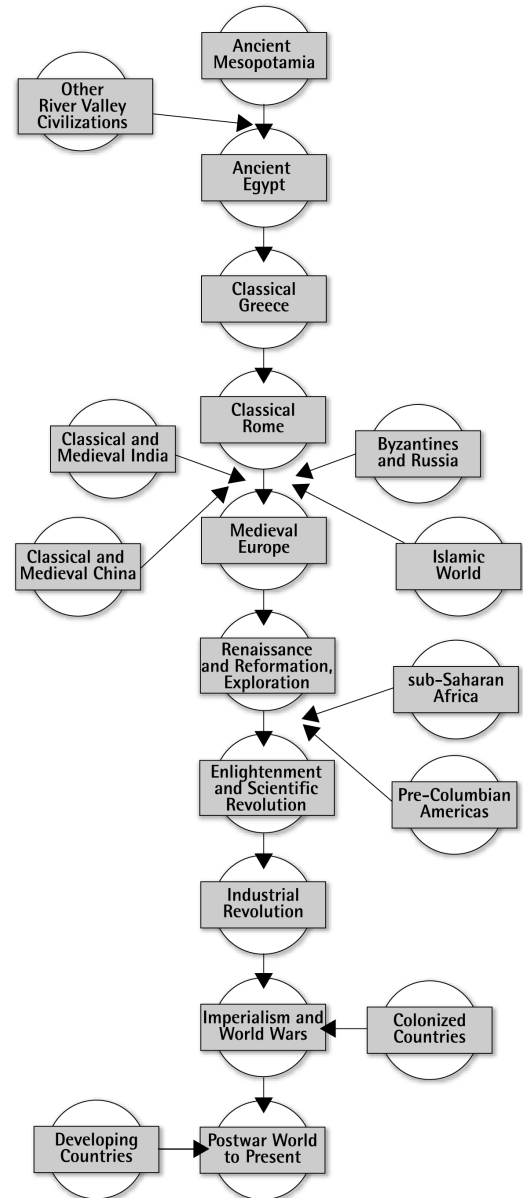
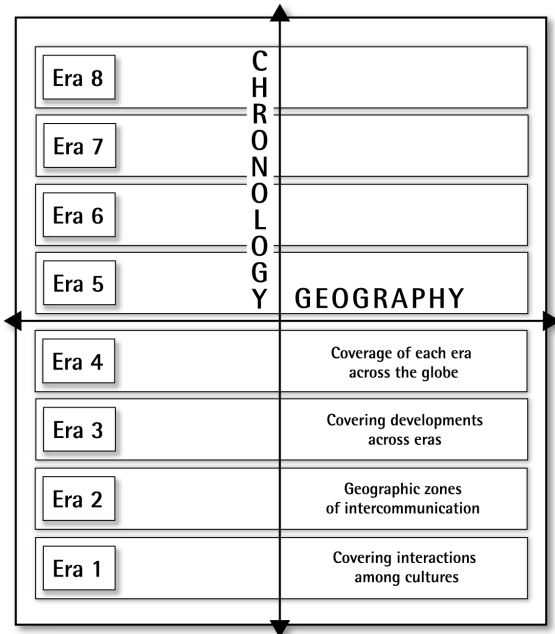


Diagram of Coverage under the World History Model



Most important for continuity in the study of cultural development, the new world history model follows civilizations through the eras, not in one- or two-shot coverage. Once a culture group or region has been introduced, it is not dropped or forgotten; rather, developments in that culture, and interactions within its own and other geographic regions, are covered during study of each subsequent era for as long as the culture existed.

Importance of the World History Model for Teaching about Religions

This difference in approach has important consequences for teaching about religion. Within the *National Standards for World History*, teaching about world religions holds a prominent place. Most important, the structure of the document is particularly useful

for following developments in religions over time. The global/chronological approach to each era means that once the story of a religious belief system has been told in the context of its period and culture, the new world history framework provides opportunities to follow the spread of the faith, the cultures and societies it influenced, its manifestations in institutions, humanities, political and social affairs, and, finally, the way in which institutions and intellectual movements related to the religion over time. Similarly, in US history, teaching about religion, like economic, social, political and intellectual history -- including the history of science and technology -- is incorporated under the combined regional and chronological framework of coverage. Religious activity and thought in America runs parallel to other themes and is often considered as it interacted with other aspects of the American experience. This allows teacher or textbook to keep students abreast of religious developments throughout the survey course.

Another major advantage of this framework for the study of history is that it allows the teacher and students to view events, trends and historical processes across regions. This approach covers multiple perspectives from various historical realms, giving students the opportunity to practice historical thinking and research skills. History-led social studies programs based on the *National Standards for History* framework provide opportunities to include numerous social science and humanities fields, just as historians utilize evidence from many realms and tools from many disciplines. By varying the amount of coverage on specific events, regions and realms, the history program can be individualized to meet the needs of various classrooms across the nation. The system was developed by historians aware of the value of the past half-century of research and of the wide gap between what is available to students at universities and in typical high schools. These historians set about the task of developing a flexible system for integrating the mass of new research and to meet the demand for developing analytical skills.

Finally, the major significance of the K-4 history standards is the fact that they are present at all. Under traditional social studies programs for elementary grades, students were

exposed to very little national or world history at all until the middle grades. Instruction was organized around a concentric scheme in which self, family, neighborhood and school provided the starting point for a gradually expanding view that worked outwards toward knowledge of the community, the state, the nation and the world. Several other national models also introduce more historical studies in the earlier grades. Among these, the Core Knowledge model has contributed significantly to teaching about religion in elementary education. Religion appears as a theme in the K-4 National History Standards as well.

References to religions in the *National Standards for History*

To characterize the degree to which the *National Standards for History* include teaching about religion, it is helpful to summarize and categorize the references. The document features many direct references to religion, beliefs and belief systems as well as citations on specific religious groups or institutions. Evidence that teaching about religion is a prominent feature in the study of US and world history is also found in indirect references to *culture, ideals, values* and *tradition*. In all, the history standards contain 54 occurrences of the words *religion* or *religious*, in addition to about three to five occurrences in the introductory essays for each section. It is important to note that these fifty references occur in the knowledge and performance standards alone. If the exemplars from the first edition of the National History Standards were included, as they are in the other national standards documents, the number of references to teaching about religion would probably double. A look at *Bring History Alive*, where they are now published, would quickly confirm this. Direct references to religion in the National Standards for History, Basic Edition include:

- 1 reference to *religion* in historical thinking standards
- 4 references to *religion* in K-4 history
- 21 general references to *religion* in US history
- 28 general references to *religion* in world history
- 14 references to *belief* in the history standards, divided about equally among K-4, US and world history.

References to specific religious groups, institutions or events are also plentiful, though the majority of these appear in the world history standards; several references to Christianity, its institutions and forms also appear in the K-4 and US history standards. It is important to note that each reference may include several aspects of religion in a single statement that lists beliefs, institutions, movements and important individuals. These have not been considered as separate references.

- Christianity – 42 references
- Judaism – 6 references
- Islam – 30 references
- Buddhism – 15 references
- Hinduism – 8 references
- Other specific religious traditions – 3 references

It is important to place these references to religion in context both as firm evidence that teaching about religion is present and to avoid the controversy inevitably engendered by a simplistic scorecard approach to assessing standards documents. It can also be seen how the document approaches teaching about religion, its distribution among the major subject areas and topics, and its integration into the chronological and geographic framework of coverage.

As stated above, each section of the *Standards* begins with an introduction designed to give teachers and curriculum planners general understanding of the era and its importance. Since these introductions each include at least one direct or indirect reference to religion -- and some as many as four or five -- it may be concluded that no historical period or topic is to be studied without some reference to religion. The knowledge and performance standards, based on highly specific historical content, provide precise guidance as to what aspects of religion are relevant to the topic or era in question.

The K-4 standards require students to “*compare and contrast family life now with family life in the local community or state long ago by considering such things as roles, jobs, communication...schools, religious observance and cultural traditions...*” Students in grades K-4 “*explain ways that families long ago expressed and transmitted their beliefs and values through oral traditions, literature, songs, art, religion, community celebration, mementos, food, and language.*” Religion and its cultural expressions appear in more than one aspect in these standards. Two other K-4 standards items address specific religious aspects of local, state and US history related to exploration and the development of democratic principles and individual rights. Finally, a thinking standard for grades K-4 includes religion, defining what students should know in US and world history, “*drawn from the record of human aspirations, strivings, accomplishments and failures in at least five spheres of human activity, including...cultural (philosophical/religious/aesthetic)...*” This standard also refers to utilizing this historical material “*to analyze contemporary issues and problems confronting citizens today.*”

The US history standards for Grades 5-12 require that instruction “*should reflect ... the nation’s diversity exemplified by race, ethnicity, social and economic status, gender, region, politics and religion, and the nation’s commonalties...*” and “*should integrate fundamental facets of human culture such as religion, science and technology...*”

Eras in US History

Specific knowledge standards and topics on religion during the colonial period, **Eras 1-2**, include native American religious beliefs, practices, society and culture; the religious background to the Age of Exploration in the eastern hemisphere; similarities and differences in religious beliefs and values among indigenous and colonizing groups in the Americas; religious rivalries among colonial powers, and religious motivations behind colonial immigration.

For **Era 3**, students are required to learn about the development of religious institutions and how they influenced the intellectual climate of the American colonies and about religious diversity and its role in community life. Examples include “*how ideas about religious freedom evolved*”; “*how gender, property ownership, religion and legal status affected political rights*”; “*how Puritanism shaped New England communities and how it changed during the 17th century*”; and “*the impact of the Great Awakening on colonial society.*” Religious aspects of the American Revolution are also considered.

For **Eras 4-6** (the nineteenth century), students learn the “*sources and character of cultural, religious and social reform movements in the antebellum period*” including beliefs about abolition, Catholic dissent and reformers’ beliefs and ideas, religious aspects of Manifest Destiny and westward expansion. Students are required to “*evaluate how enslaved African Americans used religion and family to create a viable culture and ameliorate the effects of slavery.*” Immigration is explored in terms of religious and other motivating factors and in

view of the nation's growing religious diversity. Specific aspects of this topic include Catholic and Jewish immigration and responses to discrimination.

For **Eras 6 -8**, students are required to “*explain how intellectual and religious leaders laid the groundwork for...Progressive plans to reform American society.*” “*The rise of religious fundamentalism and the clash between traditional moral values and changing ideas*” is discussed in connection with controversy over Prohibition and the Scopes trial.

For **Eras 9 and 10**, students “*examine the role of religion in postwar American life,*” “*evaluate the Supreme Court's interpretation of freedom of religion,*” and “*understand changing religious diversity and its impact on American institutions and values,*” as well as analyzing “*the position of major religious groups on political and social issues,*” “*the growth of the Christian evangelical movement,*” and “*how religious organizations use modern telecommunications to promote their faiths.*”

Eras in World History

The majority of references to specific religions are found in the national standards for world history.

They begin in **Eras 1 and 2** with prehistory, examining “*the ritual life*” of early people, and continuing with evidence about the development of towns and civilizations, writing systems, religious institutions, belief systems, ethics, and early forms of monotheism in Egypt.

Study of **Era 3**, “*Classical Traditions, Major Religions and Giant Empires,*” includes the origins, basic beliefs and practices of Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity in addition to various polytheistic belief systems such as those found in Greek, Persian, Chinese, Indian and Roman civilizations. The interactions of various traditions are discussed as well as the spread of each tradition and its cultural and social influence.

For **Era 4**, the continuing spread of the major religions among “*peoples of differing ethnic and cultural traditions*” is discussed along with the role of religion in societies in Oceania and the Americas. The political, social and religious context of the Byzantine and Sassanid Empires is discussed, as well as the origin of Islam and a detailed account of its beliefs and practices, its spread across the hemisphere, and its influence on culture, society, economy and politics.

Era 5 continues coverage of changing historical circumstances and expanding hemispheric interactions, tracing the effects of migrations, invasions, trade and technology on religion and other aspects of society. Interactions among religious groups and change in religious institutions and thought are also emphasized for the major world religions including various branches of Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. This era features not only the Crusades but also the intellectual exchanges among Muslim, Jewish and Christian scholars in 11th century Spain, Sicily and Byzantium. Interactions among Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus in Southeast and Central Asia, including the role of Sufism, is covered here as well. The hallmark of this era is the “*maturing of an interregional system of communication, trade, and cultural exchange in an era of Chinese economic power and Islamic expansion.*”

Era 6 covers the Renaissance and early Scientific Revolution, the Protestant and Catholic Reformations, religious effects of the rise of the Ottoman, Safavid and Mughal states and of the growth of Islam in West and East Africa, as well as interactions among various religious groups in these societies. The Reconquista in the Iberian Peninsula, the role of religion and religious institutions such as the Catholic Church in the Age of Exploration, and

religious developments in Eastern Europe and Russia are studied. As part of their study of Era 6, students are required to “*describe the varieties of Buddhist and Hindu teaching and practice in Asia and compare their influence on social and cultural life.*” Students also “*identify regions where Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam were growing in this era and analyze why these religious and cultural traditions gained new adherents in various parts of the world.*”

For **Era 7**, from 1750-1914, students continue to analyze the effects of the Scientific Revolution and the Enlightenment on religion, the influence of religion on political ideas that led to the French, English and American Revolutions and their effects on religious thought and institutions in these societies, as well as in Russia and Eastern Europe. Religious responses to imperialism in West Africa and various other regions, religious influence in the independence struggles in Latin America, and “*causes of 19th century movements of reform or renewal in Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism*” are required as part of the study of the early modern world.

Era 8 includes the requirement to “*analyze ways in which secular ideologies such as nationalism, fascism, communism, and materialism challenged or were challenged by religions and ethical systems.*” This study includes specific examples from various traditions and is supplemented by knowledge and performance standards that address aspects of culture from which evidence concerning religious and other influences can be drawn.

Era 9, which embraces study of the contemporary world since 1945, includes the following performance standard for grades 5-12: “*Describe varieties of religious belief and practice in the contemporary world and analyze how the world’s religions have responded to challenges and uncertainties of the late 20th century.*” Ninth to 12th graders also “*describe ways in which art, literature, religion, and traditional customs have expressed or strengthened national or other communal loyalties in recent times.*”

The preceding summary of topics concerning religion is not exhaustive. Detailed perusal of the document reveals other ways in which specific religious traditions are traced over the eras, are shown to interact in various ways, respond to changing historical circumstances and influence myriad aspects of culture and society.

Indirect references in the National Standards for History

It has been noted in the analyses of other national and state standards documents that words derived from *culture* often carry some of the burden of discussing religion and its expressions. The fact that religion is implied within the definition of culture is justified by both dictionary definitions and those supplied with many curriculum framework documents. *Tradition* and its derivatives also commonly refer to customs, practices or influences that include religion. Accordingly, the *National Standards for History* contains 120 references to *culture* and about 50 to *tradition*. These indirect references often occur together with a direct reference to religion, as in this 9-12 world history standard: “*Analyze the major social, economic, political and cultural features of European society...that stimulated exploration and conquest overseas.*” Meeting this standard would naturally entail study of the religious background of European overseas conquests. Other indirect references appear in general requirements to study cultural aspects of a period, such as this one for grades 5-12, on the transition to the European Renaissance: “*Evaluate the aesthetic and cultural significance of major changes in the techniques of painting, sculpture and architecture.*” Others discuss broad hemispheric trends such as “*The student understands how interregional communication and*

trade led to intensified cultural exchanges among diverse peoples of Eurasia and Africa.” Clearly, the spread of religions is one such exchange.

The rest of the more than one-hundred indirect references cover various time frames, human activities and specific societies whose history involves religious factors.

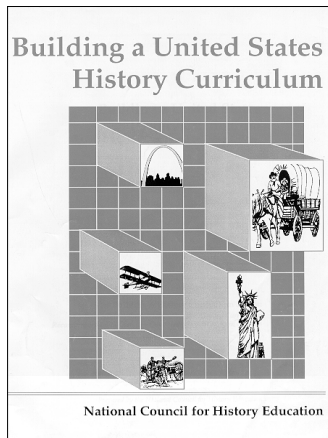
References to culture often occur in performance standards aimed at “examining the influence of ideas, human interests and beliefs,” “interrogating historical data,” “considering multiple perspectives,” “comparing and contrasting differing sets of ideas,” and “reconstructing patterns of historical succession and duration.” An interesting example of such an exploration of continuity and change is the following standard item for Era 3:

“Analyze the significance of the interaction of Greek and Jewish traditions for the emergence of both Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity.” Examples of a more general standard which can easily accommodate the study of religion as an aspect of culture, are these from Era 6, 1450-1770, which summarize historical trends on a global basis: “Standard 2: How European society experienced political, economic and cultural transformations in an age of global intercommunication”; “Standard 3: How large territorial empires dominated much of Eurasia between the 16th and 18th centuries”; “Standard 4: Economic, political, and cultural interrelationships among peoples of Africa, Europe and the Americas, 1500-1750.”

To summarize the findings, careful assessment indicates that the *National Standards for History* offer curriculum designers and teachers many opportunities to cover aspects of religion in lower grades and upper grades in US and world history. The content-specific, multi-layered knowledge and performance standards and supporting essays and charts show how teaching about religion can be presented in a dynamic manner that covers individual faiths and cultures as well as interregional and global influences during various periods of history.

The Bradley Commission Model: *Building a History Curriculum*

The Bradley Commission Report on History in the Schools was a very important contribution to raising the profile of history within the social studies. It drew attention to the

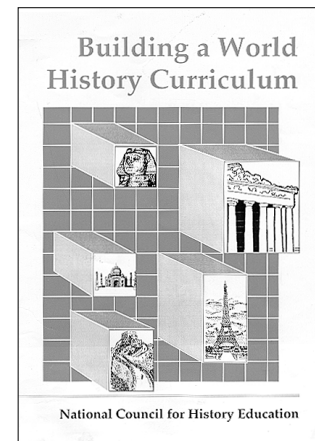


role of history in the overall social studies program. Most important, it condemned the practice of teaching an overstuffed one-year survey course in US and world history and then repeating the same mistake at a higher grade level. Acknowledging that most classes never get through the material, much less grasp it, the Bradley Report recommended sequential, cumulative courses at two or more grade levels, asserting that students can retain learning from the earlier level when courses incorporate both review and increased depth of learning at higher grade levels. *Building a [US and World] History Curriculum* is a pair of documents that provides a practical framework for curriculum designers. It lays out several alternative plans for an integrated sequence of courses from elementary through middle and high school that constitute a

program in which history dominates but the focus is multidisciplinary. The Bradley Report also championed increased integration of history with geography, the latter in a subordinate but complementary role, as a discipline “by nature the constant companion of historical studies.”

Building a History Curriculum: Components and Organization

Like the other national models, *Building a History Curriculum* has numerous components. The approaches, goals and principles of selection that are identified here arise from the reasons to study history. Among these are unifying themes and narratives, the cultivation of historical thinking and integration of history, social sciences and humanities in instruction. Several overall patterns of coursework from K-12 are presented. The 1997 edition includes “Standards for Historical Thinking” quoted from the *National Standards for History*. The two documents consist of Central Strands and Significant Questions, Major Eras and Topics of history, and a list of brief subtopics. Although *Building a History Curriculum* shares the structure of eras with the *National Standards*, the former is smaller in scope and not as detailed in laying out an approach to specific content as any of the National Standards documents. Another major difference is that *Building a History Curriculum* takes a selective approach that is more closely tied to coverage of individual civilizations than to a hemispheric or global survey for each era. For example, African history does not appear in every era, and some developments in African history fall well outside the era in which coverage is inserted. Expansion of agrarian and commercial civilizations is the framework for the medieval period, but zones of interaction such as the Mediterranean, the Eurasian Steppe and the Indian Ocean, for example, appear only in relation to specific empires or civilizations.



References to Religions in *Building a [US and World] History Curriculum*

Teaching about religion is an integral part of *Building a History Curriculum*. The introductions to US and world history set out lofty goals and criteria for selecting topics and themes for study, acknowledging that the study of history is characterized by “*interwoven public and private purposes*,” “*to prepare the citizen and cultivate the person*.”⁶ Paired with asking “*what people need to know*” about “*past politics, economics, culture and social life*” in order to be good citizens, the document asks, “*What lives, works, and ideas from the past best nourish the individual mind and spirit?*” Thus the foundations of the model include two indirect references to religion, one within the realms of social life that may be influenced by religion, the other invoking the development of spirituality in individual students. The inventory of references to religion and related terms in *Building a History Curriculum* includes both introductions and recommended content (themes, topics, subtopics and individual items within the latter), but does not include the duplicate headings that appear in some sections. It does include multiple mentions of the themes in brief summaries describing study of each era, since these bring to attention specific aspects of the period to be covered. A single topic or subtopic might list several aspects of religion to be covered, such as an institution, a movement and several individuals. A tally of references to religion in *Building a World History Curriculum* gives the following result:

- 27 general references to religion in world history, including one in “Vital Unifying Themes and Narratives, and six in “Central Strands and Significant Questions”

⁶ National Council for History Education, *Building a United States History Curriculum*, 1997, p. 5.

- 39 topics or subtopics referring to Christianity, its adherents, ideas, institutions, movements and leading individuals
- 9 topics or references to Islam, its adherents, ideas, institutions, movements and leading individuals
- 6 topics or subtopics referring to Judaism, its adherents, ideas, institutions and leading individuals
- 5 topics or subtopics referring to Hinduism, its adherents, ideas, institutions and leading individuals
- 7 topics or subtopics referring to Buddhism, its adherents, ideas, institutions and leading individuals
- 6 topics or subtopics referring to other specific traditions or their ideas.

The tally of references to religion in *Building a US History Curriculum* was conducted in the same manner, giving the following result:

- 25 general references to religion, including several to “morals” or “moral values,” three of which appear in “Central Strands and Significant Questions,” and one in “Vital Unifying Themes”
- 2 topics or subtopics referring to religions of Native American groups
- 1 subtopic referring to “African components of religion” in African-American culture
- 21 subtopics and 1 topic referring to Christianity, its adherents, ideas, institutions, movements and leading figures
- 1 subtopic to “pre-Christian traditions and practices” among African slaves and Native Americans
- 2 topics or subtopics referring to Jews, 1 reference to “Judaic-Christian principles”
- 2 subtopics referring to Islam, both in Era 1, on African background

Under the six unifying themes of history, “*Values, beliefs, political ideas, and institutions*” the first direct reference to “*the basic principles of influential religions*” appears, but religious influences are not directly mentioned under thematic categories such as “*Civilization, cultural diffusion, and innovation*,” “*Conflict and cooperation*,” or “*Patterns of social and political interaction*.” Religion may be an implied component of these themes, however.

The rubric “*Historical Habits of Mind*,” the skills-oriented component of the document, includes ample mention of culture, complex causation and common human values. Intriguingly, it encourages appreciation for “*the force of the non-rational, the irrational, the accidental in history and human affairs*,” but the spiritual realm is only inferred as a font of individual understanding or as a catalyst for human action. The document lays great stress upon this component of the plan, encouraging “*a steady stream of assignments*” to make these thinking skills “habitual.” Among further criteria for selecting historical material, mention is made under integration of history, the social sciences and humanities of “*aspects of cultural, religious and intellectual history*” as ways to “*nourish student understanding of the arts, literature and philosophy*.”

Building a US History Curriculum: Eras, Topics, Subtopics

The framework document identifies eight central strands of US history that should be covered in order to make it meaningful. Two of these specifically mention religion. In Strand 3, “*the several religious traditions that have contributed to the American heritage*,” “*codes of morality, and secular and religious aspirations in the American ‘gathering’*” are mentioned.

Strand 6 addresses the changing character of American society and culture, including religion and values. One of the most influential aspects of the Bradley Report framework is its listing of rubrics and subtopics for study. These have been incorporated verbatim into a number of state documents to serve as their knowledge standards and will in turn become units and chapters in instructional materials. *Building a History Curriculum* identifies nine major eras with four to eleven topics of study listed under each. In this section, however, religion is barely mentioned. The only era in which a direct reference to religion is found as a subtopic is the following: “*The Colonial Era: An Emerging American Identity, F) Intellectual and religious characteristics of Anglo-American colonials.*” A chart keys each era and the subtopics identified as worthy of study with the eight thematic strands, whereby Strands 3 and 6 -- those in which references to religion appeared among other topics – are suggested for focus in nine out of 51 citations. The balance of the document on US history consists of bulleted points that expand upon the subtopics identified for each era.

Era I includes two mentions of tribal religions and of major religious movements in Europe before settlement.

Era II includes the role of religion in founding colonies in the New World, as well as African religions, and five references under the “*Intellectual and religious characteristics*” of colonists.

Era III, on the Revolution and the founding of the American government, contains no references to religion.

Era IV, on “*Expansion and Reform,*” makes no reference to religion as an influence on abolition and social reforms but suggests exploring under American culture and literature the “*Distinctiveness of American religion: the Second Great Awakening; American Methodism; Unitarianism and the decline of stern Calvinism; immigrant and African-American currents in Catholicism and Protestantism in America,*” in addition to discussion of Transcendentalism and religious and secular Utopian communities.

Under **Era V**, the Civil War, the only direct reference to religion comes under Reconstruction: “*black families, churches, social and cultural structures survive and strengthen.*”

Era VI, under “*the Progressive movement,*” mentions as a bulleted item “*Persistence of traditional religious impulse for reform, justice and welfare.*”

Era VII, on the two World Wars, mentions Jews and Catholics in relation to the Ku Klux Klan, but includes no other reference to religion.

The final unit, **Era VIII**, mentions “*morals*” as an area of American life to assess in terms of having “*done better or worse*” but fails to mention religion or churches either in connection with the Civil Rights struggle or with the “*many faces of social and cultural upheaval*” of the 1960s and 1970s. The only mention of religion is “*Political awakening of Christian fundamentalists; opposition to gay rights, abortion, feminism, and Supreme Court ban on school prayer.*” The final bulleted point on the “*culture wars*” also contains no reference to religion. Also unmentioned are the recent growth in religious diversity due to immigration and structural changes in established religious institutions. .

This fading of discussion about religion across the eras of US history is both typical of US history programs for decades and significant because the preamble to *Building a History Curriculum* continually emphasizes selection from the many possible topics, justification for those that are chosen, and a “less is more” philosophy for dealing with depth vs. breadth. Teaching about religion peters out after the first three eras, scarcely playing a role in the discussion after the Civil War. While it might be argued that teachers or textbook writers are

free to include teaching about religion in other areas, the fact that states have adopted the lists as knowledge standards to be assessed in high-stakes, standardized tests makes it less likely that teachers would introduce new topics to an already crowded curriculum.

Building a World History Curriculum: Eras, Strands, Topics

Building a World History Curriculum contains the same prefatory material as the US History document concerning principles of selection, skills, unifying themes and narratives of human experience, as well as suggestions for designing overall social studies programs and “*Teachable Courses*.” Interestingly, the latest version of the document incorporates the “*Standards for Historical Thinking*,” the skills component of the National Standards for History published by the National Center for History in the Schools. This cluster of skills is more detailed and specific than the “*Historical Habits of the Mind*.”

As in the US history document, the section entitled “*Using Principles of Selection*” makes the following claim for the material included in the framework called “*Major Eras and Topics within the Chronological Narrative of World History*”: “*In most cases, these are not matters of choice to select or reject. Too vital to leave out, they represent the core of historical study in each of the three fields.*” Left to local schools and teachers is merely “*deciding how to teach the core of each field.*”

In addition to the unifying themes shared with US history, *Building a World History Curriculum* identifies twelve strands and significant questions. These are related to specific cultures and realms of history and are linked to the unifying themes by symbol icons. For example, “*the evolution and distinctive characteristics of major early Asian, African and American pre-Columbian societies and cultures*” is identified as a world history “*strand*” that is to include “*their religions and stories of their societal origins.*” **Strand 3** includes “*forces from religion, ideology, social movements and political decisions*” under global discussion of human use of the environment from Paleolithic times to the present. **Strand 4** addresses “*The origins, central ideas, and influence of major religious and philosophical traditions*” and names five major faiths, adding to them “*major ideologies and revolutions.*” This strand includes discussion of worldviews, ethical systems, economic and political ideologies, morals and individual and social ramifications of these belief and value systems.

Strands 5-9 address comparison and contrast among “*Western*” and “*non-Western*” or “*European and non-European societies*” and requires that the course include “*close study of one or two selected non-Western societies*” as well as “*at least one society that can no longer be simply defined as*” one or the other. Three of these strands include comparison and contrast of religion as a factor in shaping culture, in acceptance or adaptation of industrialization, and as factors that contributed to commonalities and differences in human values and activities. The last two strands address “*the interplay of geography and local culture,*” and “*selected instances of historical success and failure, of amelioration and exploitation, of peace and violence, of wisdom and error, of freedom and tyranny.*” Religion is specifically mentioned as a factor in the first, but not in the latter strand, though for better or worse, religion is likely to figure in any such discussion.

Seven Eras of World History

World history study is organized into seven eras with between seven and twelve topics. These, in turn, are expanded upon in four to eight bulleted points under “*Some Details of*

World History.” A chart plots these eras and topics against the strands that are to be emphasized in each. Study of religion, because it was mentioned in eight out of the twelve strands, would logically figure as a major aspect of study for each era. Specifically, 183 citations of strands that include some discussion of religion appear in the chart, with 122 citations of those strands where religion was not mentioned as a factor. Such scorekeeping, of course, can only provide a vague indication of what content might potentially be taught in courses based upon this world history framework. As in *Building a US History Curriculum*, the eras, lettered topics and bulleted subtopics identified in *Building a World History Curriculum* give a better indication of what is likely to be taught, since a number of states have adopted them verbatim as knowledge standards. The presence of testing requirements give these points great prominence over anything teachers might add on and indeed may discourage such enhancements. Analysis of the topics and subtopics for each era reveals a picture of teaching about religion that is rather different from the chart correlating the strands.

In **Era I**, for example, religion is absent from the discussion of very early human societies. It is only introduced with “*the first urban societies*,” specifically Mesopotamia, Egypt and Minoan culture, and “*the coming of Hinduism*.”

In **Era II**, Classical Civilizations of the Ancient World, 1000 BC to 700 AD, “*the development of major world religions and ethical traditions*” is discussed. This includes Monotheism (Judaism, Abraham, Moses and the Hebrew prophets), Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism and Taoism, Christianity and Islam. A final subtopic calls for comparing and contrasting central religious and ethical principles. The next four topics, on Greece and Hellenism, make no reference to Greek or Roman religion and mention only “*religious diversity: Jews, Greeks, Eastern and mystery religions*” during “*the age of Alexander the Great*.” Two topics and five subtopics address religious aspects of Indian and Chinese civilization. The section ends with “*the spread of Christianity*” which includes seven subtopics outlining its relationship with Judaism, its spread, growth of early communities, social and political effects on Roman life and the establishment of the Church and the Nicene Creed.

For **Era III**, which covers 500 AD to 1450 AD “*World Expansion of Agrarian and Commercial Civilizations*,” establishment of the Eastern Orthodox Church is mentioned in one bulleted point. An entire topic with six bulleted points is assigned to “*the origins and spread of Islam*,” including subtopics on “*relations to Judaism and Christianity*,” “*the five duties of Islam*” and “*the place of women in Islamic religion and society*.” “*Islam*” and “*Islamic*” are the terms identified with the expansion of the unified state, arts and letters, as well as the sciences and preservation and transmittal of Greek and Indian works. It is interesting to note the lack of any corresponding mention of “*the place of women*” with reference to any other world religion. . An unlikely assumption is that women in religions other than Islam have no place or simply that the topic of women lacks in importance; the more likely implication is that the stance toward women in other religions is considered neutral or positive in nature, while only Islam deserves to be held up to scrutiny in its teachings about women.

Continuing under **Era III**, the Early Middle Ages appears in two topics and two bulleted points, one on the early medieval church and another on monasticism. Buddhism, Shintoism and “*native Japanese religion*” are included as bulleted points under “*Japan’s Classical Age*.” Conversion to Orthodox Christianity is a point under medieval Russian history, and discussion of the High Middle Ages includes mention of the clergy and “*The*

Church, cathedrals and Gothic art, St. Thomas Aquinas and the Crusades.” Both popular religion and persecution are bulleted points under this topic.

Another topic addresses African history for the first time in the document since Leakey and “*African origins*,” as well as Kush and Egypt. The “*Muslim*” institution of slavery tops the list of bulleted points on Africa, followed by the spread of Islam and the rise of Christianity in Ethiopia. No mention of indigenous African religion is recommended. Similarly, though religion had been mentioned in the strands on ancient African, Asian and American cultures, no mention is made of religion in pre-Columbian societies of the Americas. .

Era IV, from 1400 to 1750, mentions teaching about religion in three of nine topics and subtopics. These references include “*Christian humanism*,” the “*Development of Sikh religion*” and “*the Reformation and religious conflict*.” Subtopics include struggles between religious and secular authorities, reformation thought in the Protestant and Catholic traditions, wars of religion and popular religion, including the “*place of women and family*.” Discussion of European colonial expansion in this period includes a subtopic on “*The Spanish Church*.”

Era V, on the Age of Revolutions, 1650-1914, mentions the Enlightenment as an expression of “*new faiths in science, laws of nature, reason, harmony, progress*” as well as its “*negative impact on older, traditional faiths and religions*” and “*new religious currents: Deists, Quakers, Methodists; the Great Awakening*.” The other ten topics for this era contain no mention of religious factors in the technological, political and social transformations of the Age of Revolutions.

Era VI covers World Wars I and II. Religious groups that have ethnic connotations, such as Jews in relation to fascism, and Muslim political parties in relation to Indian nationalism, constitute the only mention of religion recommended for the era.

Religion does not appear among the nine topics for the modern Era VII, but it appears in two subtopics “*Worldwide revival of religious fundamentalism; Iranian revolution*” under the topic “*World prospects for political democracy and social justice*,” and “*The Middle East; religion, oil, dictatorships; the Gulf War*.” In both, the religious connotations are clearly somewhat negative, and no balancing discussion of any positive role for religion is recommended for the study of modern life or contemporary issues.

In summary, the framers of this document have clearly intended to include liberal discussion of religions, religious values, philosophies and ethics, particularly those associated with Christianity and the monotheistic tradition, in which Judaism and Islam are included. Apart from the description of Judaism’s origins in the ancient past, the document recommends virtually no study of Jewish history, thought or institutions. Similarly, discussion of Islamic beliefs, society and institutions appears in connection with its origins and earliest centuries, but not thereafter.

The representation of women has of course engendered controversy in relation to many if not all religions. If the issue is raised at all in a curriculum guide, it should be handled with sensitivity, accuracy and balance in all religions studied. Singling out one set of religious teachings to be targeted on this issue falls short of the guidelines and certainly fails to represent the state of scholarship or public discussion on the issue. By the same token, the purpose of teaching about religion is not to sanitize historical reality by referring only to religious ideals. *Building a History Curriculum* champions the domination of history in the curriculum precisely because historical study is best suited to provide students with historical evidence, primary sources and critical thinking opportunities that lead to acquisition of a suitably complex, differentiated view of human experience.

The main emphasis and reinforcement in the document, however, is on the historical, not the contemporary, role of religion, its values and worldview. For the modern era, the framers of the document have not found it important that students learn about religion except as it is connected to politics or revolution under the rubric of “fundamentalism.” The term “fundamentalism,” however, does not appear as a topic in earlier eras where students could learn about its historical context.

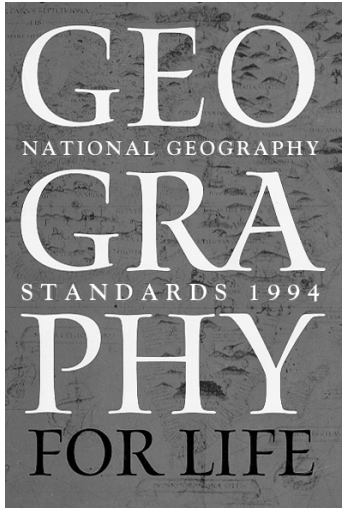
Overall, the treatment of religion in *Building a History Curriculum* seems rich in some areas but very poor in others. The amount of emphasis placed on each religion and corresponding attention paid to beliefs, values and development over time lacks balance. Christianity is the only religion whose philosophical, theological and institutional development is traced over time. The others are characterized as having emerged at a specific time and place, as possessing certain beliefs with some social, political and perhaps economic or environmental implications, but, by default, these characteristics are viewed as static and unchanging.

By the modern era, religion in general is seen to have become less relevant as a factor in human life, except as a rather negative and backward phenomenon. The strands, do not ensure a balanced inclusion of various realms of history. Instead, they stress the contrast between the West and the non-West, on acceptance and adaptation of modern technology in “*European and non-European societies*,” and on “*adaptation of indigenous and foreign political ideas and practices*,” emphasizing a notion that certain societies are “*borrowers*” while others are “*exporters of political ideas*,” and that some have resisted change, or “*altered and transformed their indigenous, traditional*” ideas. The study of world religions and their influence on society will be adversely affected by the biased framework set up by the thematic questions posed in the strands. That the Christian tradition is the richest, most worthy of study, the most historically adapted and adaptable seems a foregone conclusion, simply because it receives the most detailed and differentiated study. The criteria for selection of historical topics apparently make world geography subservient to culturally determined criteria. Three of the strands require highly selective study of “*one or two non-Western societies*,” not because they are an integral part of the story of world history or human experience, but in order “*to achieve the interest and power of the good story that narrative provides*.” The recommendation to study “*at least one society*” which fits neither one nor the other category virtually guarantees that students’ impression of world history and geographic space will exhibit significant gaps. The “spaces” between civilizations and societies, where religions often spread and thrived, apparently find no place among significant topics. Given these prejudices, the two strands comparing commonalities and differences, art, literature and thought could hardly produce favorable comparisons between “West and non-West.” What students have not studied, they can ill compare.

In order to fulfill the requirements of the guidelines for teaching about religion, a revision of *Building a History Curriculum* should redress this lack of balance in portraying the historical development of other world religions. It should raise the coverage of both non-Christian world religions and the pre-modern and modern history of all religions, religious thought and institutional development to the level of importance assigned to Christian faith and institutions. Students will assume that those aspects of other religions to which they have not been exposed simply do not exist. Similarly, if only “one or two” societies of the non-Western world are selected for study, others will be assumed to lack importance in human

history. These flawed selection criteria will not serve the purpose of building a global world history program or cultivate an appreciation of the role of human spirituality.

The National Geography Standards



Other documents carrying the title of National Standards have been less controversial than the history standards and have emerged as the leading models in their field. The *National Geography Standards*, and to a lesser degree national civics and economics standards, can be classified as the dominant model in state programs. Nearly all of the states have integrated the structure and language of the National Geography Standards into that component of their program. It is possible to detect other influences in the state geography standards, particularly those states whose standards predate publication of the *National Geography Standards*, but the programs do not differ significantly in approach to the subject. The national civics and economics content standards also appear in many state programs. This is apparent in three ways:

- (a) The document is mentioned in the front material, introduction or bibliography,
- (b) The structure and wording of the document appears in the state standard outline for that content area,
- (c) Specific language from the skills and knowledge standards of the national document is integrated into or quoted in the state document.

The most widely accepted of the national content documents is *Geography for Life: National Geography Standards*, which lays out a comprehensive model for conveying a large body of information on geographic science and cultural studies within the description of six essential elements of geography. The geography standards provide a framework for a balanced view of various world regions, successfully integrating history and geography, as well as a host of other social science disciplines. A number of states emphasize history as the flagship of curriculum planning, integrating geography as an essential component of historical understanding. In other states, the geographic framework is the lens through which world history content is viewed. Parallel to but contrasting with multi-year world and US history surveys, some states have placed a two-year geography/world cultures course in middle school (between grades 5 and 8, generally). Instead of a chronological survey, students acquire knowledge of the world region-by-region, including history from ancient times to the pre-modern period. Many of these courses are divided between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres with the emphasis on Europe in the latter.

Geography for Life is a rich curriculum framework document of 270 pages with many components, elegantly printed and embellished with photographs by the National Geographic Society. The basic structure of the document is a set of eighteen content standards organized around the “Six Essential Elements” of geographic studies. These elements are:

- The World in Spatial Terms
- Places and Regions
- Physical Systems
- Human Systems

- Environment and Society
- The Uses of Geography

The basic structure also includes a set of geography skills organized around five components: asking and answering geographic questions and acquiring, organizing and analyzing geographic information. These five skill sets are described at increasing levels of complexity for each grade level grouping at K-4, 5-8, and 9-12. Similarly, the eighteen knowledge standards are identified and associated with performance benchmarks and exemplars appropriate to each grade level grouping.

References to religion in the National Geography Standards

There are copious references to religion in the geography standards—general and specific, direct and indirect. This is due to the thoroughness of the document in covering physical and cultural features, to its global focus and balanced inclusion of examples and knowledge from regions across the world, and the way in which it refers to the historical background of contemporary situations and issues. It is important to note, however, that the basic content standards contain only one or two direct references to religion. That is because they consist of general statements about physical and human geography. The references to religion are found in the second and third level of content – performance standards and exemplars, which use examples from local, national and world geography -- real people and places-- to illustrate what is meant by the content standards.

- 25 general references to religion and related terms
- 30 references to specific religious traditions, groups or institutions

It is important to understand, as many critics of the national standards failed to do, that the explanatory material and exemplars are illustrative, not comprehensive or exhaustive. To do that would have meant writing a national textbook, not a national framework for curriculum planning. The examples do, however, enable the critical reader to better understand the intent of the designers. These exemplars create opportunities for in-depth instruction from various perspectives and point out areas of current and respected older research.

The following examples show how the National Geography Standards curriculum framework allows for integration of teaching about religion at every grade level, and from many perspectives, creating a balanced perception of the role of religion in history and contemporary life from the local to the global level.

Nine of the eighteen standards contain most of the 55 direct references to religions or cultural features associated with religion. Nearly all of the references are grouped under these nine standards, though a few references are included under others. Indirect references are many, since *culture* is defined in the National Geography Standards glossary as “*learned behavior of people, which includes their belief systems and languages, their social relationships, and their material goods—food, clothing, buildings, tools and machines.*” In fact, however, the reader need not rely solely on such extrapolations, as the following examples from the standards and their explanatory components demonstrate.

Standard 4, “*The physical and human characteristics of places,*” includes as examples “*population distributions, settlement patterns, languages, ethnicity, nationality, and religious beliefs.*” The emphasis is on using various information-gathering tools and skills to observe and describe the human characteristics of place, explicitly including religion, leading to an understanding of how the various components of the description such as religion, ethnicity, language and nationality are interrelated and how they impact settlement patterns.

Standard 5, *That people create regions to interpret Earth's complexity,*” includes “*similarities and differences among regions*” and “*ways in which regions change.*” The emphasis is on the way people use perceptions and descriptors to organize knowledge about the world and to compare and contrast regions based on their characteristics. For example, styles of housing and dress are viewed as combining influence from cultural and physical characteristics. Students learn that regions change and that they acquire the tools for detecting such changes. Examples such as migration, changing political boundaries, conflict and cooperation affect regional groupings for various reasons, including the influence or spread of religion. Among specific and implied references to religion in discussion of regions are the Bible Belt in the US, religious events, ethnic neighborhoods and cultural ties among regions.

Standard 6, *How culture and experience influence people's perceptions of places and regions,*” helps students understand how their own views and characteristics such as gender, age, religion and culture influence the way they see a place. Conversely, they study how others’ views, beliefs and values give significance to places. Students consider sacred places and architecture using examples like Jerusalem, Makkah and other national and cultural symbolic monuments. Some interesting references to religion under this standard include how “*religion and other belief systems influence traditional attitudes toward land use (e.g., the effects of Islamic and Jewish dietary practices on land use in the Middle East),*” a reference to poems, stories and songs such as “God Bless America,” and in Standard 2, grades 9-12, discussion of “*selecting a building site in a dramatic physical setting for a house of worship.*”

Standard 9, *The characteristics, distribution, and migration of human populations on Earth's surface,*” includes “*the characteristics of populations*” and “*causes and effects of human migration.*” This standard introduces the study of human systems on earth. The main reference to religion, either direct or indirect, involves causes of migration.

Standard 10, *The characteristics, distribution, and complexity of Earth's cultural mosaics,*” includes “*how the characteristics of culture affect the ways in which people live,*” “*how patterns of culture vary across Earth's surface*” and “*how cultures change.*” This standard includes discussion of “*the role that culture plays in ...conflict and cooperation*” including “*national, ethnic and religious differences,*” links among regions, and how cultural characteristics affect demographic data such as birthrates, literacy rates and differences in the lives of women and men. Among specific references in the document are the suggestion to “*distinguish between the ways of life of ...Native Americans and Europeans...in the 17th century...Sikhs, Hindus and Muslims living in India today*”; and “*how cultures differ in their use of similar environments and resources... (e.g., Phoenix, Arizona, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia)*”. Among the groups mentioned are Algerians in France, Irish immigrants in the 19th century, realignment of Hindu and Muslim populations after partition of the Indian subcontinent and ethnic enclaves of Sikhs in Vancouver, Canada. The range of examples from this standard illustrates the variety, balance and imagination brought to bear in this document. Standard 10’s examples for grades 9-12 include “*the impact of Buddhism in shaping attitudes in Southeast Asia,*” “*the role of Christianity in structuring the educational and social-welfare systems of Western Europe*” and “*the adaptation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to different cultural contexts (e.g. the Red Cross versus the Red Crescent distinction).*” Cultural convergence and divergence are also described in terms of changing technology and diffusion. Under such a rubric, things like televangelists, the role of cassette tapes and the Internet in fostering religious resurgence might figure as case studies.

Standard 11 mentions trade routes as means of cultural and religious diffusion under the rubric of *“patterns and networks of economic interdependence.”*

Standard 12, *“The processes, patterns, and functions of human settlement,”* includes *“factors that affect where people settle,” “how...patterns of human settlement change”* and *“spatial characteristics of cities.”* Again, various causes for migration and concentration of settlement would naturally include religion as a cultural factor. This standard includes analysis at each grade level grouping of *“the world’s culture hearths (cultural groups’ places of origin),”* their spread, diffusion and persistence today. The clearest direct reference, in grades 5-8, lists *“religious needs”* among the reasons *“why people would choose to change from a dispersed rural to a concentrated urban form of settlement.”* Such a creative exemplar opens curriculum planners to a wealth of interesting historical research on the role of cities in fostering the spread of religion, as well as the development of religious thought and institutions, and its relationship to economic interdependence (colonies, trade routes, architectural styles, libraries). The spread of Christianity, the Protestant Reformation, Judaism, Islam and Buddhism are examples that, while not specifically cited, may clearly fall within this standard.

Standard 13, *“How the forces of cooperation and conflict among people influence the division and control of Earth’s surface,”* mentions only *“ethnic or national differences”* under competition for control of territory, but religion is specifically mentioned as a factor in cooperation and conflict in grades 5-8. Another interesting take on the contemporary world is the suggestion that 5-8th grade students *“compare organizations that transcend national boundaries to determine their social, political and economic impact (e.g. ...world religions),”* or *“explain the role of various factors in the development of nation-states.”* References to religion in grades 9-12 include the roles empires have played in history and the shaping of regions, *“religious conflict or expansion”* and *“the impact of the Crusades on the cultures of Western Europe and Southwest Asia.”*

Standard 14, Environment and Society, or *“how human actions modify the physical environment,”* offers an interesting case. Under *“people’s changing attitudes toward the environment,”* exemplars fail to mention the impact of belief systems on land use and attitudes about ecology. This is odd, since nearly every US history book, elementary and secondary, contrasts Native Americans’ beliefs and views of nature and land use with those of European colonists. Elsewhere in the geography standards, however, *“differing attitudes of people regarding the use and misuse of resources [Standard 16, gr. 5-8],”* are cited as a performance standard to *“appreciate the significance of people’s beliefs, attitudes and values in environmental adaptation [Standard 18, gr. 5-8].”* Standard 15, grades 9-12, assesses *“the effects of religious beliefs, socioeconomic status, previous experience, and other factors on perception and response toward [environmental] hazards.”*

Standard 17 & 18, *“How to apply geography to interpret the past, present and future”* includes *“how people’s perceptions affect their interpretations of the world.”* Direct and indirect references in grades 9-12 suggest investigating this important aspect of the religious worldview. One asks indirectly *“how different points of view influence the development of policies designed to use and manage Earth’s resources.”* In order *“to assess how...changing perceptions of geographic features have led to changes in human societies,”* an intriguing exemplar is offered: *“compare the attitudes of different religions toward the environment and resource use and how religions have affected world economic development patterns and caused cultural conflict or encouraged social integration.”*

Summary : Religion in the National Geography Standards

The document closes with a section describing assessment on three levels. Any references to religion, direct or indirect, in this section are merely suggestive, so they were not tabulated. In summary, teaching about religion has been shown to be well integrated into the National Geography Standards for each appropriate and relevant topic and each grade level. Specific examples, while not to be interpreted as exhaustive, are well balanced among direct and indirect references, specific religions, and historical and contemporary situations across the globe. To the degree that this document is utilized in the states and districts as a model for instruction, teaching about religion can be expected to reflect considerable depth and breadth in geography lessons at all levels.

As excellent and varied as the geography standards are, however, they give rise to several questions. First, it seems apparent that students would be more capable of understanding the complex issues and applying skills if they enter the world geography course with a solid background in world history. This is likely to be the case if geography is offered as a stand-alone high school course, or if the geography objectives are fully integrated into a multi-year history course. Both circumstances prevail in several states and districts. It is very questionable, however, whether early middle school students would be able to get the most out of a course that introduces for the first time a mass of historical background in tandem with a demanding survey of world cultures and a major skill-acquisition effort. This is the pattern in those states with grade 6-7 or 7-8 “Eastern/Western Hemisphere” courses. Within these marathon programs resides students’ introduction to the major world religions, their historical unfolding and contemporary contours.

National Standards for Civics and Government

The *National Standards for Civics and Government*, published in 1994 by the Center for Civic Education, Calabasas, California, is a document of approximately 100 pages plus appendices. It consists of a rationale and a structure of goals, knowledge standards and skills. The standards are described as “*content standards specifying what students should know and be able to do in the field of civics and government,*” including exit standards or benchmarks for grades 4, 8 and 12. The content standards are organized around five questions related to

- I. The definition of government, politics and civic life
- II. The values and principles of American democracy and the US political system
- III. The organization, purposes, principles and functions of American government under the US Constitution
- IV. The relationship of the United States to other nations and world affairs
- V. The roles of citizens in American democracy.

The replies become knowledge standards of increasing complexity and depth for grades K-4, 5-8 and 9-12, with corresponding examples of performance standards included in the appendix. Since the same five areas of study are addressed three times at increasing levels of difficulty throughout the K-12 program, certain points concerning each topic are repeated. For example, under the purposes of government or the Bill of Rights, freedom of religion is

mentioned at each of the three grade level groupings. The following comparison includes all such repeated references.

References to Religion in the National Standards for Civics and Government

References to religion in some form, either general or mentioning a specific religion, religious institution, practice or group occur 45 times in the total number of content standards organized under the five questions above. In the K-4 group, 29 sub-questions with approximately two knowledge standards each contain 13 references to religion in all. In the grades 5-8 group, 21 sub-questions with approximately two-three knowledge standards each contain 17 references to religion in all. In the grades 9-12 group, 21 sub-questions with approximately three to six knowledge standards each contain the remaining 15 references to religion. In summary, the National Standards for Civics and Government contain:

- 13 general references to religion at grades K-4
- 17 references to religion at grades 5-8
- 15 references to religion at grades 9-12

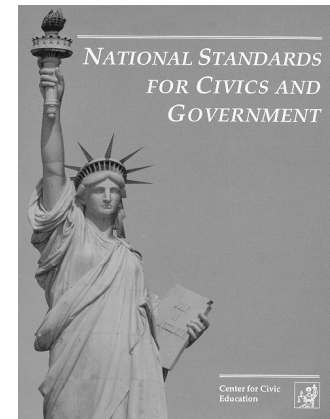
The nature of these references is quite interesting, as shown in the following analysis.

At all three grade levels, **Question I** includes religious belief under the definitions of private life and mentions the need for laws to prevent government from discriminating against people for their religious or political beliefs, as well as other mentions of limited government as a guarantor of personal rights.

Question II mentions “*common beliefs*” held by Americans including the right to freedom of religion at least once in each section. Under the definition of identity in the American system, religion -- like class, gender, language, ethnicity and national origin – is excluded from consideration of citizenship. At the same time, the benefits of diversity, including religion, are mentioned.

Question V lists the roles of the citizen, and traits of character such as “*moral responsibility*,” “*human dignity*,” and such other desirable qualities as respect for the rights of others, including their religious rights. In grades 5-8 and 9-12, there is discussion of the purposes and foundations of government in various nations and societies, including the source of authority and legitimacy as proceeding from “*custom*,” “*law*,” “*principles of morality*” and other sources, but the standards do not mention those systems of governance that derive all authority ultimately from God, or those monarchic systems that have recognized a divine right to rule. The standards do, however, mention nations in which the “*purposes government should serve*” or “*purposes constitutions serve*” also list “*promoting a particular religion*.” The standards also mention alternative forms of representation under constitutional systems, including “*religion, race and ethnicity*” as criteria in some nations.

In grades 9-12, students are required to “*explain the major arguments advanced for the necessity of politics and government*,” and one of the points is that “*human beings...are sinful or depraved by nature*.” No contrasting argument based on a more positive religious view of humanity is given. Under the possibilities for “*purposes of government*,” “*achieving a religious vision*” is mentioned, with the warning that “*promoting a religious vision of what society should be like may require a government to restrict individual thought and actions and*



place strict controls on the whole of society.” In the same section, students learn to “*explain and evaluate the argument that civil society is a prerequisite of limited government,*” and are asked to “*describe the historical role of religion in the development of a personal sphere of life.*”

Under “*Distinctive characteristics of American society,*” in grades 5-8 and 9-12, both “*religious freedom*” and “*Judeo-Christian ethic*” are listed under “*important factors that have helped shape American society.*” Similarly, several references to formative historical conflicts are given, including the “*Catholic/Protestant conflicts in the nineteenth century,*” the Protestant Reformation, the Enlightenment and religious conflicts in Europe which spilled over into colonial America.

On the topic of interactions among nation-states in both 5-8 and 9-12, “*common reasons for the breakdown of order among nation-states*” and “*conflicts about...religion*” are listed along with other causes. Under “*International Organizations,*” however, two specific global and national religious institutions are mentioned: the World Council of Churches and the Catholic Church. Otherwise, no positive role for world religions or religious institutions is mentioned to counterbalance their roles in engendering conflict. One might expect citations on charities for disaster relief, diplomatic initiatives, or social and community work here or abroad. Under discussion of the American political system, religious groups are mentioned among prominent associations that have played historic roles and have contributed to contemporary American society.

At all three grade levels, the First Amendment, freedom of religion and freedom of association are cited repeatedly in connection with important rights in American democracy. Finally, fewer than five of the references noted above are in the form of sidebars with quotations from philosophers, statesmen and other important American figures placed in the margins to illustrate the points in each section.

In summary, teaching about religion is integrated to some degree at all grade levels of the *National Standards for Civics and Government* with a roughly equal distribution in terms of grade level groupings and topics. Since this national model provides the basic structure and content for civics and government standards in many state standards documents, it will be utilized at the district level as a guide for standards implementation and instructional as well as standardized test design. It is thus encouraging that the National Standards for Civics and Government feature a considerable mention of the religious background of American civic life, the participation of religious groups in that life, and regular reminders of the importance of religious freedom and tolerance. The area of comparative governments is, however, one section of the document that could be enhanced in ways that would help students to understand the religious roots of civic values and government in other parts of the world. This should not be limited to a superficial discussion of theocracy, as the issues are more complex than such a categorization would suggest. In addition, as noted above, the practical role of religious groups in civil society should be better represented. If the skeletal framework is implemented in these areas, the document clearly allows for discussion of religion in relation to civics and government.

National Content Standards in Economics

The *Voluntary National Content Standards in Economics* was developed by a panel of economists and economic educators under the auspices of the National Council on Economic Education in partnership with the National Association of Economic Educators and the

Foundation for Teaching Economics. The approximately thirty-page document consists of 20 knowledge or content statements based on essential economic principles, with a rationale for their inclusion, benchmarks indicating attainment levels for students in grades 4, 8, and 12, and exemplars of student activities to enhance or demonstrate understanding of economics.

References to Religion in the National Economics Standards

Among the national standards efforts, the economics standards are the least inclusive of teaching about religion. The document champions a very mechanistic view of the subject overall, and one which admits little or no discussion about economic values that stem from religious beliefs or about religious ways of viewing economic problems or decisions.

There is only one direct reference to religion in the document to the effect that “*Not-for-profit organizations are established primarily for religious, health, educational, civic, or social purposes and are exempt from certain taxes.*” In fact, there is only one reference to values, whether religious or otherwise: “*People’s views of rewards and penalties differ because people have different values. Therefore, an incentive can influence different individuals in different ways.*”

Unlike the civics document, the national economics model does not attempt to deal with the historical foundations of its subject area. No mention is made of the fact that historically, religious scriptures, institutions and leaders have had much to say about and exercised considerable influence upon the economic life of societies where they predominated. The only sign of historical discussion in the standards document is in the form of modern economic history, using illustrations of economic concepts and suggesting that lessons be drawn from the Great Depression, the price inflation of the 1970s and 1980s, anti-trust legislation, oil price fluctuations and the like.

Even religiously motivated economic behavior in the contemporary world is excluded from discussion. . The effect, intentionally or otherwise, is to foster the impression that the principles of economics presented are more analogous to immutable laws of physics and mathematics than principles of government or other human systems of social organization. Similarly, in the course of their schooling, students may acquire the impression that the economic system is immutable and that they might therefore aspire to grow up and serve it, but not view it as a system that was designed by people to serve society and might therefore be modified to serve it better.

Strikingly absent is any direct mention of poverty either within the nation’s population or among the nations of the world. Other than including discussion of not-for-profit organizations in a general way, charitable giving as an economic activity is mentioned only once, and neither analysis of the social and economic effects of such a practice, nor of its costs and benefits, is included at any grade level.

Indirect references to the sphere of moral behavior and values, which are often addressed by religions, are similarly missing. Rather than values, ethics or morals, the document refers to advantages and disadvantages. This is not to suggest that a set of voluntary national content standards should include any normative content on what constitutes moral behavior in the economic sphere of life. On the other hand, it would be useful to direct students’ attention to the fact that human beings past and present have considered such issues in making economic decisions.

The *Voluntary Content Standards for Economics* does contain some normative content. For example, the writers cite uses to which specific content knowledge can be put: “*Students*

will be able to use this knowledge to: Make effective decisions as consumers, producers, savers, investors, and citizens”; “Negotiate exchanges and identify the gains to themselves and others“; “Explain how they can benefit themselves and others by developing special skills and strengths.” While these examples could engender classroom discussion touching upon the moral dimensions of informed economic choices, the document makes no mention of such a potential line of discourse. Choices are framed simply in terms of personal benefit.

Content Standard 3 and an activity for grade 4 provide insight into the value-neutral tone of the document: *“There are different ways to distribute goods and services (by prices, command, majority rule, contests, force, first-come/first-served, sharing equally, lottery, personal characteristics, and others), and there are advantages and disadvantages to each.”* The accompanying activity suggests that students *“Compare the advantages and disadvantages of different methods of allocating various goods and services, such as cookies, houses, student time on playground equipment at recess, elective class offices, military service in times of war or peace, and athletic championships.”* The explanation accompanying Standard 3 states, *“Unfortunately, many students have experienced the use of force to allocate resources on the school playground. Students also know that families typically use authoritarian systems to decide how resources are used -- Mom and Dad decide.”* While allocation of such things as kidney transplants and prison parole time are mentioned in the lesson, nothing but the sterile *“advantages and disadvantages”* is cited as a criterion or framework for decision-making. To be sure, if teachers are inclined to insert such matters into the discussion (without, of course, imposing any particular moral system), they can do so, but no reference is made to the possibility that advantage and disadvantage might have a moral dimension and some association with religious values.

The document’s framers try to use examples that are relevant to youngsters, but they have not tried to mix these with alternative consumption possibilities. Discussion of consumption and spending offers a typical case: Content Standard 2 includes the following: *“To determine the best level of consumption of a product, people must compare the additional benefits with the additional costs of consuming a little more or a little less.”* An activity for grade eight states: *“Solve the following problem: Your grandmother gives you \$30 for your birthday and you are trying to decide how to spend it. You are considering buying compact disks (\$12 each), going to the movies (\$5 per ticket), or taking some friends out for pizza (\$7.50 per person). You do not have to spend all your money on one thing. You can use some money for one thing, and some for another. How would you spend your money to get the greatest satisfaction?”* Not until Standard 10 are the possibilities of saving or charity mentioned. The explanation that *“Saving is the part of income not spent on taxes or consumption”* is accompanied by the following activity: *“Plan a budget for an allowance. The budget will include spending for goods and services, charitable donations, sales taxes, and saving.”*

At grade 12 there is more potential for discussions touching on moral issues, but teachers are not provided with encouragement or guidance on how to lead such discussions or to incorporate religious points of view. The document includes these statements: *“With this understanding, students can assess the benefits and costs of alternative allocation systems when discussing difficult questions such as how incomes should be divided among people or who should receive a kidney transplant and who should not”* and *“Also, compare the advantages and disadvantages of economic systems used in different countries and at different times, using as criteria broad social goals such as freedom, efficiency, fairness, and growth”*

and “*Comparing the benefits and costs of different allocation methods in order to choose the method that is most appropriate for some specific problem can result in more effective allocations and a more effective overall allocation system.*” An activity suggests that students “*Examine economic systems used in different countries, select the one that provides the most effective method for allocating resources, and explain why this method is effective. Also, assess the effectiveness of various systems for allocating organ transplants, hunting and fishing licenses, elective offices, time with a parent, and access to hospital maternity facilities.*” Here, too, with the exception of “*broad social goals,*” criteria for choosing one type of behavior over another are stated only in terms of cost and benefit, effectiveness and efficiency.

The economics standards approach the moral dimension in discussing the term “*market failures*” and the role of government. In Standard 16, students are told that “*Learning the economic as well as the political and social reasons for public sector services helps citizens make better choices about the appropriate size and scope of markets and government. It is also important that students be able to evaluate re-distributive effects of government programs.*” Issues like pollution and substance abuse are indirectly mentioned in terms of price: “*When a price fails to reflect all the benefits of a product, too little of the product is produced and consumed. When a price fails to reflect all the cost of a product, too much of it is produced and consumed. Government can use subsidies to help correct for insufficient output; it can use taxes to help correct for excessive output; or it can regulate output directly to correct for over- or under-production or consumption of a product... Explain why state and local governments use public money for elementary education and why tobacco and gasoline are heavily taxed.*”

A few other examples hint at normative intent, such as the suggestion that people should hold their government accountable for acting in the general national interest. Questions about government action and civic participation are part of this explanation to Standard 17. It is disappointing, however, that only the most rudimentary discussion of civic values provides relief from emphasis on self-interest. The document’s framers shied away from cultural and ethical views of economic issues, including those based on religious beliefs. It will remain for creative and capable teachers and school districts to provide students with a well-balanced and fully representative view of the religious and moral dimensions of economic decision-making, in addition to the secular, mechanistic view.

How National Standards Documents Relate to State Standards

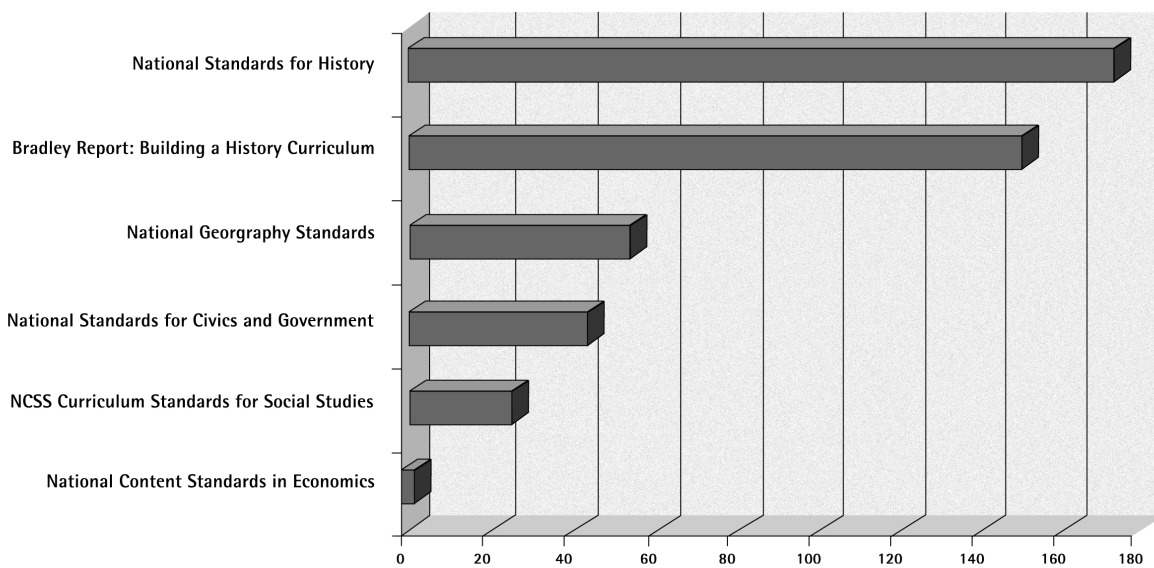
The national standards and other models analyzed on the preceding pages are copious, detailed guides for each field of study. They range in size from approximately 30 to nearly 200 pages. Experts in each field and various sub-specialties, together with grade-level teachers, curriculum designers and organizations provided input into the design and review process. These combined efforts resulted in generally excellent guidelines for teaching these subject areas according to the most recent thinking on content and pedagogy. While the guides are neither syllabi for instruction nor day-to-day lesson plans, they do provide a solid framework of specific content knowledge and teaching methodology for instructional planning. Many provide exemplars, though these are intended to be illustrative rather than exhaustive.

The state standards documents for social studies, on the other hand, are generally more schematic and basic. Many state commissions do not make highly detailed requirements;

instead, they supply a set of minimum standards as a basis for standardized testing. In order to clarify what may appear on tests, however, many states have already prepared implementation guides to supplement and clarify their standards to test-makers, content specialists, teachers and parents. Even then, state curriculum planners are clearly aware that amplification of state academic standards will occur at district and classroom levels.

The amount of autonomy left to districts and teachers in implementing and meeting the standards varies widely from state to state. Some state guides clearly indicate their intent that districts may choose among various models or develop their own (e.g., Montana, Iowa). Others are more stringent in specifying content and sequence for instruction, and some even seem to insist upon certain interpretations to be absorbed by students and rigorously assessed by the state, particularly in history.

References to Religion in National Curriculum Models



The national models are influencing several phases of planning and implementation. The relationship between the state and national documents is threefold. First, state academic standards commissions and committees have clearly utilized the national models to develop their own standard documents. This is apparent from direct references and citations acknowledging the national frameworks. It is also apparent in the use of identical or very similar structure, outlines, rubrics, skill sets, definitions and other content elements, even where these have been modified or combined with other elements. In other words, while none of the states has reproduced a national standard document in its entirety, many are a distillation of the basic information and structure of the national documents, with or without modifications. Many states have also incorporated aspects of the philosophy and goals statements from the national models directly into their state standards. Most states incorporate components of several national models, using one overall framework and “plugging” the national documents into the core subject areas.

Second, district planners are using the national standards documents to fill in the outlines of basic state standards requirements. In other words, what the state has distilled out, districts may pour back into their detailed instructional guides, under admixture of material

relevant to their student populations, inclinations and expertise. Course descriptions, detailed outlines, lesson planning guides, resource lists and activities are currently filling up three-ring binders in counties and districts across the US. This effort relies upon fiscal and human resources provided by federal, state and local agencies. A flurry of in-service training related to standards is being carried out with the help of the national standards guides and the specialists who helped to write them. Another use of the national standards documents is in preparation of test items, sample tests and coaching books and web sites.

Third, nearly all of the state departments of education provide links to online and/or downloadable versions of their standard documents and to online versions of one or more national documents to help with instructional planning. These links place the national documents directly into the hands of teachers who may read them for explanation, clarification or implementation. These online resources supplement the thousands of copies of the national standards documents already acquired by teachers in print form. In effect, each state and national document posted on the Internet is available to everyone in the US and abroad. The convergence of the rise of the Internet and the current round of educational reform has produced a very dynamic, invigorating atmosphere of discussion and investigation of possibilities. Most states include feedback links and invite web surfers to comment on the documents they have produced. In turn, some web sites sponsored by organizations that produced or disseminate the national models offer to review draft standards documents for states and localities.

Since the process of implementing standards-based instruction at the district and classroom level is still in the early stages, it would be difficult to quantify the degree to which various models are being incorporated into local school programs. A sampling of districts across the nation is possible, however, as state and county programs of study and other resources are being published on the Internet. Putnam Valley, NY, has assembled a national center for standards development. Many states and districts have assembled excellent web sites describing their programs and offering teacher resources and links to other academic and education sites. Teachers across the nation are also sharing their local experiences at conferences, making it clear that the national standards documents are having considerable impact at all stages of the planning and implementation process.

Part 4: The State Standards and Framework Documents

Organizing almost 50 disparate documents into coherent groups that yield meaningful analysis is a difficult task. They vary in length from a few pages to about a hundred. They appear on web sites as an intricate series of nested pages, as downloadable Acrobat or Word documents of prodigious size and complex formatting, and as simple text files. They are published as multi-layered outlines and charts as well as simple lists of skills and/or content. Some states include supporting documents, while other such supplements are still in development. The most difficult part of grouping the documents, however, is drawing conclusions about which approach dominates and which national model or models they most closely approximate. A few state documents or components owe little or nothing to the national models in a particular subject area.

Table of Social Studies Models By State

STATE	Nat'l History Standards	Bradley history	Traditional history	Geography-dominant	NCSS	None
Alabama		X				
Alaska						I
Arizona			X			
Arkansas	O				X	
California			X			
Connecticut	X					
Colorado	X					
Delaware	X					
DC						I
Florida			X		O	
Georgia				X		
Hawaii					X	
Idaho						I
Illinois	X					
Indiana		O		X	O	
Iowa						
Kansas					X	
Kentucky					O	
Louisiana	X				O	
Maine	X					
Maryland				X		
Massachusetts		X				
Michigan	X				O	
Minnesota					X	
Mississippi		O		O		
Missouri						
Montana	O	O	O	O	O	
Nebraska	X		X			
Nevada			X			
New Hampshire		X				
New Jersey	X					
New Mexico					X	
New York	X					
North Carolina				X		
North Dakota						I
Ohio					X	
Oklahoma			X			
Oregon	X					
Pennsylvania						I
Rhode Island						I
South Carolina	X				O	
South Dakota			X		O	
Tennessee	X					
Texas			X	X		
Utah				O	X	
Vermont	X					
Virginia			X			
Washington	X					
West Virginia				X		
Wisconsin	X				O	
Wyoming					X	

KEY	X =Dominant model for history/world studies
	X =NCSS as a stand-alone model
	O =Secondary model
	I =No standards or indeterminate model

Typing and Grouping the State Standards

Most of the state documents incorporate more than one of the national models, either explicitly or implicitly. Many simply “plug in” the basic standards items, rubrics and topics from all or some of the national documents under core subject areas or strands used in their programs. Some documents distribute the many fields of social studies evenly across their program of grade levels and courses. Others lay out benchmarks or standards in each discipline that reflect varying degrees of difficulty and depth in each grade level or cluster of levels. Some of the more rudimentary state documents are limited to lists of skills to be attained at certain grade levels or upon graduation. Some mandate content in a general way, indicating only topics or broad areas of knowledge, while at the other extreme, a number of documents include definite interpretations of history rather than more neutral identification of study topics.

The criteria used for grouping state social studies standards in this study are based on identification of aspects of the programs’ structure and content which significantly affect

teaching about religion. In each group, there are several states whose programs follow a given model quite closely, but states that incorporate this the model along with other influences may also be included in that group. Thus, some state documents are analyzed from more than one point of view and appear in more than one group.

A number of states, for example, built their overall K-12 social studies program around the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS) model, but they imbedded content and structure from the National Standards for History, Geography, Civics and Economics into the strands at relevant grade levels. Other NCSS model states have incorporated all of the national standards models except history; they insert a more traditional model for history studies, based on the themes and topics outlined in the Bradley Commission framework *Building a History Curriculum* or the National Center for History in the Schools framework *Lessons from History*.⁷ Still other states have traditional, but eclectic outlines of history that significantly diverge from any national model.

A few states have very rudimentary, brief or sketchy guidelines that are limited to general skills benchmarks. Such documents seem to signal districts that have autonomy in setting specific content standards or designing their programs. Some states in this group are in the process of adopting supplementary guides to elaborate on minimal standards adopted during the 1990s. Finally, several states have not completed their standard-setting process, have opted out of standards by choice, or have no social studies component in their standards program.

It is possible to differentiate among “history-dominant” programs with a strong sequence of “draped,” or sequential, required courses beginning at the middle school or elementary level, and those that are more focused on exposure to the social sciences in general or emphasize contemporary studies of the nation and the world. Many “history-dominant” programs label the social studies component of their standards as History and Social Science. California, which pioneered such emphasis, as well as New York and Virginia, are examples of such history-dominant states. “Social-science-dominant” programs prevail in a cluster of states, and some frame coverage of world religions and civilizations in middle school courses that might be characterized as “geography-dominant.” Around grades 6 or 7, the students take a Western Hemisphere and an Eastern Hemisphere course, which is invariably structured around the National Geography Standards and includes a survey of the world’s contemporary and historical cultures and religions, continent-by-continent or region-by-region. Capping this sequence in early high school is a course on post-1500, or “Modern” World History.

Under standards-based reform, US history is nearly everywhere a draped series of courses at grades 5, 8 and 11. As we shall see, the telescoping of ancient history and contemporary world studies in these Middle School courses has important ramifications for teaching about the rise and spread of world religions and their beliefs and practices, and it has important ramifications for the level of depth and integration with which their history is approached.

It is interesting to note that numerous states mention or outline a variety of elective courses in their standards documents. While only a percentage of students take such courses, they can make up for the lack of depth and breadth in some programs and for the necessarily superficial coverage that occurs when students learn about such complex subject matter at the comparatively young age of eleven to thirteen years in grades 6 and 7. It is worthy of note, however, that students interested in the sciences are less likely to take such electives than those headed for higher studies in the humanities.

⁷ Charlotte Crabtree, *Lessons from History*, National Center for History in the Schools, University of California, Los Angeles, 1989.

Teaching about Religion in State Standards on the NCSS Model

As many as nineteen states have based their programs on the NCSS model to one degree or another, and influences from this model can be detected in several others. One can divide those states adhering to this model into two groups. The majority of states in this group use the NCSS framework of strands to organize their overall K-12 program, but “plug” one of the national standards models for specific disciplines -- such as geography, economics, civics or history -- into the appropriate strand. In this study, states that follow the NCSS model overall, but use a different model for their history program, are not designated or analyzed under the NCSS model group. The reason is that the majority of content on teaching about religion resides in history, and significant differences in approach to teaching about religion can be traced back to the history or geography models.

There are, however, a few states whose standards or frameworks adhere closely to the *Expectations of Excellence* as a stand-alone model. Since that fact differentiates this group of documents from other groups, such states are designated in this study’s charts as NCSS model states. The states that may be most nearly classified as following the National Council for Social Studies model are Arkansas, Hawaii, Kansas, Minnesota, New Mexico, Ohio (which does not have a standards document at this writing but has posted a statement of outcomes which are subject to proficiency testing at several grade levels), South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming. Other states that use the NCSS model as a framework, but imbed into it other models, especially in history, are Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, South Carolina and Wisconsin. All of the latter state documents, however, will be analyzed in other sections, based on the history model they employ.

Direct references in state documents on the NCSS model

Those state documents that use the NCSS model as a stand-alone are characterized by a relative paucity of direct references to religion, from as few as one or two to fifteen in most of the group. The word “*beliefs*” in these citations includes both secular and religious meanings. The word “*religious*” or “*religion*” in these documents, as in the NCSS model, is most often – though not exclusively – used in conjunction with categories concerning study of such attributes of culture groups as ethnicity, language, gender, family, nationality and socioeconomic status. For example, Wyoming’s document, under grade 8 benchmarks, requires that “*Students explain how family systems, religion, language, literature and the arts contribute to the development of cultures.*” Nearly identical wording appears in most of the other documents in this group. In New Mexico, students are expected to “*evaluate how interactions among art, music, language, technology, belief systems and other cultural elements can impact global understandings.*” Typically, this group of state documents features zero references to Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism or any other specific tradition. Instead, omnibus standards or benchmarks refer to teaching about world religions as in this citation from Hawaii’s *Essential Learnings*, which requires knowledge of “*the development and spread of major philosophies, religions and value systems.*” Similar references appear under the study of art and language arts in Hawaii and in other states following this model, referring to “*a tradition in every culture, reflecting, perpetuating and reshaping its beliefs, values and traditions.*”

Utah, with its strong religious heritage, is the exception, with over 40 direct references. Most of the documents in this group make scant mention of specific religious traditions; seven of the documents do not mention religion at all. The South Dakota standards mention each

specific faith once or twice; the Kansas document mentions Christianity four times and “Muslim religion” (in comparison with Christianity) once, but names no other specific faith tradition. Utah is again the exception, with one or two mentions of each major world religion and some of their scriptures, two mentions of Mormons, and one of Bahis.

Indirect references in state documents on the NCSS model

Following the original document *Expectations of Excellence*, the NCSS model group of state documents seems to focus most of its content on teaching about religion in the form of indirect references, particularly under the broadly defined rubric of *culture*. A definition of *culture* taken verbatim from *Expectations of Excellence* is incorporated into several of these state documents. The NCSS standard document defines culture in this performance standard for high school:

Social studies programs should include experiences that provide for the study of culture and cultural diversity, so that the learner can:

- a. analyze and explain the ways groups, societies, and cultures address human needs and concerns;*
- b. predict how data and experiences may be interpreted by people from diverse cultural perspectives and frames of reference;*
- c. apply an understanding of culture as an integrated whole that explains the functions and interactions of language, literature, the arts, traditions, beliefs and values, and behavior patterns;... (*Expectations for Excellence*, p. 111) [Emphasis added]*

Four of these NCSS-based state documents incorporate this language directly into standard items, while others include it in glossaries. Several include components of the definition in standards from other subject areas including music, fine arts and literature. This broad definition, of course, fully justifies the assumption that any reference to *culture* may include study of religion or beliefs in those standards documents that include or refer to this definition, and by extension any document that incorporates language on teaching about culture from the NCSS model standards document. This group of standards documents generally tends to include few direct references to religions but many references to culture. At the low end, the Arkansas standards, a comparatively brief document, has 11 references to culture; Wyoming’s has 12; Ohio’s has 10, which are repeated at various grade levels. In the middle range, New Mexico’s document has 21 and Hawaii’s has 20. At the high end, Utah’s standards contain over 60 references to culture in addition to the direct references in this extensive and content-specific document. South Dakota’s standards refer to culture 23 times, and Kansas’ standards 22 times.

Indirect citations of “*ideals*” seems to refer most often to the civic realm, though the occasional reference to *ideals* harks back to some that have historical origins in religious beliefs. “*Tradition*,” is often paired with “*customs*” or “*values*” in the citations, as in “*Analyze the influence of values, beliefs, and traditions in the economies of India, China and Mexico.*” or “*Describe how ideas, beliefs, values and Western traditions are sustained and continued over time in governments of the United States...*”(Kansas).

In summary, those documents that follow the NCSS model most closely and do not embed specific content from the subject area national standards models into the appropriate NCSS categories generally have the fewest direct references to teaching about religion. As stated above, even these specific references are most often alloyed with other categories and, therefore, express less familiarity with human spiritual expression or the history of religious institutions, and more identification of group or individual attributes like ethnicity, gender and

nationality. Only a few of these generic references to religion address the historical development of specific traditions; many state documents following the NCSS model contain no references to specific religions at all. It must be reiterated, however, that these documents as a group mandate content in a generalized, categorical way. They tend to include less specific, mandated content in history, economics and geography than other, content-specific state documents. In order to gauge exactly what is taught in the classroom in these states, it would be necessary to determine how the districts interpret these guidelines in their detailed programs of study, as well as analyze test items given over time in those states with standardized testing programs.

It is not justified to conclude from the above observations that teaching about religion will not occur in states that follow the NCSS model. Content on religions might appear under the rubric of culture, or in the NCSS strand on “Time, Continuity and Change” as a category that encompasses all areas of history study. To critics inclined to see this in a positive light, the lack of specifically mandated content represents autonomy for local school districts, which may design rigorous and penetrating programs on teaching about religion if their communities desire them. To others, the documents seem incomplete, unspecific and very difficult to use as tools to assess and raise the level of students’ knowledge on religion or any other topic. In the final analysis, the mere possibility of inclusion by dint of interpretation is no assurance of inclusion, nor do these documents as a group offer guidance on teaching about religion, a sensitive and academically demanding field of study. Unless district curriculum plans specifically include and assess teachers and students on the topic, some teachers may – as they have for years – teach it or not teach it, depending upon their level of comfort with, affinity to and knowledge of the subject. As a final note, it must be stated that just as other states using the NCSS framework to structure their overall social studies program incorporate the national standards or other national models as a guide to specific content, districts in states with general content mandates may also turn to the national models for guidance in the core disciplines.

State Standards following History and Social Science models

The majority of states with published social studies standards have programs in which history courses dominate. In this report, such programs are designated as “history-dominant,” in contrast to “social science” or “geography-dominant” approaches in which contemporary world studies appear in place of middle school world history surveys. Most history-dominant documents state that the core disciplines of geography, economics, civics and history are intended to be fully integrated within history studies, in addition to content on arts, literature and even earth science. In contrast to the many social science strands outlined in the NCSS model, or the four core disciplines outlined in other models, history-dominant states often integrate these strands as a component of multidisciplinary history studies at multiple grade levels. History, however, is the vehicle for incorporating other content, with the exception of the standard courses on economics, government/civics and the primary grade social studies.

Describing Divergent History Models

History-dominant state programs can be grouped according to their adherence to two basic approaches, which are most apparent in the way they structure world history content. On one hand, several states build sequential US and world history courses around the traditional sequence of civilizations and topics upon which Western civilizations courses have been based

for many decades, though they do include varying amounts of content on non-Western civilizations. On the other hand, numerous states utilize a more recent, innovative model based on a structure of eras and themes. These state documents diverge into sub-groups based on their adherence to either the Bradley Commission model in *Building a History Curriculum*, or the *National Standards for History* model of global eras. A few states, particularly those whose standards documents were already completed around 1994, refer to US and world history in terms of eras titled after those in Charlotte Crabtree's report *Lessons from History*. The eras in Crabtree's report are quite similar to those in the *National Standards for History*.

States' adherence to one of the models is most apparent in the titles of the eras that have usually been adopted verbatim from one of the three documents. Identification is more difficult in cases where state curriculum writers have modified or combined the titles of several eras or models. In a few cases, introductory text in the documents acknowledges two or all three of the history models. Despite some variance in periodization, state documents organized around eras derive benefit from balance and continuity, which is advantageous for teaching about world religions and religion in US history.

States Incorporating the *National Standards for History* Model

States that adhere to the *National Standards for History* model or utilize its structure and terminology are grouped and analyzed under that model in this study. They include states that use the NCSS framework overall and incorporate the *National Standards for History* under the rubric of Strand II, "Time, Continuity and Change."

An important criterion for determining whether a state document incorporates the *National Standards for History* is whether or not topics of history are described within a chronological structure of eras for US and world history. Another sign is acknowledgement of reliance on the *National Standards for History* in introductory text or its inclusion as a citation in the reference section.

It is important to note that many of the documents that mandate a structure of eras in US and world history do not include extensive content outlines. A number of states seem to utilize the *National Standards for History* framework of US and World Eras as a kind of shorthand, incorporating its Historical Thinking Skills and Eras, but stating very little else about how history is to be taught. Adoption of the model signals to districts that they may fill in the schematic course outlines with content from the full *National Standards for History* document, which is known and readily available. These state documents neither repeat what already exists nor tinker with the national model.

Some states, on the other hand, use modified titles for the eras, omit one or more eras, or compress two eras into one, although their history framework still utilizes the new structure of chronological/global coverage. Another small sub-group of state documents included in this category are those which incorporate the framework of eras for US and world history but utilize the era titles and periodization adopted from *Lessons from History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire*, a guidebook for developing history curriculum. This guidebook by the National Center for History in the Schools embodies some elements of the *National Standards for History*. Again, the decisive element is that the structure of eras across the globe provides the framework for history study rather than the traditional, topical approach based on a sequence of civilizations. The state documents that utilize era headings from *Lessons from History* were among the earliest history standards documents published by the states, predating the appearance of the *National*

Standards for History or appearing around the same time. It is fairly likely that districts in such states would turn to the full text of the *National Standards for History*, which was also published under the auspices of the UCLA Center for History in the Schools, to fill out the details of content. Indeed some states have already revised their standards documents to conform to the *National Standards for History* era periodization (See Delaware, for example).

The list of states that incorporate the *National Standards for History* model in their history/social studies standards includes Connecticut, Delaware, Illinois, Louisiana, Maine, Michigan (which published US but not world history standards), Nebraska, New York, Oregon, South Carolina, Tennessee, Washington and Wisconsin. Nebraska's document frames world and US history in terms of *National Standards for History* eras almost verbatim, but its history survey omits the period from 1000-1450 CE. Nebraska's standards are a most peculiar mixture, as they cite the innovative framework of eras in the *National Standards* but also feature topics and specific content standards from the staunchly traditional *Virginia Standards of Learning*. States whose history standards utilize the structure of eras taken from *Lessons from History* include Colorado, New Jersey and Vermont. A total of sixteen states fall into this group.

Evidence for Adoption of the Model

Several of the state standards documents in this group illustrate how incorporation of rubrics and structural elements from the national documents indicates general adoption of the model and approval for districts to utilize the full text of the National Standards for program planning. Illinois' document is brief, importing language from the national standards in all fields, and explains its brevity and lack of comprehensiveness thus: "*Note: Examples are designated by "e.g." and enclosed in parentheses. They are meant to guide the teacher as to the general intent of the standards and benchmarks, not to identify all possible items.*" Louisiana's document also incorporates the basic structure of all national standards skills and content standards, embedding them within the NCSS overall structural model under each thematic strand. Maine, in its fifteen-page document, takes the same approach, as do Colorado, Delaware (recently revised to align with the National Standards eras) and New Jersey. Vermont's document is among the briefest, mentioning that students should acquire knowledge of "major eras of history" without indicating which national model's structure is to be used. Washington State has constructed a fairly brief document that incorporates the core disciplines, with history to be considered within a framework of eras, and Wisconsin recommends three national models—the National Standards, the NCSS and *Building a History Curriculum* as a basis for developing local curriculum. Connecticut, whose history standards were only recently completed, adopts the *National Standards for History* structure of eras verbatim, as well as incorporating its Skills for Historical Thinking, which the National Center for History Education (NCHE) has also reproduced in recent updates of *Building a History Curriculum*.

New York's social studies document, at nearly a hundred pages, is among the most extensive and detailed of those that depend upon the *National Standards for History* for its framework. It includes the following statement about use of the national standards:

"The national standards projects, funded by the federal government, in history ... geography... and civics and government ... provided direction for organizing the standards, identifying and selecting areas of study, and defining approaches and

competencies to be included in the framework. The voluntary national standards are meant to be a resource to be used by parents, teachers, and all citizens as one guide to high standards. They can be used by schools, districts, and states to guide and revise curricula, assessments, teacher preparation, and instruction... The standards in each of these subject areas were valuable in developing the New York State standards. They served as a reference and much of the wording of the final standards was based on the wording in the reports of these projects.”(Page 17)

The program includes extensive incorporation of arts and literature as part of a rigorous history-dominant set of standards. Oregon requires that students “*exhibit knowledge of the chronological flow of human history*” and “*understand significant eras*” of US history. The document cites the national standards in every field, including verbatim incorporation of the historical thinking skills from the *National Standards for History*. South Carolina cites the *National Standards for History* era titles, featuring the “*Period of Intensified Hemispheric Interactions*” as the dividing point for a two-year study of history. Like Louisiana, South Carolina embeds all of the national standards in the four core areas under the NCSS thematic structure for the overall social studies program. Tennessee’s standards document is based upon the four core discipline national standard documents and includes a strong statement in support of the National Standards for History model: “*Student learnings are keyed to standards developed to reflect applicable national standards efforts. History content is sequenced according to the eras identified in the National Standards for History: Basic Edition.*”

As noted above, more than half of the state documents that incorporate the four national standards core disciplines, including history, are quite brief and sketchy. Because these state documents are so strongly linked to the detailed national standards documents, however, their impact will differ from those states whose standards are brief or vague but do not follow any of the national models very closely. In the case of this group, it will be abundantly clear to districts as well as teachers where they may turn for further guidance on specifics. Citation of the rubrics and skills need only be employed as a kind of shorthand. This is one reason why a simple tabulation and comparison of citations on teaching about religion in the state standards documents would not produce a good indication of how much teaching about religion is likely. Deeper analysis of the process is required.

Teaching About Religion in State Documents on the National Standards for History Model

Among the documents in this group, New York, Colorado, Delaware and New Jersey have the most detailed content guidelines, New York’s being the most extensive. A summary of the number of citations on teaching about religion is an indicator of contrast within this group, but as noted above, it must be understood against the background of the complete national standards documents to which the state documents refer for implementation. New York’s standards have 53 direct references to religion and beliefs in general, and 13 references to specific religious traditions or their adherents. Indirect references to religion as a component of culture and civilization are found in more than 40 references to “*culture,*” as in the statement, “*The study of world history requires an understanding of world cultures and civilizations, including an analysis of important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs and traditions...*” or “*The study of New York State and United States history requires an analysis of the development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways*

people are unified by many values, practices and traditions.” Twenty-nine references to tradition and several to ideals supplement the direct references. Among the direct references, about one third refer to elementary grade standards on religious beliefs and practices as expressions of diverse communities, individuals and groups “*in New York, the US and the world*” and their influence on history from the local to the global arena.

Colorado’s document has 15 direct references to religion and 12 to specific traditions, in addition to 36 references to culture or traditions. Among the briefer documents, such as those of Oregon, Washington, Vermont, Maine, Michigan and Tennessee, direct references to religion range from 4 to 20, with 0 to 10 references to specific traditions, and between 10 and 30 references to culture or traditions. The documents in this group built around the NCSS framework, with the *National Standards for History* as the “Time, Continuity and Change” strand, exhibit the comparatively large number of references to culture typical of that model. Other states in this group have a range of references to religion falling between the greatest and least number of citations.

A few references may translate into extensive instructional content, however, as seen in the description of the *National Standards for History* content on religion included for each of the historical eras. Each state document which cites the *National Standards for History* includes the requirement to study “*Era 3: Classical Traditions, Major Religions and Giant Empires, (1000 B.C. to A.D 300),*” as cited in the Louisiana standards, for example, or in Kentucky’s rephrasing of the National Standards for History language: “*The rise of classical civilizations and empires and the development of major religions had long lasting impacts on the world (e.g. Greece, Rome, Aryan conquest, Shang and Chou dynasties, Judaism, Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam).*” This era includes the introductory study of the major traditions, with Islam appearing in Era 4. The importance of the world history model here, however, is that the rise of world religions is considered on a global level, and regions which may have been peripheral to the major civilizations are also considered as arenas for the development and spread of religious ideas, practices and traditions. Specific references to religions also appear in Eras 1 and 2, such as Tennessee’s requirement for grades 6-8: “*Evaluate the influence of religion on the development of early codes of law.*” This built-in comparative approach is a hallmark of the world history model. As a further example, Era 4 in the Louisiana document requires study of “*Expanding Zones of Exchange and Encounter A.D. 300 – 1000) Tracing the expansion of major religions and cultural traditions and examining the impact on civilization in Europe, Asia and Africa.*”

General requirements to incorporate the study of religion include examples such as this set of items in Colorado: “*Students know the historical development of religion and philosophical ideas*” and “*Students know how societies have been affected by religion and philosophies*” and “*Students know how various forms of expression reflect religious beliefs and philosophical ideas.*” These statements are accompanied by subtopics mandating specific content and performance standards. Colorado’s rationale statement for this group of history standards makes a very strong statement about following the thread of religion through time and space:

“From the great questions of human existence, religious and philosophical answers have emerged with power to move entire peoples to action. Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or

unimportant. Knowledge of the basic symbols and practices of various religions and the concepts of various philosophies help students understand history, literature, art, and contemporary life.”

New York’s document features a detailed set of mandates on teaching about religion that is well linked to specific historical content. An example from Era 3: *“develop a map of Europe, the Mediterranean world, India, South and Southeast Asia and China to show the extent of the spread of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism and Confucianism; explain how the spread of these religions changed the lives of people living in these areas of the world.”* An interesting standard in Wisconsin’s document that is echoed in various states and models is the following: *“Select instances of scientific, intellectual and religious change in various regions of the world at different times in history and discuss the impact those changes had on beliefs and values.”* The latter provides a real impetus to compare and contrast regions, civilizations and religious influences throughout the span of history.

Among this group of state documents, general and specific requirements to study religion in US history follow the typical pattern, with emphasis on the role of religion in early American history, such as this standard item from Tennessee requiring students in grades 3-5 to *“Distinguish the religious, economic and political reasons for colonizing North America.”* A much more extensive standard in Colorado for grades 5-8 includes *“describing religious traditions of various ethnic groups in the United States; describing religious developments in United States history (for example, the Puritans, the Great Awakening, the Christian Abolitionists, the Mission System, the Mormon Trek, the founding of utopian religious communities). . .”* New York’s standards exhibit some detailed statements on US history, such as this exemplar for the elementary grades:

“Conduct interviews with family members, collect family memorabilia such as letters, diaries, stories, photographs, and keepsakes; classify information by type of activity: social, political, economic, cultural, or religious; discuss how traditions and practices were passed from one generation to the next; determine the extent to which the traditions and practices are shared by other members of the class”

This group of standards documents includes typical elementary-grade references to religion as a component of community, state and national identity, with the addition, in many history-dominant states, of introductory information on selected world cultures in grades 3 and up. Some of the elementary grade standards in this group, however, include more historically rigorous and analytical mandates, such as this one from New Jersey: *“By the end of grade 4, students compare and contrast similarities and differences in daily life over time. Identify social institutions such as family, religion, and government, that function to meet individual and group needs.”* New York quotes the *National Standards for History*, grades K-4, in a standard that is typical for the history-dominant programs following this model: *“Explain ways that families long ago expressed and transmitted their beliefs and values through oral traditions, literature, songs, art, religion, community celebrations, mementos, food, and language.”* In Vermont, PreK-4 standards include this challenging item: *“Compare a broad range of cultural expressions from both elite and folk groups (e.g. literature, art, artifacts, religions and histories) to discover the variety among cultures. . .”* and include as a means the following skill-based standard: *“Investigate and use the formal and informal methods (e.g. photo albums, oral traditions) and institutions (e.g. family, schools, museums) that have been used to transmit culture.”*

Geography, civics and economics standards tend to be integrated into the study of history in this group, except in states that separate the standards into the four core disciplines. Most direct references to teaching about religion in this group, however, are listed under rubrics about history, while indirect references, under culture, also reproduce objectives from the geography standards. A typical formulation of the tendency to integrate the disciplines is this statement from the Wisconsin document: “*In Wisconsin schools, the content, concepts, and skills related to geography may be taught in courses that deal with geography, history, global studies, anthropology, sociology, psychology, current events and world religions.*”

State Documents Based on the *Building a History Curriculum* Model

A smaller number of history-dominant state documents incorporate the structure and titles of eras, and/or the list of topics and subtopics from *Building a World History Curriculum* and *Building a US History Curriculum*. Just as states “plug in” the National Standards for History eras for the NCSS strand “Continuity and Change,” some state documents insert language from the Bradley Commission rubrics for eras, topics and subtopics. Even some states that embed middle school history standards into geography-based Western/Eastern Hemisphere courses have incorporated some language from *Building a History Curriculum* into their guidelines. For the purposes of this study, however, these states have been discussed as a group because of the effects of the geography approach on teaching about world religions. Altogether, the Bradley model has been utilized and incorporated into many state documents, though few have structured their social studies content by quoting extensively from the outlines and subtopics.

Evidence for Adoption of the Bradley Commission Model

States that clearly utilize the Bradley Report language to denote topics and subtopics are Alabama, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Mississippi and Indiana, but numerous others cite the document in their introductions, especially the history-dominant state documents discussed below. The state documents cited here, however, represent those that most closely adhere to the structure and topical content laid out in *Building a History Curriculum*. Massachusetts’ history and social science standards document is both the most extensively detailed standards document in this sub-group and the one that most closely follows the language and structure of the model laid out in *Building a History Curriculum*. Massachusetts’ long introduction shows considerable influence from the California History/Social Science Framework. It is emphatic in its support for a history-dominant program, in its emphasis on acquiring research, writing and speaking and analytical skills, in teaching history and social science throughout the school years, and in its embrace of a multi-disciplinary approach to teaching.

The Massachusetts document is among the longest and most complex state documents, having multiple levels of directives and content requirements. It is organized, for example, into Core Concepts, Guiding Principles, Reasoning and Research skills, Core Knowledge in the four disciplines and Commonly Taught Subtopics related to core knowledge. The document includes a section on scope and sequence and a set of “Study Strands and Learning Standards.” These introductory sections show some influence from the California History/Social Science Framework, which is still in use. The sections on Core Knowledge most closely approximate the “Major Eras and Topics” listed in *Building a History Curriculum*, both for US and world

history. With slight modifications, the titles of eras and periodization of the Bradley Commission framework provide the structure for the Massachusetts document, and many of its topics and subtopics are incorporated with some enhancements and modifications. There is a group of several learning standards for each of the four core disciplines. These are drawn from various standards documents, and they represent a mix of skills and general content. Interestingly, the Massachusetts document does not draw heavily upon the “Central Strands and Significant Questions” in *Building a History Curriculum*, but is more concerned with the core knowledge laid out in that document.

One feature of the document that is quite significant, however, is the topical outline format of the core knowledge standards. Massachusetts’ topics are in the form of bulleted lists. Most other states, such as Alabama, structure their history programs around the eras, topics and subtopics in *Building a History Curriculum*, and usually retain the topics and subtopics of the Bradley model bulleted lists, but include them in performance objectives headed by verb phrases. Such statements and specific performance standards can provide more helpful guidance in developing curriculum and test items than a laundry list of items to be covered without further explanation.

The New Hampshire Social Studies Standards document also emphasizes its debt to the Bradley Commission as well as the National Center for History in the Schools by stating,

“From the many relevant resources listed in the reference section of this framework, two works were used as the primary basis for the organization and development of New Hampshire’s history standards. These publications are Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools prepared by the Bradley Commission on History in Schools and Lessons from History: Essential Understandings and Historical Perspectives Students Should Acquire prepared by the National Center for History in Schools.”

New Hampshire incorporates the skills standards from both documents as Curriculum Standards, or exit benchmarks for grades 6, 10 and 12. New Hampshire is the only state to fully incorporate the historical themes, as the document states, “*These vital themes are quoted in full from pages 10 and 11 of the Bradley Commission report Building a History Curriculum: Guidelines for Teaching History in Schools (Washington, DC: Educational Excellence Network, 1988).*” The “Central Strands and Significant Questions” in *Building a History Curriculum* are not incorporated into the document, however, and were not located in any state document. They may reappear at the district level in these states, since the overall document was so influential. The other states listed utilize parts of the document to provide periodization or to guide inclusion of topics and subtopics, though not always in the exact language used in *Building a History Curriculum*. One of the most influential and positive aspects of the Bradley Report has been adoption of its suggested course patterns for sequencing history-centered courses across the elementary and secondary grades.

Teaching about Religion in State Documents on the Bradley Model

Because it most closely reproduces the subtopics and topics outlined in *Building a History Curriculum*, Massachusetts’ document shares the strengths and weaknesses in teaching about religion noted above. Of the several states mentioned in this group, most have a fair number of references to religion in their standard documents. Alabama has 44 general references, with 8 on Christianity and 1-6 for each of the other specific traditions.

Massachusetts has 42 general references, with 31 on Christianity, 16 on Judaism, 23 on Islam, 9 on Buddhism and 4 on Hinduism, plus 4 on other traditions. Mississippi's document has 46 general references and 2-6 specific references. More than 10 of the general references, however, come from the Bible History and Minority Studies electives outlined in the document. New Hampshire's document has 8 general references to religion, and 1-3 on each specific tradition. By comparison, New Hampshire's document has 26 general references to culture. New Hampshire's blanket requirement to study religion is contained in its quotation of one of the Bradley Report's historical themes:

Values, beliefs, political ideas, and institutions; The origins and spread of influential religions and ideologies; The evolution of political and social institutions, at various stages of industrial and commercial development; The interplay among ideas, material conditions, moral values, and leadership, especially in the evolution of democratic societies; The tensions between the aspirations for freedom and security, for liberty and equality, for distinction and commonality, in human affairs.

As part of the document's content knowledge in world history, New Hampshire students are required to:

- *Compare the origin, central ideas, institutions, and worldwide influence of major religious and philosophical traditions including Buddhism, Christianity, Confucianism, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism.*
- *Discuss the contributions of Judaism and Christianity to the development of Western civilization.*

Another major historical theme cited from the Bradley Commission Report requires knowledge of:

- *The cultural flowering of major civilizations in the arts, literature, and thought. The role of social, religious, and political patronage of the arts and learning. The importance of the city in different eras and places.*

Alabama has a typical requirement in world history studies to “*compare the development of major world religions and their key tenets*” followed by a listing of the five major faiths, along with Confucianism and Taoism. More complex knowledge of each tradition is contained in standard items on each major regional civilization. In US history, Alabama students are required to learn about “*developments in the arts, religion, literature, architecture and technology*” as well as Native American religious traditions. Otherwise, teaching about religion in American life is most prominent for the colonial period and tapers off after that, with some exceptions. Religion is mentioned as a factor in the New Deal period and in relation to the period of reform brought on by rapid transformation and expansion of the US economy, which resulted in “*one of the greatest bursts of cultural, religious and social reforms in American history.*”

Alabama, Massachusetts and some other states require teaching about religion in connection with state history requirements, ensuring that religious diversity and its history in the state is honored. One such standard emphasizes “*the importance of religion*” in 19th century Alabama. Alabama's learning standard on modern world history includes the common association of religion with conflict, one of the worst formulations being the simplistic, pejorative juxtaposition of topics on the Middle East, which comes straight from the Bradley Commission Report, and is repeated in Massachusetts and a few other states:

“26. Analyze the persistence of nationalism, militarism, and civil war throughout the world.

- *Internal conflict, nationalist and ethnic enmity: South Africa, Northern Ireland, Chile*
- *New forms and uses of terrorism*
- *Continuation of race for modern weapons: nuclear, chemical, biological*
- *The Middle East: religion, oil, dictatorship, the Gulf War* [emphasis added]
- *Civil War and genocide: Africa, Cambodia, the Balkans*” (Alabama, p. 106)

New Hampshire’s US history standards require students to “*Identify and discuss the political, legal, philosophical, and religious traditions that the early settlers brought to the development and establishment of American democracy.*” New Hampshire students of 19th century US history will explore “*(1803-1860) ...religious roots of reform movements; and the legacies of the temperance, public education, abolitionist, and women's rights movements.*” The state’s civics standards echo language in the national civics document on the issue of identity and tolerance: “*Explain that, in the United States, constitutional democracy is founded on the conviction that Americans are united as a nation by the ideals and principles they share rather than the race, religion, or country of origin of the nation's people.*” New Hampshire has one of the most explicit and least negative requirements to study religion in contemporary American life as shown in the following statement: “*Demonstrate an understanding of major topics in the study of the recent United States (1949-present) including the Civil Rights and women's movements; new immigration policies; foreign policy developments; the Cold War; post-World War II conflicts; technological and economic change; expanding religious diversity and the growth of religious evangelicalism; and the United States in the contemporary world.*”[Emphasis added] This wording is quite different from the sole reference to “*political awakening of Christian fundamentalists*” mentioned as a Bradley Report subtopic for recent US history.

Among the mixed-model documents in this group, Mississippi’s and Indiana’s take many of their standard items on religion from the language of *Geography and Life*, while specific history items draw on Bradley Report language to some extent. Since Indiana’s program also includes social science electives, numerous items on religion appear in Asian Studies and Sociology. Similarly, many of the references to religion in the Mississippi document are part of the Bible history elective.

The mixture of influences in these documents makes it difficult to group them with any one model or to predict how teaching about religion or any other topic will be incorporated into local curriculum. What sets these documents apart from the next group, however, is that historical study is structured around a series of eras rather than discrete cultures, events or regional studies. The potential in this model, as in the National History Standards, is for greater continuity of themes, including religions, which are to be covered in each era across regions and cultures. On the other hand, if local districts adopt the “selected civilizations” approach recommended in *Building a History Curriculum*, then specific regions, cultures and time periods in which religion was an important historical factor may be omitted. Despite the fact that many of the documents in this group have a fairly high level of detail, program development may prove a confusing and contradictory process.

Traditional History-Dominant State Documents

In contrast to states whose documents are built around one or more of the recently published national models, some states have developed uniquely worded and structured alternative models based on traditional history curriculum patterns. The documents in this group reflect the basic framework for US and world history that has been typical in textbooks and survey courses for decades. They reject both the era-by-era and the global/regional structure of history study in favor of a civilizations-based approach.

State standards documents in this group are distinguished by their detailed outlines mandating study of a fixed sequence of events and topics from US history, and in world history a sequence of discrete civilizations, such as Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, the Middle Ages in Europe, and so on. These documents place greater emphasis on Western or European history than either the more globally focused Eastern Hemisphere/Western Hemisphere world studies programs or the National Standards model. Some of these states utilize themes and strands from *Building a History Curriculum* and take up its rationale and patterns for a history-centered program, but they do not structure the course around a series of historical eras.

These states convened standard-setting commissions that developed unique, highly content-specific outlines and statements about historical events and their interpretation. These frameworks for the study of history shape the structure of the survey courses and mandated knowledge standards and have significant implications for teaching about religions. These outlines differ from one another in exact wording, but they share many aspects of structure, content and emphasis. Some common aspects are limitation of US history to a traditional narrative, the story of Western civilization dominating world history, and a clearly expressed emphasis on moral/religious and patriotic values, particularly those perceived as core values of US and Western culture. These emphases play out differently in each document. .

States in this group include Virginia (one of the first states to develop standards), Arizona, California, Florida, Nebraska, South Dakota and Nevada, the latter's document appearing too recently for detailed analysis in this study. The California and Virginia documents are lengthy and detailed outlines, both leaders within this group. While South Dakota has a middle school geography sequence instead of history, its document mandates a traditional approach to history in its one-year high school world history course. Some other states whose standards list content benchmarks from the four core disciplines also have history standards that take a traditional approach based on a sequence of civilizations rather than global or hemispheric chronology and require selected items and approaches for special emphasis. Here, too, loose adherence to one or another model has made meaningful grouping quite difficult.

Teaching About Religion in Traditional State History Documents

California's *History/Social Science Academic Standards* document was a relatively late entry among standards documents (1998). The highly detailed, history-dominant program retains the innovative elements embodied in the 1989 California History/Social Science Framework, which pioneered multi-year, draped history courses. Alone in the US, California students take three-year sequences of both United States and world history. California's world history document outlines a highly detailed list of civilizations with minutely worded content mandates. California's document includes 19 references to religion, all associated with specific groups, even at the elementary level. As in the other documents in this group, there are few

omnibus standards referring to diversity or religion as a component of culture. Several citations refer to specific groups in California and US history. There are 2 references to Hinduism, 5 to Buddhism, 17 each to Judaism and Islam and nearly 30 to Christianity or Christian institutions, as well as several to indigenous American and African religions.

It is also typical for the group that there are few general references to *culture*, in contrast to their predominance in the NCSS document. Rather than omnibus standards on world religions, the documents feature content mandates on teaching about religion tailored to each specific tradition. California requires study of scriptures; the development of institutions, laws and influences on society, and cultural expressions. In US history, indigenous beliefs and those of the colonists are explored in detail, together with religious ideas that influenced events, institutions like private religious schools, separation of church and state, free association, regional religious development and “*the historical role of religion and religious diversity*” in the US. In medieval world history, students are to investigate Christian religious thought and institutions and their development through the Reformation and Enlightenment, as well as interactions among several religious groups during the period. In modern world history, “*the role of ideology and religion*” in the “*independence struggles of the colonized regions*” requires study of modern religious expression that is mandated in few state documents. Stencil-like standards refer to “*the geographic, political, economic, religious and social structures*” of the various civilizations mentioned in California’s history standards.

Virginia’s standards document bears closer analysis because it nearly became a national model for traditional history programs. The *Virginia Standards of Learning* was one of the earliest history-dominant documents to appear (1995), and it seemed possible that several states would copy its approach verbatim. As it turned out, only two states, Florida and Nebraska, incorporated much language from the Virginia document. A preliminary draft of the California Academic Standards in History/Social Science showed evidence of influence, but in the course of five subsequent drafts, language from the Virginia document was eliminated and the approach was broadened significantly.

Organized around the four core disciplines, the *Virginia Standards of Learning* is history-centered along the lines of the Bradley Commission Report recommendations. Grades K-4 include topics from US, state and world history/geography, civics, and economics. Except for grade 7 economics and civics, grade 10 geography and grade 12 government courses, the elementary and secondary programs feature draped US and world history courses. The US and state history courses emphasize a rigorous factual approach that covers individuals and speeches, events, documents and key ideas. Virginia’s two-year world history outline is organized around discrete civilizations with very specific mandates on the required approach to each topic and subtopic. A stencil-like phrase frames the study of past cultures “*in terms of its impact on Western civilization.*” The phrase appears in standards on Greece, Rome, Byzantium, Russia, medieval Europe and Islam.

Virginia’s *Standards of Learning* has 33 general references to religion and 3-7 references to each specific tradition. Nearly all references to religion in US history are related to the colonial period. In modern US history, the Virginia document mentions studying the “*effects of organized religious activism*”(6.7), and religious beliefs and groups are cited as the source of cultural influence and diversity of viewpoints in American life. Geography standards address the global distribution of religious groups and religion as an aspect of human geography. Oddly, the civics component of Virginia’s standards omits the numerous

references to religion contained in the national civics model, except with reference to religious freedom and tolerance.

The overwhelming majority of content on religions occurs in the two sequential world history courses, which break at 1000 CE. An omnibus standard item mandates study of the “*origin, traditions, customs, beliefs and spread of*” world religions in addition to achievements attributed to the associated civilization. This sequence seems skewed, unlike the more typical and logical sequence of studying the *origin, beliefs, customs, traditions and spread* of each religion. Alone among state world history documents or national models, the Virginia *Standards of Learning* violate the guidelines for fairness, accuracy and balance in the standard on teaching about Islam. The *Standards of Learning* for grade 8 require that:

The student will analyze the conflict between the Muslim world and Christendom from the 7th to the 11th century AD, in terms of its impact on Western Civilization, with emphasis on:

- *the origin, traditions, customs, beliefs and spread of Islam*
- *theological differences between Islam and Christianity*
- *cultural differences between Muslims and Christians*
- *religious, political and economic competition in the Mediterranean region; and*
- *historical turning points that affected the spread and influence of both religious cultures.*

Study of Islam is thus singled out for negative treatment. The standards are inaccurate in portraying both Muslim and Christian religion and culture in monolithic terms. This portrayal lacks balance and fairness in that it covers only the negative side of the historical relationship between Islam and “Christendom.” It also fails to reflect scholarly consensus on the cultural and religious diversity within both Islam and Christianity, theological and cultural similarities in the monotheistic tradition of both faiths (no mention of Judaism is made in the standard), and coexistence and cooperation among Muslims and Christians throughout history.

The *Standards of Learning’s* chronology is skewed, cutting off study of the non-West at 1000 AD, and compressing historical periods involving religions other than Western Christianity under the rubric “about 1000 AD.” For example, study of India’s entire history is confined to a brief subtopic which includes the caste system, Hinduism, and “*the conquest by Moslem Turks.*” This relentlessly negative focus continues in grade 9, when the difference between religions is raised to a level of “*the conflict between Christian and Muslim cultures.*” Grade 9 standards include emphasis on the Crusades, the Mongol conquests and expansion of the Ottoman Turks. Some concession to positive influence would seem to have been made in the reference to “*economic foundations of the Renaissance, including European interaction with Muslims,*” but this may refer not to intellectual exchanges with Muslim culture, but “economic competition” as a catalyst for the Renaissance.

The standard on Judaism appears in connection with the study of Rome and Christianity, not the Hebrews, and it is framed in terms of Judaism’s influence on Christianity rather than on its own terms. Like so many traditional history documents, there is virtually no coverage of Jewish history except the thumbnail sketch in Abrahamic times and the Holocaust. Buddhism and Hinduism are covered in very rudimentary fashion in connection to “selected” cultures of Asia, out of chronological sequence with the main Western narrative. Other specific references to religion in Virginia’s standards include study of Christian institutions

and societal influences in relation to the Reformation and the Age of Reason. In grade 9, the basics of each faith are also to be compared “*in terms of major leaders and events, sacred writings; traditions, customs and beliefs; monotheistic versus polytheistic views, geographic distribution...political, social and economic influences...and long-standing religious conflicts and recent manifestations (e.g. Ireland, Middle East conflict, Bosnia, etc.)*.” This standard is slotted between 18th and 19th century history standards. It might seem to require coverage of religion in the 19th and 20th centuries but provides mostly review with historical updates to the present day, and more emphasis on religious conflict in modern times. The last subtopic negatively attributes religious causation to complex political and economic conflicts around the world today, implying that religions are troublesome relics. In a document that seems to support learning about the influence of religion and values, the modern role of religions is viewed as a vestigial and negative one. For the period from 1400 to the present, content on religion is confined to European Christianity in relation to the Renaissance and Reformation, Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment, and “*the influence of religious beliefs on art, politics, science and commerce*” during the 18th century. No further standards address religious life in the modern period. The brief geography standards for grade 10 mention religion in only one item:

10.4 The student will analyze how certain cultural characteristics can link or divide regions, in terms of language, ethnic heritage, religion, political philosophy, social and economic systems, and shared history.

Indirect references to “*cultural characteristics and historical evolution*” as well as to “*forces of conflict and cooperation*” in other geography items have the potential to include religion as a component.

The *Standards of Learning* for grade 11 US history contain four references to religion. The first concerns “*motivations of ethnic, religious and other immigrants...social customs, the arts, and religious beliefs*” of the early colonies; the second mandates analysis of the Virginia Statute of Religious Freedom; the third refers to the “*cultural influence of various racial, ethnic and religious groups*” in US history, and the fourth requires students to analyze “*problems of intolerance toward racial, ethnic, and religious groups in American society*.” Perhaps the writer of that standard was unaware how the world history standard on Islam might cultivate such intolerance in Virginia students. Finally, standards for teaching literature in Virginia also contain several references to religion and beliefs.

It is important to note that Virginia’s legislature, passed a law in 2000 requiring that the history and social science *Standards of Learning* be revised, among other purposes, to enhance the ethnic and religious diversity reflected in the content. The review and revision task force is scheduled to complete its work with a view to adoption of the revised document by November 2000 and implementation in 2002-2003.

As stated above, both Florida and Nebraska incorporated language from the Virginia *Standards of Learning* into their social studies standards. Florida is the closest match, having summarized the numerous bulleted items in the Virginia document into single statements while preserving their meaning and approach. Florida’s overall document, however, follows the NCSS model more closely than the history-dominant programs. Nebraska, which follows a core disciplines model, presents an even more incongruous mixture, citing the National Standards for History eras as the structure for world and US history courses but framing its content standards in the topical, highly prescriptive and narrow language of the Virginia *Standards of Learning*. Nebraska’s standards are an idiosyncratic mixture of Virginia’s

language and Western emphasis, within a framework of National Standards eras. Most notably, Nebraska's document omits the period from 1000 to 1450 CE, leaving a gap in world history for a period that featured considerable religious activity across the Eastern Hemisphere.

A wise course of action for Florida and Nebraska districts wishing to resolve the incongruities between the two approaches would be to turn to Fairfax County, Virginia's acclaimed *Program of Studies for the Social Studies*, for grades K-12, which includes detailed teaching guides and resource lists. Unlike the state of Virginia's official resource or implementation guide, Fairfax County's program guide has achieved a practical synthesis of the *Standards of Learning* and the innovative world history model structured around the world eras and modeled on the National Standards for History. A number of districts in various states have expressed interest in utilizing the Fairfax curriculum, which was developed with the help of leading world historians and geographers, administrators and teachers.

Nebraska's document features 29 general references to religion, 2-11 references to each specific tradition and 28 references to culture as indirect references. Two general references in Nebraska's standards explain how religion is to be included in the overall social studies program. A few references relate to US history, but the bulk apply to world history and geography study. Nearly all of the references appear in standards for grades 8-12. The Virginia language on Islam is present, as are many other citations concerning religions.

Florida's standards document has 18 general references to religion and 1-3 on each specific tradition. Seven of the 18 apply to general requirements for social studies or to primary grades and include the usual discussion of religion as an aspect of families and communities in Florida and the United States. A citation for grades K-2 requires that the student "*understands the daily life, history and beliefs of a country as reflected in dance, music, or other art forms...*" The omnibus mandate to study world religions has an element that goes beyond the norm for most states, requiring that students "*know the significant ideas and texts of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism, their spheres of influence in the age of expansion, and their reforms in the 19th century*"[emphasis added]. It is quite unusual for a state to include such detailed examination of specific traditions for the modern period. Florida's history standards include a paraphrase of the Virginia language on Islam.

South Dakota's standards document presents a mixed aspect that differs from those influenced by the Virginia model. It declares that history is the integrative core of the curriculum but emphasizes only US and state history. Grade 6 ancient world history is idiosyncratic but traditional in structure and emphasis. The world history program shows gaps, however, that will negatively impact teaching about religions. There is no world history requirement for high school, and the document does not include standards for history after Rome or for the modern period. World Geography is taught in Grade 7 as a stand-alone course, ending with Meso-America. Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism and Buddhism are mentioned, but Islam is excluded from the roster of world religions studied, presumably because of the outline's premature cutoff date. Some coverage of Islam may be inferred from references to the modern "Middle East," but no standard equivalent to those for the other world religions is found. These inconsistently worded standards require knowledge of "*the major beliefs and practices*" of Hinduism and Buddhism, "*the origin and influence*" of Judaism and the "*origin and spread*" of Christianity. Hopefully, South Dakota districts will fill in these blanks.

Arizona posted a brief social studies standard document in draft form late in 1999. It includes skills and content benchmarks in the four core disciplines for each grade level. These goals loosely imply topics to be taught at each grade level, but civics, economics, geography,

US, state and world history seem to be included at various levels. The early grades are traditionally arranged, with state and US history at grades 4 and 5, and world history to 1500 CE and civics in grades 6-8.

Study of beliefs is mentioned as a required component of history studies in each grade-level in South Dakota. Content standards for US and state history refer to religion with typical frequency and depth. As in other states, additional depth comes through state history, with items on the mission movement in Arizona as well as indigenous Southwestern Native American religions. Arizona's world history standards include religion in the study of major civilizations with basic information on world religions in separate standards. An unusual item requires students to "*compare Eastern to Western religions, specifically the religions of Hinduism and Buddhism to Judaism, Christianity and Islam*" with emphasis on world distribution, founders, "*traditions, customs and beliefs.*" Another unusual requirement focuses on "*the enduring impacts of each, specifically their political, economic, and social roles and practices in today's world.*" These items provide an example of how standards can support study of world religions with reference to ancient and modern history while neglecting content on religious developments during the intervening centuries. Such an approach can lead to a static treatment with oversimplification of the modern role and character of religions. Characterization of religions as "Eastern" or "Western" is of course problematic. An Arizona geography standard requires students to know about religious and cultural symbols, "*including Jerusalem as a sacred place for Jews, Christians and Muslims.*" In grades 9-12, an interesting skills benchmark mentions analyzing events in the context of beliefs and values held at the time they unfolded, rather than solely in terms of present-day norms and values. Another standard mentions "*conflict between religion and the new scientific discoveries*" and the impact of the Puritan revolt, but no further references to religion are found in modern history or US history at this grade level. The civics standards include a reference to "*the moral and ethical ideals of the Judeo-Christian tradition, including the concepts of righteousness and justice.*" Geography standards for grades 9-12 call attention to cultural characteristics as an indirect reference to religion, with specific focus on Arizona's diversity. No further mention of religions appears in the 9-12 standards.

Observations on the Traditional Model

With regard to teaching about religion, this group of traditional, usually detailed standard documents represents a well-intentioned but rather inconsistent approach. The intent behind most of these states' emphasis on multi-year history courses and coverage of the four core disciplines indicates the value their framers placed upon academic basics, specifically the civic and intellectual value of history. Accordingly, these states have copiously incorporated content and language from the national standards in geography, economics and civics. On the other hand, most have demonstratively rejected the *National Standards for History*. Although influence from the Bradley Commission Report is apparent in some, the state standards commissions have seen fit to tailor history standards on their own.

The history outlines in this group feature very specific knowledge standards that represent efforts to achieve a level of common cultural literacy and to reinforce common values native to the Western tradition. Religion is mentioned in these documents as one font of those values. Most, if not all, of the documents in this group specifically cite Judeo-Christian religion as a source of civic and other values of which students should be cognizant. Most provide inadequate information on Judaism and its history, which is reduced to its influence

on the West. Coverage of religion in history is represented to one degree or another in all of the documents in this group, yet the placement and quality of teaching about religion in history is not significantly above the norm for most states.

California, which led the nation in teaching about religion, has produced a standards document with more content on religions, much of which was added and refined in multiple pre-publication drafts. The other states in this group restrict most coverage of religion in US history to the colonial period and to general standards on state and national diversity in the lower grades. In world history and geography, religion appears in standards on human geography as well as in typical middle school thumbnail sketches of each major tradition. Three of the documents in this group, following Virginia's lead, single out Islam for negative treatment, emphasizing conflict, competition, and cultural as well as theological differences with Christianity. Others contrast the three monotheistic faiths with "Eastern" or non-monotheistic traditions.

With the exception of California, these documents mandate little study of religious thought, institutions and change in any major tradition except Christianity. Coverage of Christian religious and philosophical traditions during the medieval, Renaissance and Enlightenment periods often features primary source study of a few important Western individuals and works. After the 18th century, however, coverage of religion is nudged aside by secular topics from political, scientific, military, social and economic history. Discussion of religion reappears in the modern era in only a few cases. A Virginia item mandates a recap of basic information on religions but ends by implying that conflict is the main legacy of religions in the modern era. There are occasional references to religious influence on economic or other decisions. Mention of Judeo-Christian values is common in civics standards in this group, but guidance on how to explore the substance of this heritage is lacking.

Scant mention of religion in the early grades, combined with its dismissal from the modern history program, effectively concentrates nearly all content on religions to the early weeks of US history programs and to ancient and medieval units in middle school world history courses. Treatment of civilizations as discrete units in this group of documents also hinders acquisition of knowledge about world religions beyond the rudimentary. Under the "selected cultures" approach, students are led through a syllabus of one-time exposures to various civilizations, completing and dismissing each without return for updates or comparisons in later historical periods. The image of static cultural characteristics is reinforced by a fact-based approach, even though skills requirements may include examination of evidence, exploration of complex causation, and development of higher-level analytical skills. The lopsided emphasis on Western European Christianity and the lack of information on religion in recent history combine to foster and reinforce an impression of creeping irrelevance. Despite standards requiring comparison among religious traditions and time periods, content is too superficial to allow more than a static or unfair comparison of the institutions, intellectual and artistic expressions and complex societal roles of all but the Western tradition. Such coverage does not really meet the guidelines because it lacks balance and accuracy and fails to portray the traditions as their adherents understand them.

The selected civilizations approach also goes against the integration of geography, which many of these states claim to implement. Areas of the world that are not "selected" for coverage of a specific culture or time period are simply treated as though they were not there. With the exception of a pair of review standards and a few other items on conflicts, world history outside of Europe receives short shrift indeed. "Moslem Turks" appear as invaders in

several of these state documents, but no standard deals with their origin or subsequent historical influence because Central Asia does not fall within the scope of coverage for any period. The Indian Ocean and many other historically and religiously significant regions either never appear or receive mention only with the appearance of Europeans after 1500. Eastern Europe, an example frequently offered in modern items on “religious conflict,” is barely mentioned in this group of history documents during the formative medieval and pre-modern centuries, with the exception of an item in Virginia’s standards. In short, plotting geographic and chronological coverage in these standard documents would reveal much unevenness in the intentionally crafted lists of knowledge mandated by this group of states. Mapping the contemporary distribution of world religions in a high school geography class—a commonly prescribed activity—would be a mysterious exercise for students whose knowledge of the spread of Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam ended in the ancient period or the first few centuries of the Common Era.

Chronological and geographic gaps and historical inconsistencies in many of these documents contradict the rigorous historical skills requirements that they mandate. If students in world history survey courses are not required to study major religions beyond the first centuries of their inception, it is unlikely that complex standards in geography courses on the influence of religion on politics, economics, social and artistic life in contemporary cultures will be met. If they do not exercise the analytical skills inherent in the study of primary sources on world religions other than Christianity, it is unlikely that students will have mastered the research and analytical skills necessary to apply knowledge of religions to modern conflicts or other situations. Simplistic stereotypes about modernity vs. outmoded religious beliefs will likely fill the vacuum.

Geography-dominant States

Instead of the multi-year, sequential history programs described above, a group of states has developed social studies programs in which geography is the dominant focus at the middle school level. These states feature a one- or two-year world studies course as the main vehicle for content on world religions, with high school courses in both geography and world history completing the sequence. US history studies in these states are similar to the history-dominant programs, with an introductory survey at grade 5, a middle school course in state/US studies, and the standard grade 11 high school US history course. A number of states in this group have outlined standards and benchmarks for an extensive series of electives as well. The states in this group include Georgia, Indiana, Maryland (though its curriculum is not designated as a standards document), Mississippi, North Carolina, Texas and West Virginia.

These programs typically begin with sequenced elementary programs built on the concentric model of expanding awareness, often modified by addition of content on selected world cultures. The programs’ hallmark is a world geography survey course at grades 6 and 7 which is divided into Western Hemisphere and Eastern Hemisphere studies with much content on Europe included in the Western hemisphere course. These courses cover, on a continent-by-continent basis, both the physical and human geography of the contemporary world and historical background from the ancient to the medieval or pre-modern period. These middle school courses are capped in some states by a one-year high school world history course and in others by a modern world course starting at 1500 or 1700 CE. This approach has significant implications for teaching about religions.

Teaching About Religion in Geography-Dominant State Documents

Georgia's Quality Core Curriculum is an extensive outline of skills and content including both required courses and electives. Standards represent the four core disciplines at each grade level. Earlier grades emphasize US history and geography. Study of religion appears in the typical manner for early US history and includes study of contemporary American culture in terms of *"how different points of view have been influenced by nationalism, race, religion and ethnicity."* Coverage of religions outside US history is housed mainly in a grade 6-7 geography and world cultures course. World cultures are analyzed within the intense contemporary survey and brief historical background typical for geography courses. For example, the student *"Analyzes society in terms of its five basic social institutions: family, economic system, education, political system, and religion"; "identifies the cultural characteristics of a place [and region]: linguistic patterns, religious patterns, political system, economic system, historical development"*; A stencil-like item on historical study is to *"Analyze the religious, political and economic systems and contributions of ... [regions and continents, with specific historical items named for each civilization]"; or "trace and examine economic, political, cultural, religious and historical changes and discoveries [e.g. Renaissance and Reformation]."* The curriculum features many citations of culture, defined as consisting of *"the following elements: values, norms, beliefs, symbols, physical artifacts, sanctions and institutions."* Georgia's curriculum document contains 33 direct references to religion and beliefs, 28 references to specific religions and 64 references to culture. The grade 9-12, one-year world history course focuses on the characteristics of various civilizations, of which world religions is one. Judeo-Christian values are mentioned in connection with both Western civilization and the American political system.

Indiana's standards include 17 general references to religion, with 1-4 references to specific traditions, though Judaism does not appear. In contrast, there are more than 40 references to culture. Indiana's elementary sequence features study of religion as a component of social and cultural diversity, in addition to typical US history content. Students in grades 6 and 7 take a two-year, comparative study of the regions and nations of the *"Western World,"* and the *"Eastern World including geographical, historical, economic, political, and cultural relationships."* Within the geographic focus, students are required to *"Identify cultural characteristics of regions (language, nationality, religion, etc.)..."* and to *"Explain how social institutions such as religions"* influence society. The standards require comparison among *"Eastern religions"* but there is no counterpart requiring comparison of *"Western religions."* In grades 9-12, course descriptions and standards items include the role of religion in personal life, the role of religion in civic and social life in the US and mapping the spread of religion (a common skill required in geography-dominant programs). It is not clear which courses are required, but proficiency statements, benchmark indicators and sample activities are given for a range of courses, including Economics, Psychology, Sociology, United States Government, United States History, World History/Civilization and World Geography. Typical references to world religious traditions are enhanced by a reference to the effects of the Enlightenment and the Reformation on religion, and capped by reference to modern *"world political, ethnic, economic and religious and environmental conflicts"* and *"religious fundamentalism."*

At this writing, Maryland has posted a brief document that does not constitute an official set of standards but does outline a program of studies and objectives that are similar to this group of state standards documents in content and organization, with the middle school Western/Eastern Hemisphere course sequence. The four direct references to religion in the

document are framed in terms of “*the dignity and worth of people from various cultural, racial, religious, ethnic and other diverse groups,*” their contributions, cooperation and conflicts. There are no references to specific religions, and the seven references to culture represent the typical proportional weight given to these topics in this group. These references to culture focus mainly on learning about cultural diversity using examples from contemporary and historical societies.

Mississippi’s document is fairly brief, beginning with a traditional, concentrically organized elementary social studies program. General references to religion in elementary grades require exploration of American and other cultures’ beliefs and values. Studies of selected cultures in Asia, Africa and Europe beginning in first grade would likely include some mention of religions as well. Among the more than 50 references to culture are several that would naturally include some discussion of religion. Western/Eastern Hemisphere studies occupy grades 6 and 7. Even in grade 6, however, references to religion in the Western Hemisphere are confined to analysis of “*the human characteristics of places in the Western Hemisphere (e.g. homes, clothing, religion and other cultural characteristics).*” Exploration of world religions takes place in grade 7 and includes analysis of “*various Eastern cultures,*” mapping the spread of religions, territorial and religious conflicts such as the Crusades, religious reforms and reformers, “*cultural and religious differences that affect economic decisions,*” comparison of “*ancient Middle Eastern cultures,*” “*the effects of early religious teachings on ancient and modern social structures,*” and several references to specific traditions. Interestingly, the state document suggests that districts might use a chronological approach to studying the Eastern Hemisphere as an alternative to the continent-by-continent geographic approach. Building on knowledge from grades 6 and 7, the high school world history course covers 1750 to the present in a traditional, topical format showing little adherence to any of the national models. On contemporary religion, Mississippi’s standards include the following unique wording: “*Explain the effects of social, political, and religious movements in various contemporary societies (e.g., cults, survivalists, Habitat for Humanity).*” Another interesting item asks students to “*Analyze how science and technology influence the values, attitudes, and beliefs of our society (e.g., censorship, etc.). Debate a changed belief or attitude that is attributable to a scientific and/or technological advancement (e.g., religious, moral).*” Secondary US history studies contain few references to religion, but an arts standard related to US history asks Mississippi students to explore the religious and economic roots of jazz. . Mississippi’s standards document includes a series of high school electives that house the bulk of the Mississippi standards’ 33 general references to religion. Among the electives outlined are a year-long Bible history course, Minority Studies, Humanities, and Local Studies. From the Bible history elective an item on contemporary and historical religious life requires students to “*Summarize the effects of early religious teachings on ancient and modern social structures (e.g., Hebrew, Christian, Roman, Persian, Egyptian).*”

North Carolina posted its standards document early in the decade on an elaborate web site describing the curriculum and linking it to resources for teachers. Early grade references to religion focus on “*religious and other traditions in the community*” and contain items on “*assess[ing] the influence of major religions, ethical beliefs, and aesthetic values on life in North Carolina...*” and in various world regions. Altogether, there are 54 general references to religion, as well as several citations of each specific world religion. Thirty-five references to culture address the components of culture and study global and national diversity through contemporary and historical studies. A number of references to the historical role of religions

provide for the possibility of analyzing religions over time; for example: “*Patterns of history: the learner will draw relationships between continuity and change in explaining human history.*” These standards provide a good example of a state mandate with considerable potential. But that potential may remain unrealized because of the limitations of course frameworks such as one-year history surveys and overstuffed world cultures courses. In schools with integrated humanities programs, however, additional attention may be paid to teaching about religion in courses on literature and the arts. For example, North Carolina ninth graders should “*Analyze and trace developments in literary, artistic, and religious traditions over time as legacies of past societies*” and “*assess the importance of non-material expressions of a culture ... such as religion, education, and language...*” and then compare and assess the “*usefulness*” of these expressions “*to the culture.*” In yet another variation on coverage of religion mainly as a source of conflict in modern societies, it is suggested that students might “*monitor events in a country and report on the influence of religion in that society. Devise a plan to lessen cultural conflicts in a country that is divided by either ethnic or religious differences. Develop theories on how increasing terrorist activity can affect freedom in a free and open society.*” The main research tools to be used in this exercise are print and electronic journalism, both well known for over-simplifying religious aspects of modern dilemmas. In US studies, students are asked to “*evaluate the influence of ethical and moral principles and religious beliefs on the development of our economic, legal and political systems.*”

The Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) document provides a detailed description of what students should learn and be able to do. It exhibits the typical structure of the other geography-dominant state standards in terms of teaching about religion. The TEKS document has 42 general references to religion, and one or two references to each specific religion, complemented by 39 references to culture, a proportion typical of the pattern in this group. Early grades explore religion as an aspect of diversity in Texas and US society, then study its role in US history in a typical manner. In grade 6, Texas students take a one-year course in cultural studies of selected world regions. They study “*people and places of the contemporary world*” and “*describe the influence of individuals and groups on historical and contemporary events in those societies and identify the locations and geographic characteristics of selected societies... identify different ways of organizing economic and governmental systems...compare institutions common to all societies such as government, education, and religious institutions.*” As in other states within this group, skills and knowledge standards in Texas include items that seem to require a thorough integration of knowledge about religions, such as the following: “*The student is expected to explain the relationship among religious ideas, philosophical ideas and cultures.*” In line with the geography approach, religions are viewed as a component of identifiable world culture regions. At the high school level, the TEKS document states that one-year world history “*is the only course offering students an overview of the entire history of humankind.*” “*Traditional historical points of reference in world history are identified as students analyze important events and issues in western civilization as well as in civilizations in other parts of the world.*” In terms of a general standard on religion for high school, the document requires that “*The student understands the relevance of major religious and philosophic traditions...and [is able to] compare the historical origins, central ideas, and the spread of major religious and philosophic traditions...and identify examples of religious influence in historic and contemporary world events.*”

West Virginia’s standards emphasize both skills and content. The state’s typical elementary grade social studies program is capped by a one-year, grade 6 course in world cultures and geography. Its “World Studies” component for high school is divided between a required course extending from pre-history to 1900 and a geography and cultures course called 20th/21st Century Studies. This unique course covers global issues with heavy emphasis on geography. It involves *“identification and study of the interaction of geographic, political, economic, and historical factors... to examine and appreciate the changing nature of societies and the increasing interdependency of the United States and the role of physical and human geographic factors in industrial patterns.”* At most, teaching about religion may be inferred from indirect references. The grade 6 program houses the introduction to world religions, providing *“an interdisciplinary examination of selected regions of the world: North America, South America, Western Europe, and the Middle East. The study of early civilizations and their impact on modern cultures will emphasize how cultures have adapted to environmental changes and have emerged into a global society.”* The grade 7 program of study is built around the five themes of world geography in the national model. Of the 20th century course, the document states: *“The purpose of this program is to present a picture of a crowded world, a physical world more threatened, and global regions more competitive and interconnected, than previously existed.”* Standards that potentially include content on religions are *“identify geographic factors and cultural factors that block the movement of ideas and innovations”* and *“describe the physical and human characteristics in major world regions”* and *“analyze interconnections between regions (e.g., goods and services, music, language, and religion)”* and *“identify and describe the patterns of immigration and effects on the distribution of cultural patterns in a region (e.g., disease, language, religion, customs, diversity).”*

Observations on the Geography-Dominant Model for World Studies

In summary, the states in this group follow a typical pattern for inclusion of religion at the elementary level, mainly as an attribute of culture and individual identity, taught in the context of validating and exploring diversity in the community, the state and the nation, or in the context of civics. Mandates to teach about religion in US history are fairly typical of social studies programs in recent years, and will likely follow the level of coverage on this topic attained by current textbooks. Most of these states have one-year middle school courses on state history and culture in addition to content at the elementary level, so that some have only one year of world studies and geography instead of two. The elective courses outlined in these state documents reflect attention to depth of coverage as well as increase the total amount of content on religions, though not every student will take them.

The salient factor determining teaching about world religions in this group of states is the presence of one- or two-year world studies courses at grades 6 and 7. Instead of a chronological, topical or thematic approach to early history, students are introduced to regions of the contemporary world in a systematic, continent-by-continent sequence. Religions are viewed as one facet of culture, part of the human geography of the place. Western Hemisphere studies cover aspects of European and American history with less content on religions than might be found in a typical world history textbook on the same topic. The Eastern Hemisphere course introduces all of the world religions, often in conjunction with the study of Asia. There are two problems with this approach. First, these courses carry a double burden of knowledge objectives from opposite ends of the historical spectrum—they cover both contemporary and

ancient/medieval time. The usual textbook solution to this dilemma is to present basic facts on each region's physical geography and political economy, followed by the briefest and most superficial of summaries as "historical background."

Such conflation of the distant and recent past virtually precludes understanding of how religious expression in societies changes over time. When religion is considered as one aspect of "culture," an undifferentiated, static picture of the religion emerges. The story of its "origins and spread" is shorn of historical or even full geographic context, and its influence on the cultures and civilizations with which it became associated is often portrayed as a direct consequence of beliefs and practices. As an example, a recent draft textbook manuscript for such a course contained a one-paragraph account of the rise of Islam, immediately followed by a paragraph on the rise of the al-Saud family and the founding of Saudi Arabia. The rest of the lesson covered everything from topography to oil drilling and women in the Saudi kingdom, in less than ten illustrated pages. The common element: both occurred on the same piece of geographic real estate. Such coverage fosters stereotypes, leaves out institutional and social history and trivializes religion. Approaching the study of world religions merely as background information to a survey of modern societies requires the student to work backward from a superficial and often blatantly incorrect reading of contemporary life. Such simplistic sketches of the origin and basic beliefs also often harbor absurd factual errors and misconceptions.

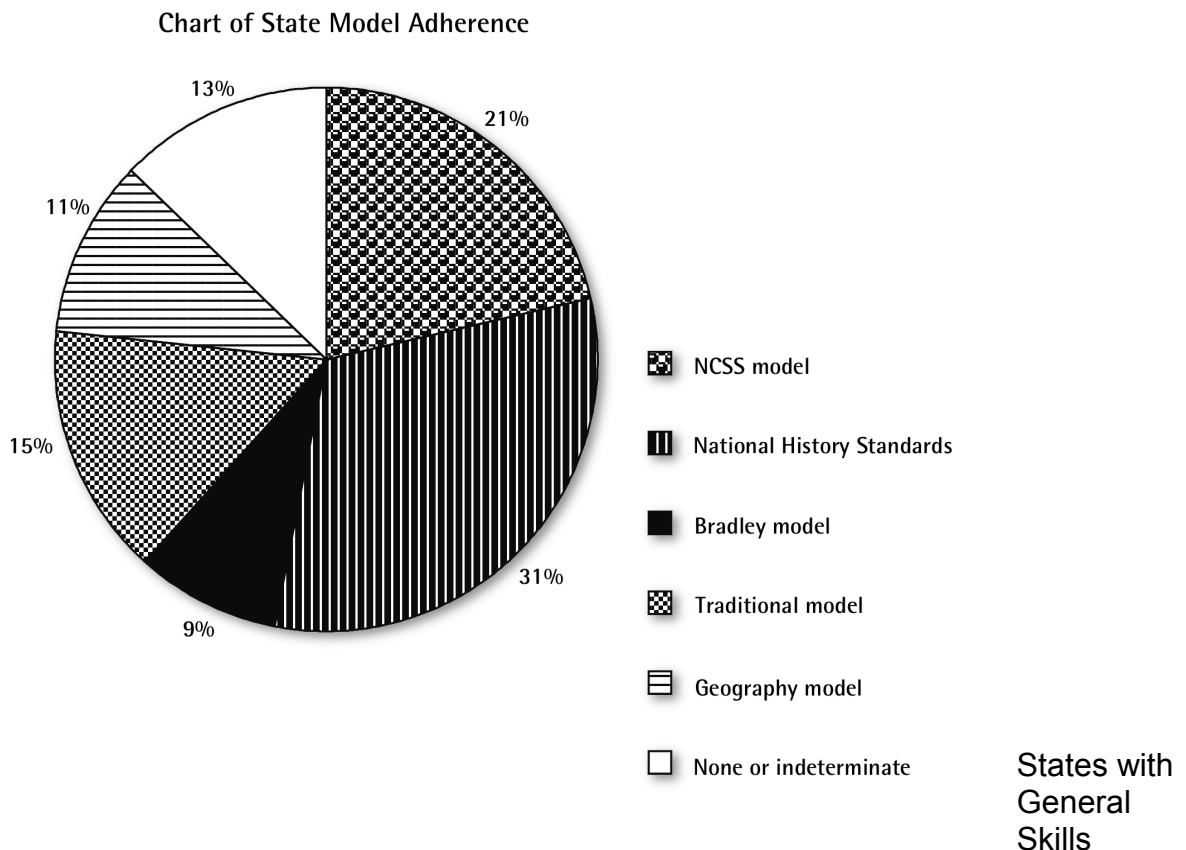
Teachers expected to cover history objectives in greater depth will be forced to use supplementary materials on each civilization required in their standards. The one-year world studies courses will make this almost impossible. Teachers of two-year courses can supplement the textbook, but removing these cultures from their chronological context tends to isolate them into discrete narratives, obscuring connections and interactions among cultures. The practice of studying historical cultures through a neutral geographic survey approach adds to the difficulty of drawing connections among cultures, as the documents themselves require. No matter what high expectations of analytical skills are written into the standards, and no matter how excellent and varied the national geography standards are, the course is simply overloaded.

The geography standards themselves teach that the meaning and configuration of regions changes with time, but the organization of the middle school geography courses defies this. Imposing modern ways of grouping countries upon ancient and medieval history hinders understanding of the very points raised by the national geography standards about migration, trade routes, use of the environment and the influence of religions. Worse still, the "logic" of structuring the course into units based on continents wreaks havoc with understanding of historical processes and geographic connections and barriers. With geographic sleight of hand, some of these courses even group Europe with the Western Hemisphere, though Rome and Greece are covered in the Eastern Hemisphere course.

Covering material from both ends of the chronological spectrum through the lens of continents makes it difficult to fulfill the challenge of the best standards document, even in a two-year course. The "selected cultures" approach of these one-year courses limits coverage and synthesis even more, leaving out whole swaths of human geography and history. When both ends of the story are telescoped, the distant past is portrayed as an explanation for present circumstances, without knowledge of intervening history. The regional and contemporary approach to the world's cultures is like peering into a series of opaque tunnels; no tunnel allows the viewer to see what was happening in other tunnels at the same time or to see the

space between the tunnels. Historical events and processes that took place between or outside the scope of modern regions will be missed altogether. Modern world history or geography courses that claim to build upon this knowledge a grade or two later will find a very shaky foundation at best.

Shortcomings in the amount and focus of language mandating teaching about religions can be detected in this group of state documents. Many consider religion merely as one aspect of culture. The greater problem, however, is that even standard items which imply considerable depth of study are “easier said than done” because of the way they are structured into the program. As a model for these courses, the National Geography Standards are thorough and thoughtful. Many excellent and important history objectives have also been written into these programs. If lofty and scholarly goals are imbedded into an impractical and contradictory framework, however, they cannot be met. In this group of states, the extensive and well-designed elective course outlines do compensate in the aggregate. Excessive curriculum time spent on state studies (frequently both grades 4 and 8) in some states crowds out depth in other areas.

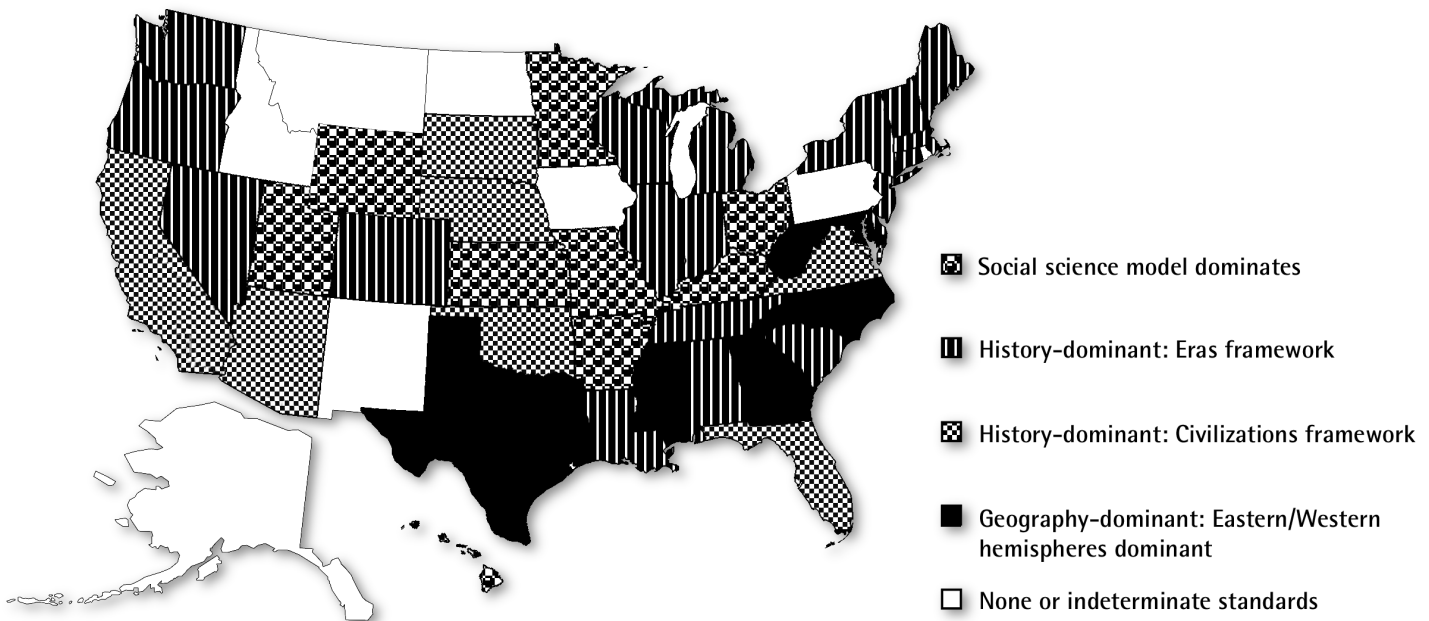


Documents or Guidelines

Missouri’s standards document, the “Show-Me Standards,” is probably the shortest state offering, consisting only of a brief list of skills students should acquire. Missouri states that writing curriculum has been intentionally left to the districts. Missouri has recently completed a hefty supplementary document outlining content, but it became available too late for inclusion in this analysis. Arkansas, Alaska, Hawaii, and Oklahoma also have fairly brief standards documents that mandate process skills and very broad content guidelines for the core

social studies disciplines. Montana, on the other hand, has placed a very expansive set of documents on its web site, posting or linking to virtually every national standards document and material discussing the process of setting standards and designing implementation programs. The web site also contains the full text of a statement by the National Council for the Social Studies on teaching about religion. Highly detailed sample units on a variety of topics model the manner and approach with which social studies might be taught in Montana and indicate, for example, the importance the state places upon coverage of the native American heritage in Montana classrooms – an emphasis also appearing in Hawaii’s brief document. These and other states will likely include considerable attention to indigenous American religions and cultures in their classrooms. Montana has signaled autonomy to districts but makes a clear statement that the process of curriculum writing is to be a thorough one.

States' World History/Geography Structure



States with No Social Studies Standards or Frameworks

Several states have elected not to set standards at all or to forego one or more component of social studies. Among such states, Iowa posted a statement with no binding standards document, saying that it prefers to give districts full autonomy. Michigan has no world history standards. Nevada has recently published a set of content-specific social studies standards that appeared too late for inclusion in this study but which are generally aligned with the traditional history group. At this writing, the process of setting social studies standards is underway in the District of Columbia, North Dakota, Pennsylvania and Rhode Island. Maryland and Ohio have curriculum documents on their web sites, but they are not designated

as standards. It is unlikely that any of the recently posted documents would significantly alter the conclusions reached in this study on patterns of teaching about religions.

Fine Arts and Language Arts Standards

As a vital core subject area, language arts standards were framed in every state that has a standards document. Even some states which lack social studies standards often include a reference or two to religion in the literature program. Hardly any states have arts without social studies, unless controversy has delayed the social studies component. A fair number of states have elaborate standards documents in language arts (reading, writing, listening and speaking), and fine arts (visual arts, music, dance). In states whose standards documents go beyond process skills into specific content, general references to religion are quite often included. Standards generally include historical and contemporary examples from US and world cultural traditions and relate them to expression and interpretation of literature and art. Fine arts standards have been published in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Connecticut, Idaho, Illinois, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, New Jersey, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Vermont, Washington, West Virginia and Wisconsin. References to teaching about religions in language arts and fine arts are frequently presented in terms of interpreting, appreciating and understanding culture, tradition or ethnicity through examples of art and literature. A general standard in which the place of religious expression can be inferred is a Colorado standard for literature: *“Students read and recognize literature as a record of human experience.”* Students are expected to discern how beliefs, values and ideals are expressed in examples of historical and contemporary artworks. Kentucky’s arts and humanities standards are quite ambitious, as this standard for “Historical and Cultural Context” shows: *“Students will develop an understanding of diverse cultures, periods, and styles in music; describe how factors such as time, place, and belief systems are reflected in music.”* Similar Kentucky standards exist for all of the arts. A Colorado standard item for Grades 5-8 requires *“identifying and comparing the characteristics of works of art from various cultures, times, and places; creating art based on personal interpretation of various historical and cultural contexts; demonstrating how history and culture of various people influence the creation, meaning, and style of works of art.”* These examples are representative of arts and literature standards in other state documents. Standards in the arts also address acquisition of expressive skills in ways that will involve religious beliefs for many students. For example, a Massachusetts standard item addresses students’ artistic development: *“Students will use the arts to express ideas, emotions and beliefs.”* Hawaii’s literature and arts standards address both interpretation and personal growth to an unusual degree:

“Literature as human experience is experienced, appreciated, and valued as: The exploration and understanding of human nature; Affecting personal growth and self-understanding; Leading to examination and development of one's personal values and beliefs to guide one's life; Representing various cultures, differing values, beliefs, and experiences; Fostering a sense of community with people from other cultures; Reflecting universal themes.”

Implementation of teaching about religion in literature and arts programs will vary and may be closely related to social studies in some cases. The impact of cross-curricular teaching can be multiplied in comparison with the effect of classroom time spent on isolated activities in each subject area. In the self-contained elementary classroom, such inclusion often takes

place through multi-disciplinary teaching in the social studies, where greater opportunities exist for coordinating art, literature and social studies activities across the curriculum. Students learning about medieval Europe in a grade 6 world history course, for example, might learn about the historical role of the church, study cathedral architecture in science, mathematics and art class, make a stained-glass window, listen to medieval church music and read religiously inspired literature from the period. In secondary programs, on the other hand, inclusion of references to religion in art in the standards usually means that instruction will take place in separate social studies and arts courses. Some programs, such as magnet and charter schools, have humanities-based curricula that link a sequence of history, literature and arts courses, though tie-ins to science and mathematics are rare. Of course, many state curriculum guidelines and standards emphasize coordination of history and humanities in their standards documents, but logistics of scheduling and departmentalization will stymie implementation of many such well-intentioned proclamations in standards documents.

If the implementation is as good as the intent, the existence of such standards bodes well indeed for teaching about religions. The arts, however, are less likely to appear in the batteries of standardized, multiple-choice tests whose implementation has been accompanied by calls for increased funding to raise scores.

Part 5: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Status of Teaching about Religion in State Standards

Analysis of current national and state standards documents in history and social studies provides a significant indicator of progress toward integrating education about religion into the school curriculum over the past two decades. Teaching about religion has been included, both directly and indirectly, in every newly minted standards document. Despite the states' rejection of a national curriculum, their efforts have not resulted in fifty utterly disparate sets of curriculum standards in social studies. In fact, it has been shown that most of them generally follow the national standards in geography, civics and economics, but diverge into numerous models of history teaching.

The relationship of national standards and models to state standards documents has been shown to be a close one, with the state commissions citing the national documents, shaping their overall programs according to one or more of the various national models, utilizing their rubrics and incorporating lists of topics, subtopics, content and skills. It is fair to conclude that in adopting such language and structural elements, nearly all of the states have in effect endorsed the national models and encouraged school districts to refer back to them when they develop their programs of study, filling in the usually skeletal state mandates with the more copious and detailed material in the national standards and other national social studies documents.⁸

New Authority for State Curricula under Standards Reform

This study concludes that the current cycle of centralized curriculum reform under the banner of standards-based education allows us to assess what will be taught in classrooms across the nation more reliably than at any time in the recent past. The process began with the

⁸ See list of documents analyzed in this study, Appendix I.

commissioning of national standards documents in the core curriculum areas and culminated in the commissioning of individual state standards documents under legislative mandates. The promulgation of standards requirements and testing by the states has placed curriculum decision-making squarely in most of the state capitals, but implementation of the standards in terms of content will depend heavily on the design of tests and the consequences of failure to pass. Some states have signaled that they favor more local autonomy than others, and this is often reflected in standards documents that are very brief and lack specific content guidelines. The process will conclude as curriculum at the local level is aligned with the state documents. This phase has already been completed in some areas of the country. Taking the process full circle, revision of state documents is already under consideration or actually in progress in some states.

These documents are critical for instructional content precisely because legislative and administrative mandates have linked state curriculum decisions to student test scores, aggregated scores for schools and districts, and correlation with individual teachers' professional competency. This study does not take a position on the desirability of this situation or the efficacy of this method for raising achievement.

In summary, the state standards represent a departure from the status quo ante, when state curricula were greeted as mere guidelines at best or ignored at worst. Legislative mandates to teach and test content now virtually guarantee that content in the standards will be included in local districts' curriculum and classroom instruction. In some states, high-stakes standardized testing will ensure coverage of topics that teachers might have skipped over in the past if they felt uncomfortable or lacked knowledge. While it may not be an earth-shaking conclusion to discover that teaching about religion has been included in nearly every state standards document, we may now be reasonably certain that the topic will be covered in the classroom, since it may appear on the test.

Patterns of Inclusion for Teaching About Religion

Virtually all of the state standards documents follow a similar pattern in placement of content for teaching about religion. Most of the states have incorporated the bulk of teaching about religion into US and world history, world cultures and geography standards at the elementary and early secondary levels. Not only has religion been included in terms of specifically cited content on the faith traditions in history, but attention to religion and religious expression is often mandated as part of a multidisciplinary approach to social studies and history teaching, including the sciences and humanities. All of those states that outline content and skills requirements for literature and the arts also require content and skills related to interpreting religious expression and influence in these fields. Elective courses for the high school level are outlined in several states, including world religions or regional studies. The educators who developed national standards in the social studies disciplines have included considerable content on religions in the history and geography standards, as well as some discussion in civics. Only the economics standards came up seriously lacking in teaching about religious views and influence.

All states require students to take several courses in US history at elementary, middle school and high school levels, and all include at least some discussion of the role of religion in US history and contemporary life. All but a few states now require courses in world studies, world history and/or world geography at middle school or high school level. All of the states have integrated civics instruction into their overall program in addition to required courses in

civics and government at the secondary level. Here, too, due to general acceptance of the National Standards for Civics and Government, teaching about religious influences in law, civic values and principles, the role of religious freedoms and other matters is likely to be included most everywhere to some degree.

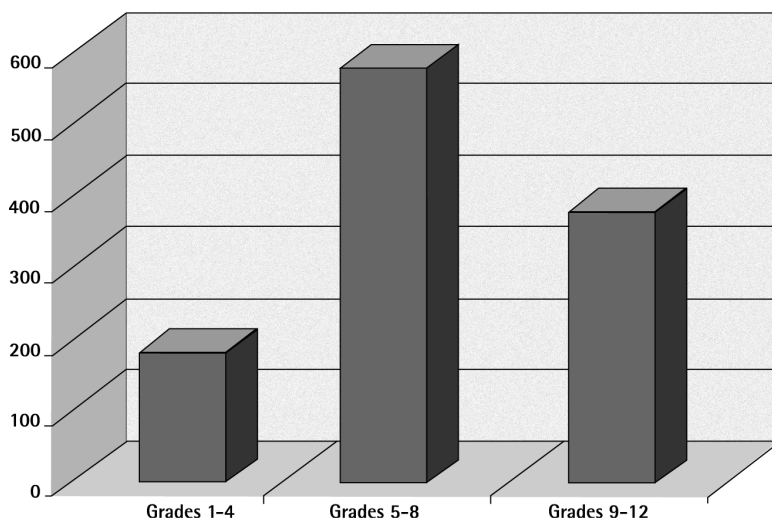
Thus, by the time they finish grade 11, most students across the United States will have been exposed to the basic outlines of the major world religions and the regional cultures with which they are associated, and they will have been taught about the role of religion in the origins and implementation of our system of government, and its historical role in US society. From elementary grades through high school, there will have been opportunities within standards-based education for students to become familiar with the ways in which religious beliefs and values affect identity, how they contribute to the community at the local, state, national and global levels, and how religious beliefs affect the whole range of human behavior and decision-making.

On the other hand, much of this exposure will take place between grades 6 and 9, and relatively little is found elsewhere. With some exceptions, very little content on religion is written into state world history standards for the period after 1800 in European history, and after 1500 in non-Western cultures. All students will have been exposed to information about the role of religion in American history before 1800, but they will receive little additional

information during their studies of 19th and 20th century US history.

Across the states, there is considerable evidence that students will receive additional exposure to religious thought and influence in literature and art classes, though not always in coordination with social studies courses. Course outlines or standards for electives in a few states include courses in world religions, regional cultures or Bible in history studies. While this is encouraging, the documents do not provide any indication of where and how often such courses are offered or how many students attend.

Direct References to Religion in State Standards Documents



Adherence to the Guidelines for Teaching about Religion

Adherence of the standards documents to the guidelines for teaching about religion can be viewed on more than one level. The evidence from state and national standards documents might be interpreted as demonstrating adherence on one level, and as falling short on a deeper level.

This study concludes that on a minimal level, nearly all of the states have framed the study of world religions in language that conforms to the guidelines in terms of balance, neutrality and fairness. In most states, however, the language is too general to provide a clear

indication of how accurate instruction on each tradition will be. Most documents state basic information requirements in terms of the origins, beliefs, traditions and customs of each major world religion, or all of them in general. Many states write this mandate into one single item of their standards. Language framing the study of religion in US history is generally fair and neutral.

A few documents fail to meet minimum guidelines, mostly due to lack of evenhanded coverage of the major faith groups. Among state documents there is some evidence of imbalance in coverage among specific religious traditions. Some states spell out specifically the topics and subtopics that are to be included in teaching about each tradition in a manner that is not always balanced among the faiths. Kansas, for example, specifically mentions Christianity but not Judaism and cites Islam only in comparison with Christianity. Other faiths are not cited. Indiana fails to mention Judaism among specific faiths, but has several general items on religious groups among geography and history standards items, including one on the religions of Asia. South Dakota's standards document omits Islam from its middle school Western/Eastern hemisphere survey courses, and requires no world history in high school. The contemporary Middle East is mentioned, however, and each of the other four major world religions is mentioned once. Utah's standards contain considerably more content on Christianity than other faiths, though to be fair, this is the case in most states because of their emphasis on Western civilization. In general, standard items on the three monotheistic faiths are more numerous than those on Hinduism, Buddhism or other specific faith traditions. A significant imbalance in treatment of the religious traditions appears in Virginia's *Standards of Learning* and the Florida and Nebraska documents with similar world history language. The flaws noted above are generally amenable to correction in district programs of study simply by adding what is missing to achieve balance in treatment of each faith. In the Virginia example that would include comparison of Islam with Christianity in addition to contrast teaching about historical evidence of cooperation in addition to conflict and competition with Christians, and differentiating among Christian groups rather than treating them as a monolithic group. Similar additions may be made in the other cases. If the states closely model their test items after the flawed language, however, these violations of the guidelines for teaching about religion will continue to mar the record. Worse still, if the state assessments adhere closely to the state documents, districts' efforts to redress the imbalance will be undermined, especially under severe pressure to produce passing scores on a welter of complex social studies content. As noted above, the Virginia *Standards of Learning* are currently under revision, and it is hoped that other states influenced by its model will carefully consider Virginia's history revisions.

On the other hand, interesting and rich suggestions on teaching about religion may be found in some of the state standards. Wisconsin indicates that students should learn to “describe how buildings and their decoration reflect cultural values and ideas, providing examples such as cave paintings, pyramids, sacred cities, castles, and cathedrals,” and to “analyze the effect of cultural ethics and values in various parts of the world on scientific and technological development.” Still other states, such as California, Massachusetts and New York, include historically rich mandates to cover religious influences, institutions and ideas in connection with specific cultures and historical periods. These documents not only meet the guidelines in terms of basic wording but also open up possibilities that in-depth study of religions can occur as curriculum is developed along the lines of state standards.

In economics, civics and geography, as well as psychology, sociology and other disciplines of the social studies, the adherence of states documents to the national models has

been shown to either limit or enhance teaching about religion, depending upon how content is integrated into specific courses or course sequences. Some states have modified the national models to include what is lacking. For example, an item on the influence of beliefs on economic decisions is inserted in the Mississippi economics standards: “*Compare how values and beliefs influence economic decisions in different societies. Compare cultural and religious differences that affect economic decisions.*” A number of states, such as Georgia, North Carolina and Mississippi, include extensive outlines for elective courses, in which religion and related keywords are mentioned. These appear in courses on regional studies, the Bible and psychology, among others.

Even where religion is not specifically mentioned in connection with other disciplines, its inclusion by inference under the rubric of *culture* is a strong possibility. Though these documents provide little state guidance on the topic of religion, and do not guarantee that it will appear in test items, individual teachers or districts may place increased emphasis on teaching about religion in the social sciences if they and their communities are willing to do so. The lack of specific mandates to teach about religion, however, increases the likelihood of its being overlooked or shortchanged, especially considering how standards and accountability regimes have increased pressure on classroom time.

Looking at the overall structure, rationale and specific content of the national and state standards documents in social studies from elementary to high school, it is clear that the framers have intended to include teaching about values, beliefs, traditions and -- either directly or by inference -- the moral and ethical standards and practices of various faiths and philosophies in human experience. Many states emphasize influence of religious (specifically Judeo-Christian) beliefs and values as a source of unity and identity in the United States and the specific state. Following on the National Standards for Civics model, religious beliefs in civic life are also mentioned in relation to Judeo-Christian values and ethics. The most typical manner in which religions other than Judaism and Christianity receive mention in elementary grades is, however, in relation to “*the contribution of various ethnic, racial, and religious groups to the development of communities*” (Maryland). Such language is widespread. Items demonstrate the states’ intention to familiarize students with the existence of values as outcomes of religious and other belief systems, to show how they influence decision-making, and how values and morals work as sources of unity and conflict. Many states also include the mechanisms by which religious traditions and their values are transmitted, and the way in which cultural expression changes in response to changing values and circumstances.

The Other Side of the Coin

Examination of the placement, quantity and characteristics of content on religion is encouraging but also reveals limitations and gaps in integrating discussion of the human religious experience in the nation’s social studies standards. Despite religion’s secure place in state and national standards, it is possible to conclude that teaching about religion in US public school social studies programs is in fact quite sharply circumscribed, and it is questionable whether the topic is being pursued with much seriousness or depth. A summary of the type of content taught in the K-12 program provides evidence for such a viewpoint.

In nearly every state where it is mentioned in the standards, any discussion of religion in the early elementary grades is focused on the religious groups that make up the US and the state’s population. Students learn about the various religious holidays and other customs. As a typical example among the more concretely worded standards, North Carolina’s primary grade

students identify, elaborate on and analyze “*religious and other cultural traditions in the community.*” At increasing levels of sophistication, they “*Identify religious and secular holidays observed in neighborhoods and communities*” and “*distinguish between secular and religious symbols and explain why ...holidays are celebrated as they are.*” They identify and interpret “*religious and secular symbols used in neighborhoods and communities.*” Students go on in grades 4-5 to learn about the role of religion in US history, beginning with religion among the colonists and continuing on to its role in American political, social and cultural life in some later periods. A few states emphasize religion as a component of state history, and several make specific mention of native American religious traditions. To the degree that state standards documents express content-specific mandates as opposed to general topical requirements, however, they seem to indicate that the role of religion in US history occupies much the same place in the new standards as it has in textbooks and curricula over the past decade or so. Religion in colonial life looms quite large in such US history units; the Great Awakening is often earmarked for coverage, and some national and state standards developers have thought to highlight the role of religious thought in the abolition, temperance and other social movements. As in the past, coverage of religion in US history tapers off markedly for periods after 1800. Religion in 20th century America is covered with any depth in only a few states; many mention it only with reference to the emergence of religiously motivated, fundamentalist political movements in recent decades.

With the exception of Massachusetts and states that follow the National Standards for History in grades K-4, world religions are not systematically introduced until late elementary grades or middle school introductory courses on ancient history. A few other vague references form the only exceptions, along with the possibility that some rudimentary information on world religions may be presented in early grades’ content on religious holidays. Following the Core Knowledge model, however, Massachusetts’ program includes topical outlines from US and world history for all grade levels, stating that, although concentrated study of these topics appears later, “*Many of the subtopics for grades 5-12 may be introduced to children in earlier grades, in ways appropriate to their ages and in support of their work in English and other languages, in the arts, in science, and in mathematics.*” Introduction to world history and geography begins in grade 4. In several other states, such as Virginia, selected ancient civilizations are introduced in grade 3. Teaching about world religions may come in connection to literature in earlier grades. A few states’ rather sketchy standards include the general mandate that objectives from world history be incorporated into each grade level, but little concrete detail is given as to how or what to teach in which grade.

The Thumbnail Sketch of World Religions

For the most part, systematic instruction about any world religion takes place in survey courses on world history or world cultures, usually in grade 6 or 7 (in a few districts at grade 5 or grade 8). A few states still teach the old “Stone Age to Space Age” forced march through world history at grade 9 or 10, but most states now have sequential, multi-year world history or world studies courses.

Thus, in public schools across the nation, most content on world religions is really taught between grades 6 and 8, when most students are between the ages of twelve and fourteen. Most content on religion in US history takes place in grade 5 and in middle school, where the earlier historical periods, which contain the lion’s share of content, are taught.

Middle school World History I survey courses cover the rise of world religions. Students are typically given a thumbnail sketch of each world religion: its origins, beliefs, traditions and customs, leading personalities and early history. Associated scriptures, arts, institutions and religiously inspired cultural aspects of the societies in which they took root are introduced. A few hundred years of history associated with the religious group is covered, with particular attention to schisms and divergent paths, political and military repercussions and cultural achievements. In general, a set of beliefs and practices for each faith is arrayed before the students and then related to present cultures in a way that would imply continuity more than change. The entire unit on each religion may be completed in as little as a week or as much as a month in some states. In many programs, these middle school thumbnail descriptions provide the only instance of serious exploration and discussion of the religions in the whole curriculum.

One must question, however, the ability of twelve-to-fourteen year old students to absorb, appreciate and compare the various spiritual traditions. While they may take some interest at this age, most students will barely get beyond the basic facts about each faith, at best gaining a general impression of how they relate to the associated civilizations. Middle school is rather an early stage to have absorbed and dispensed with knowledge about world religions, considering the fact that such content is insufficiently reinforced and expanded upon at later grade levels.

Viewing the overall picture, most state standards documents -- and some of the national models -- expand little on this basic thumbnail sketch. For example, religious institutions, thought and practices are presented, by default or omission, as though they remained static over time, if indeed they are covered at all. With the limited exception of Western Christianity, this important aspect of religious traditions receives very little coverage. Students are required to learn, for example, about changes in Christian institutions from late Rome through the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, Reformation and Enlightenment, in addition to a few more recent developments. Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, or Hinduism, in contrast, receive only one-shot coverage in most states, with little information on their institutions and intellectual expressions. Judaism is usually portrayed as the first monotheistic religion, but coverage of Judaism is relegated entirely to the ancient past. There is virtually no mention of developments in Jewish philosophy and theology in Persia or Rome or during the Middle Ages in Europe and Muslim regions, nor of its influence on thought in modern times. Jewish social, intellectual and economic life receives not an iota of mention; only medieval pogroms against European Jews are mentioned along with the Crusades in a few documents. Hinduism, as diverse a faith as it is, seems to have been frozen in its beliefs and practices since the ancient Indian past. Islamic law, intellectual production and social institutions are covered only for the first two or three out of fourteen centuries.

Although US and world history standards documents in some states reflect a clear intent to redress past exclusion of religions from the curriculum and to place them prominently before students, some of these items miss the mark. If religions are covered in one-shot, thumbnail descriptions during the ancient and medieval units, and religions' later histories are barely discussed, this surely reinforces the idea that religions are exotic relics of the distant past. These omissions mitigate against the possibility that students see the vitality of religions through the ages, and it is a direct argument against some of these documents' own underlying assertion that religious values live on and should live on in modern societies.

Contradictions in coverage of religions across historical periods

Internal contradictions in the standards may negate the effect of enhanced teaching about religion in some standards documents. Too many standard items in the states – often the same documents that posit Judeo-Christian religion as the source of civic and moral good in our society -- emphasize religion in modern life only as a source of conflict or a font of political activism. The pejorative twin of intractable religious conflicts around the world is characterization of the modern religious impulse as “fundamentalist,” another familiar focus in standard items. Together, these two ideas rest on outmoded modernization theories that considered religion a relic of traditional life that would wither away with time. In covering the role of religion in modern life, conflict is emphasized over constructive contribution; fundamentalism is highlighted in the absence of mainstream religious thought and activity.

Half full or half empty?

One may just as easily see the glass half empty as half full. It is surely a sign of progress that all states have incorporated teaching about religion to some degree. It is similarly to be applauded that nearly all of the states express standards on religions in language that meets the basic guidelines for teaching about religion in public schools. The glass is half empty because the overwhelming majority of state mandates require knowledge about religions in courses offered to pre-teens, world religions are studied at a fairly basic and superficial level, and coverage is circumscribed within a few centuries for each tradition. The balance in content among the various traditions, as well as the balance in coverage across the span of time, leaves much room for improvement.

In most states, religions are covered even-handedly, though such states may include coverage of all religions in one, brief standard item. In many states with detailed content mandates, Christianity plays a larger role than other faiths, as a result of the relatively greater weight given to European and US history in these state standards. The weakest coverage of religions in the standards occurs in the modern period in these history programs, which start with coverage during the ancient and medieval periods and taper off toward the 18th and 19th centuries in Europe and the rest of the world. The absence of standards items about religion for the modern period in many world history programs is, however, offset somewhat by its strong presence in geography and civics, though it is largely absent in economics.

This produces a rather anomalous situation overall. On the one hand, most students will encounter basic information on world religions in grades 6-8 . Within multi-year history programs, their encounter with these faiths may last from one to several weeks. Those middle school students who learn about the basics within a world studies or geography survey may be exposed to a more superficial summary than students in history surveys. On the other hand, the presence in high school geography courses of numerous standards items on the influence of religion in culture, economics, environmental decisions and politics is a sign that the glass is certainly at least half full.

One is left wondering how the gap between generally adequate coverage for the ancient and medieval periods and scant or absent coverage between the pre-modern and modern eras can be bridged. The almost total lack of coverage on religious institutions, changes in religious thought and the role of religion in social institutions for more than a thousand years will make it very difficult for students to get beyond stereotyped, essentialist views of these cultures. If students are not exposed to religious thought and legal, ethical and social systems from other religious traditions, they will naturally assume that such complexity is missing from those

traditions. By the same token, lack of content on religions during the past two centuries fosters the assumption that religion has faded as an influence in Western culture and remains a troublesome relic in less advanced parts of the world. If these standards items requiring students to understand the roots of modern cultures are to be seriously implemented, it will be necessary to fill in this information by enhancing coverage of religious traditions in earlier historical periods. Half full or half empty, there is still plenty of room for progress in the breadth and depth of teaching about religion in public school curricula.

Applications and Recommendations: Prospects and Opportunities

The conclusion that teaching about religion is now a required, but flawed and incomplete, element in social studies curricula across the country leads to the question of how to tap the enormous potential in the current focus on the topic. Rather than complaining about the current state of affairs and waiting for the curriculum development wheels to turn through another cycle, it is more constructive to find ways to enhance teaching about religions through the implementation of current mandates. The following pages offer suggestions on solidifying the clear gains in this area and are intended for educators, publishers, school administrators, teachers, teacher training institutions and civic and professional organizations concerned with the content, methodology and practice of teaching about religion in public schools. Given the high degree of flexibility in various areas of the implementation process, there are many ways to fill some of the gaps and rectify some of the flaws in existing state and national standards. These possibilities should stimulate interested persons to explore ways to further improve the full range of current implementation efforts as well as future revision and planning processes.

Implementation of Standards Documents

Where relatively schematic state documents leave off, the districts and classroom teachers must begin. Programs of study, implementation guides and syllabi are already being designed and distributed at the local level. Fleshing out the bare-bones content and bringing it to life through primary sources, sound research and carefully worded explanations can go far toward correcting and elaborating on unclear, incomplete statements in the standards. Examination and review of existing or draft documents prepared at the local level should include special attention to the accuracy, adequacy and efficacy of content on religions. Some of these local efforts are overcoming the shortcomings of state documents by adding content to balance and clarify existing material.⁹

Since state documents contain specific content items and general mandates that open the door to enhancement of content on religions, it remains only to house them in the overall program of courses in such a way that they become understandable and doable. Some districts are already changing their course offerings to align instruction with state standards and testing programs.

⁹ The Fairfax County, *Virginia Program of Studies for World History and Geography I and II* is such an implementation document for the Northern Virginia county in the Washington, DC metropolitan area, the state's largest school district. The resource and lesson planning document, which is many times larger than the *Standards of Learning* it is designed to implement, has been written specifically to redress weaknesses and imbalance in the SOLs, including the lack of adherence to the guidelines for teaching about religions. Similarly, the state's implementation or resource guide was written with the input of Fairfax County social studies specialists, and also provides some amelioration in these areas. The latter document will be used to prepare test items for the high-stakes Virginia testing program in social studies. It is important to note that the Virginia Standards of Learning is undergoing review and revision at this writing, under a legislative mandate passed in 2000.

Specific and general mandates can be brought alive through implementation guides based on a high degree of scholarship and attention to skill acquisition. Though it is likely that specific content mandates will be more readily implemented, blanket mandates to include beliefs and religious influences in history and social science teaching may also be effectively integrated into classroom teaching. Curriculum development at the district level should take place with the guidance of scholars from local universities. Such specialists, working with teachers, can show how historical material reflecting state-of-the-art research can be incorporated into topics and subtopics in existing standards. Such collaboration will do the most to close the yawning gaps in coverage of religious institutions, thought and social influences in societies associated with each religious tradition.

Much of the current problem lies in the shameful lag between up-to-date historical scholarship and the K-12 classroom. The answer lies in incorporating solid scholarship, both recent and respected older work, into teaching at elementary and secondary levels. While increased attention to good scholarship would solve many problems in social studies education, it could be argued that in teaching about religion, it is impossible to meet the guidelines without recourse to scholarship of the highest caliber. If the entire exercise of setting standards for skills and content is to have any benefit, social studies instruction must build on the same expectation of up-to-date research as mathematics and science. Fortunately, the current wave of curriculum reform has been accompanied by renewed participation and interest in K-12 education on the part of academics in all fields.

A Standards-Based Framework for Teaching about Religion

Based upon the analysis of strengths and weaknesses in teaching about religion in the various documents, it is clear that the real work of bringing about improvement through standards-based education, if it is to succeed, lies in careful implementation by curriculum planners, teachers, instructional materials and assessment developers. This process should include access to the expertise of scholars in the core discipline content areas, including religious studies. The following points lay out a framework for overcoming weaknesses and realizing the potential for teaching about religion in the implementation phase.

1. Accurate discussion of the basic outlines of each religious tradition.

Since it is a universal element of all standards documents, the basic introduction to each tradition in a history, geography or world cultures survey is of critical importance. The description of each religion's origins, beliefs, practices, traditions (in the broad, cultural sense of the word) and customs is a thumbnail sketch, but it should be neither a caricature nor a travesty. Teaching about the faith as perceived by its adherents requires scholarship that applies the mandated rubrics in these standards with sensitive interpretation of religious beliefs, not a one-size-fits-all approach. For example, many religious persons would object to calling a prophet or other spiritual leader a "founder," because the religion's "origin," lies in revelation or spiritual communion with God. Similarly, in the interest of differentiating among religions, the thumbnail sketch may assign an arbitrary beginning to the faith that violates some of its tenets, or pigeonhole the faith in a manner that obscures continuity. Portrayal of the monotheistic faiths suffers particularly from this treatment. The prophetic and scriptural traditions based on divine revelation are lost in the recital of each group's "founder," "book" and "origin." In extreme cases, such presentations become utterly secular, casting Abraham as a shepherd, Jesus as a carpenter, and Muhammad as a merchant with a wealthy wife. A

pervasive secular bias is often detectable in these presentations, which focus almost exclusively on worldly causes and barely relay any sense of the spiritual context of the religion, or religion in general. Sometimes beliefs, moral teachings and practices of the faith are formatted in congratulatory tones as group “achievements,” pushing aside the significance of belief in divine, not human origins. This is multiculturalism run amok, and it does not meet the guidelines for teaching about religion because it secularizes, and in so doing dismisses, religion. A secular tone has been so pervasive in basic presentations as to force one to the conclusion that such an approach is mistakenly considered to be editorially neutral. These failings become all the more blatant when the introduction to each group is very brief and is followed by an account of the related culture in static, fragmentary outlines.

A neutral presentation that meets the guidelines, on the other hand, is aligned in its approach and in the categories it applies with the religion’s beliefs. It describes the tenets strictly and clearly with attribution to its adherents. The separation of the text from the researcher must be clear. When it comes to interpretations and differences of opinion within the tradition, these, too, can be appropriately described and attributed to various sects or scholarly sources. Teaching about religion well and accurately may contribute to ending the omniscient textbook voice at the K-12 level and replace it with primary source investigation, multiple perspectives and use of recent, specialized sources. In seeking to improve the implementation of mandates on teaching about religion, states may need to look no farther than the high standards for skill acquisition in critical thinking and research set within the state documents themselves.

Teaching about a wide variety of religious traditions is an excellent exercise in teaching about multiple perspectives and in recognizing and overcoming bias and oversimplification. Educators and instructional material developers have begun to grapple seriously with the basic descriptions of world religions by delving into their scriptures and scholarly traditions, examining the changing social and political ramifications of their teachings and researching their historical and artistic influences. They are often required to make non-qualitative comparisons among religions. The task is to sort through important issues of interpretation, belief and practice in order to provide sufficiently differentiated and complex explanations and avoid simplistic, static conclusions and stereotypes. A number of the standards items require students to understand how ideas and beliefs influence behavior, how religious influences combine with social status, ethnic and geographic factors, and to utilize skills in examining and analyzing evidence. Only such authentic presentation will meet the standards, and only such presentations will achieve the stated goals of acquiring knowledge, improving skills, discerning and incorporating values and ethics, and building a foundation for public discourse that is essential to civic tolerance. Continuing implementation of teaching about religion and developing coverage based on these guidelines will open similar opportunities to those already noted.

2. Discussion of Religious Traditions in Their Historical and Cultural Setting

Historical discussion should go well beyond introducing the basic outlines of each religious tradition and identifying the regions and cultures in which it is practiced. Most standards documents require coverage of various historical realms in a multi-disciplinary context. Implementing general mandates to cover religious groups and their literary, philosophical and artistic expressions and influences must include teaching about the history of that tradition in any relevant historical periods covered in the course. It is inadequate and inaccurate to cover a major religious group’s social, political and cultural history for a century

or two out of a tradition lasting millennia and to let this brief overview stand for the group every time it is subsequently mentioned.

As a minimum requirement, study of each major tradition must include the development of a religion's institutions and the growth and influence of its intellectual tradition. Internal consistency within these documents means that basic mandates on "*understanding and appreciation for the culture*" must include the role of changes in interpretation and practice in different cultures and at different levels of society where the religion has been practiced. Use of primary sources and specialized resources help produce a sufficiently differentiated treatment of the topic based on evidence from several historical periods. Coverage of the religious dimension of history and culture enhances rather than supplants other types of information, since it provides another tool for integrating the many disciplines of the social studies.

It is necessary to overcome the limitations of the single teaching unit, lesson, or period of history into which each faith tradition has been pigeonholed in most textbooks and programs of study. . In a better-integrated model for teaching history and geography, it is natural to follow developments across time and space and to integrate knowledge about religious dimensions of social, intellectual and cultural history in the period when they arose as well as subsequent periods. Omission of these historical aspects of any major religion covered in the curriculum amounts to failure to meet the guidelines for accuracy and balance because it indicates to students that one or more tradition lacks these areas of development. Omission also sets up the program of standards for failure when enormous gaps in chronological coverage separate content items that mention religion in connection with different historical periods. Filling the gaps through proper implementation of the standards creates internal consistency among standards throughout the K-12 program. The same process applies to coverage of religion in US history.

3. The Geographic Spread and Current Distribution of Religions

Geography and history courses, and especially those programs that strive to integrate both disciplines, should follow the spread of the religious traditions in a manner that produces understanding of the geographic, historical and cultural circumstances within which this took place. The spread and mingling of Buddhism and Hinduism in Southeast Asia, the many religious groups that interacted in Central Asia, and the spread of Islam beyond the initial expansion of the Muslim state during the 7th and 8th centuries are essential parts of the ubiquitous requirement that students be able to map (and comprehend the importance of) the distribution of world religions today. Coverage of this and other global processes would do much to bring into the curriculum areas of the globe that are often omitted in world history surveys. It also helps students understand the interaction of cultures, the effects of trade and migrations and other movements on a hemispheric or global scale. Understanding the dynamics of religious continuity and change lessens the tendency to think in stereotypes.

4. Religions in Early Modern History, 1500-1900 CE

Many standards documents, following recent tendencies in textbooks and curriculum, drop the thread of religion at about 1800 CE. Numerous documents, on the other hand, do include religion as an aspect of the contemporary era, a facet of nationalism, ethnic identity or communal diversity.

As a condition for meeting standards on contemporary events, sound implementation of standards-based education requires that any existing standards items on religion in the modern

era – in all societies – must be backed up by discussion of religious thought and influence during the 19th century. If state standards require, for example, that students understand the role of religion in modern conflicts, then the survey course needs to provide content on Judaism, Islam, Hinduism Protestantism, Catholicism or Eastern Orthodox Christianity in the centuries since their origin. (Students will not get much mileage out of content studied years earlier in units on the ancient or early medieval world when asked to comprehend, say, religious responses to imperialism or social costs of industrialization.) If such information is missing, however, the standard on the modern era will not and cannot be met. If the question framed to cover the role of religion in modern life is answered with static assumptions and vague stereotypes, then such coverage fails to meet the guidelines for accurate, fair and balanced coverage. Religious responses to scientific advances, industrialization, imperialism and social modernization were dramatic and dynamic in the West and in colonized societies of the Americas, Africa and Asia. If religions are mentioned at all for later periods, examination of the religious impulse must take the place of default assumptions about traditionalism vs. modernization, or conventional wisdom about the anti-Western mind-set of religious groups, or about the irrelevance and atrophy of religious institutions. Implementation of content and skills means complex investigation of primary source evidence and current analytical scholarship.

5. Study of Contemporary Religious Expression

Contemporary study of religions has a small and perhaps inadequate place in most of the models and standards documents, but its presence has been documented both in specific content mandates and in general requirements to cover the religious dimension of culture. If religion is mentioned at all, it must be studied well, or the standards become meaningless and the guidelines are violated. Even seemingly simple mandates to explain or describe the religious component of local, national or global diversity, or the numerous, ill-conceived requirements to associate multi-dimensional global hot-spots solely with religious conflict cannot be met if students haven't heard about religion since ancient or medieval history lessons. Thumbnail descriptions of the tradition served up in grade 6 or 7 provide little traction in understanding modern religious expression or distinguishing it from political, social or economic expression. Yet a look at many standards documents' perspective on specific religious traditions reveals just such a yawning gap in coverage combined with sweeping mandates to grasp complex global conflicts and cultural movements. Sound implementation at the district level can help fill the gap.

Students who learned nothing about Judaism since Abraham will not be prepared to understand contemporary Judaism, its global or national distribution and significance; discussion of medieval and modern persecution of Jews is no substitute for engagement with its intellectual and religious thought. In US history, standards on the modern civil rights struggle are incomplete without content on the growth of African American churches since the 1700s, nor can the contemporary role of Christianity in elective politics be understood when American Protestantism was last heard from in the Thirteen Colonies. Many similar examples would show that even seemingly simple standards on the 20th century could not really be met without ongoing and penetrating coverage in earlier periods, even though this is not spelled out in the standards documents. Unexamined notions about modernity and religion, as prevalent as they are in contemporary culture, slip naturally into the knowledge vacuum. There is room for such knowledge in the implementation of standards-based education, even though few of the documents lay out specific details.

How the Various History Models Affect Implementation of Teaching About Religions

Analysis of the national models and state standards shows that teaching about religion may be facilitated or hindered depending upon the selection of a curriculum model and the program of courses in which it is embedded.

Stand-alone geography courses, for example, are too overloaded with disparate content to serve as viable vehicles for introducing world religions, despite the wealth of references to teaching about religion in the National Geography Standards. The burden of surveying contemporary regional cultures along with building a foundation in ancient and medieval history in middle school creates a tendency to do both superficially. These objectives can be better met within an integrated history and geography course sequence, with sufficient time for recent history given when students are old enough to understand its enormous complexity.

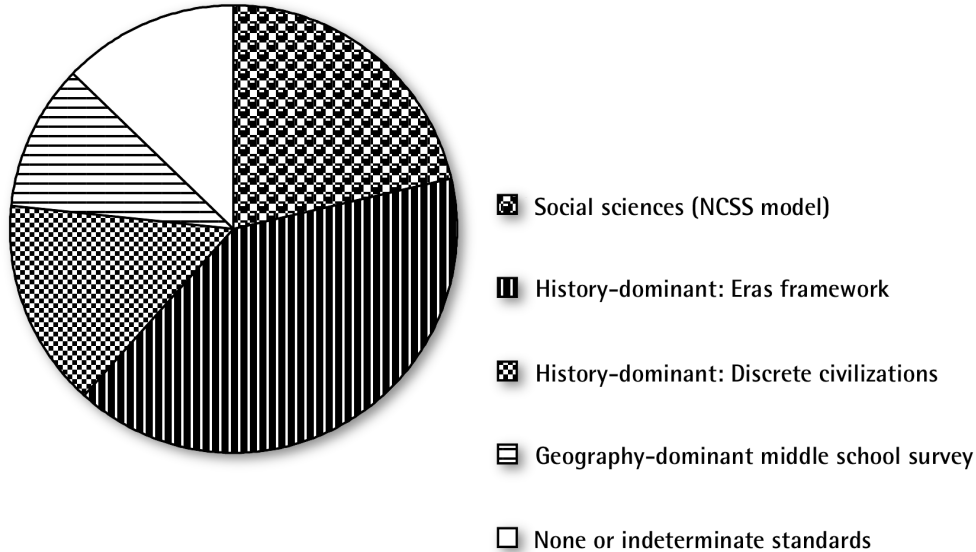
On the other hand, various history models allow different degrees of global coverage, multi-disciplinary instruction and attention to cultural interactions, including religion. The major difference among the various history models lies in the way content is structured. Some of history standards documents exhibit significant gaps in chronology and geography, while others are constrained by their narrow approach.

World history survey courses built around the traditional Western core narrative tend to discuss and dismiss cultures one by one, making it difficult to follow any culture or region outside of Western Europe over time. India, China and Africa appear in the sequence once or twice in isolated chapters covering hundreds or thousands of years at a time. Of two such units, only one might mention religion at its period of “origin.” The sequential study of discrete civilizations also means that regions outside of the immediate territory of a major civilization are omitted or scarcely mentioned. For example, Central Asia usually appears in traditional textbooks once for the Huns and once for Ghengis Khan. The presence of Nestorian Christians, the general climate of tolerance and polyglot religious life in the region is not taught. The Indian Ocean basin, a great mixing bowl for the spread of religion, trade and technology escapes the notice of teachers and students until Vasco DaGama’s appearance. The civilizational approach confines religious groups to a narrowly defined region, leaving out adherents in other regions. This can be a source of stereotyping, such as defining Islam as a Middle Eastern religion.

In contrast, teaching models based on the study of world history era-by-era across the globe, such as the *National Standards for History* and the Bradley Commission model in *Building a History Curriculum* offer advantages in teaching about religion. The significance of a global or national structure of eras – as opposed to a topical, regional or cultural structure of content -- is that it is more systematic, thorough and flexible. The chronological study of developments in individual cultures and interactions among them is set against a global geographic backdrop. Thus, civilizations do not seem to appear and disappear as the course unfolds. Under the new world history model, each culture group, region or civilization is introduced and then becomes part of the regional and global landscape in each subsequent era. Study of each subsequent era provides opportunities to trace changes in those cultures and in adjacent regions. World religions and their adherents, institutions, influences and other manifestations may be viewed and reviewed for each new era or period of history that is studied during the course, all the way to the modern period. Teaching about religion can be implemented with greater depth, accuracy and balance within a history program that is draped across several years, as the Bradley Report and the National Standards for History both

unequivocally recommended, and these courses can fully integrate geography and other disciplines within a global chronological framework.

Chart of States' History/Geography Survey Structure



Other Practical Aspects of Implementing Standards

Assessment Design and Implementation

State testing and accountability programs derived from the standards documents range from high-stakes graduation requirements in some states to mere indicators of progress and diagnostic tools in others. Assessment, the same factor in the new equation that guarantees classroom coverage of topics mandated in standards, may also sharply circumscribe instruction. The recent trend toward authentic assessment based on portfolios, research projects, essays and other forms of non-standardized student evaluation has barely faded from the memory of teachers, who have seen more than one enthusiastically supported innovation fall by the wayside. Standards and accountability now hold sway, and despite the best intentions of administrators, economic constraints dictate that most state tests probably will be formulated as machine-graded batteries of multiple choice test items. As news of test results and content filters into the feedback loop, it can have a disproportionate effect on what is taught, especially when it comes to content that does not lend itself to factual treatment. Despite the nearly universal mention of research and analytical skills in the standards document, that type of learning does not lend itself well to mass testing.

Apart from ensuring that teaching about religion is included, testing regimes based on factual recall could trivialize learning about the faith traditions by reducing them to a simplistic set of descriptors. Specialists in test writing ensure that it is possible to design multiple-choice items that evaluate analytical and critical thinking. It is clear that careful and insightful writing of test items on religion or any other interpretive topic requires depth of knowledge. General wording of state standards, and the plethora of different state requirements may result in avoidance of all but the most basic questions concerning the role of religion in

history. Test-makers will be added as another potentially weak link in the education food chain that includes textbook writers and teachers with little training in world religions. While textbooks have been opened to the review process by academics and educators, test items are of necessity produced in an atmosphere of greater secrecy. In order to evaluate state testing on religious content, it will be necessary to await the release of used and sample test items in order to detect emerging patterns. Training on teaching about religions should be extended to test-writing companies (often divisions of the textbook companies). Assessment specialists should be made aware of any language in specific state documents that falls short of the guidelines, and should receive training that exposes them to knowledge of the guidelines for teaching about religions in terms of specific content. Since new test items do undergo review by educators and scholars, those interested in sound teaching about religion must involve themselves in the assessment review process at the state level. Despite the difficulty of monitoring this new and highly official level of activity, it is every bit as important to ensure that test items on religion are included and in tune with guidelines as it was to include them in standards documents. If test items are absent or faulty, then simplistic, inaccurate teaching about religion may hold sway in states with testing regimes. Instruction will soon reflect the quality of the tests, with little regard to the wishes of teachers or community members.

Standards and Curriculum Revision Cycles

A hue and cry over standards and testing has already begun in some states. Calls to reconsider the wisdom of reducing complex knowledge in the humanities to lists of facts and multiple choice items have begun to appear in the media. Instead of making a choice between existing standards and no standards, it should be possible to draw attention to details and structural elements of standards-driven curricula that merit reconsideration. Standards framed in language that falls short of the guidelines for teaching about religions may be remedied as the new standards enter their first cycle of revisions. Contradictory standard items and inadvertent gaps such as those identified above may be rectified. If changes on a grander scale are considered in some states, thought might be given to restructuring overloaded or incongruous courses and course sequences in order to improve the quality of coverage on religions and related history and geography content. To realize the full implications of general, omnibus mandates on teaching about religious traditions, content standards can be broken down into more specific items and sub-topics that guide instruction and direct the research on which instructional materials are based. Problems of negative focus and imbalance such as those in the Virginia Standards of Learning, should be addressed through the revision process. Omissions such as those in South Dakota, Indiana and elsewhere should be corrected. Vague, sketchy or unrealistic expectations should be trimmed and sharpened with attention to providing specific, practical guidance.

Academics and civic groups might easily overlook the political intricacies of the state curriculum revision process, but in an era of centralized education policy, their attention to these matters is necessary. While participation in the implementation phase of standards-based education is likely to bring quicker results, it is important to ensure that standards to which students and teachers are held represent a valid measure in the long term.

Teacher training

Facing rows of students who represent most of the world's faith traditions in a single classroom, many teachers cannot afford to treat religions as exotic, faraway, mysterious

phenomena. It is not enough to validate other traditions without knowledge, or to rely blindly on inaccurate, second-hand summaries that reflect the views of the writer more than the beliefs and practices of a religion's adherents. The first step toward meeting the standards and realizing their potential for a rich and useful experience in young students' lives is to raise the level of knowledge about religion and how to teach about it at all levels that affect instruction. Training should include professional educators and researchers all along the line from curriculum design and implementation to textbooks and other media, classroom teaching and assessment design.

Pre-Service Training

The most concentrated, effective environment for improving the knowledge of teachers is in the context of pre-service training. Universities should engage their own or nearby religion departments in designing courses in world religions tailored to the needs of future educators. These courses should be practical in the sense that they address what is taught and how to teach within the guidelines and that they engage discussion on enhancing implementation of current curricula. Such university courses, which can, of course, be made accessible to teachers already in service. They should be authentic in the sense that they are not watered-down summaries thought to be "good enough for kids" and should involve exposure to serious scholarship. In line with the principle of "natural inclusion," however, such courses should be anchored in historical studies and not orbit mainly in the realm of religious esoterica. University students preparing themselves to teach secondary history/social studies should be required to take at least one course in comparative world religions and perhaps one or more courses in the development of a specific tradition, its changing religious thought, cultural expressions and historical context. World history courses at a high caliber of recent scholarship, as opposed to tired Western Civilizations courses taught in mass lecture halls for decades, are a must for preparing effective teachers in the current environment. High on a wish list for preparing future teachers would be a few in-depth studies of regional or cultural history, and an innovative course in practical geography -- not one that summarizes facts and figures, but one that applies geographic skills and perspectives to the exploration of issues in history and contemporary human and physical geography. Administrators of university teacher training programs must realize that pre-service teacher education must keep pace with the demand for teaching about religions by offering candidates more religious studies and history courses.

In-service Training

Few teachers – especially those in service for a more than a decade – would maintain that they were well prepared by their undergraduate or even graduate programs to meet the demands of teaching history/social studies at the secondary level. Still fewer elementary teachers would argue that they were well prepared to realize the potential benefits of teaching about religion or other social studies topics across the curriculum. History and geography have long been acknowledged as particularly weak. Apart from requiring extensive university coursework for working teachers, the only way to make up the knowledge deficit is through in-service efforts of various kinds. Necessary elements of in-service training include peer collaboration based on sharing areas of expertise, workshops in which teachers are exposed to content knowledge by specialists in the field, exposure to available resources and workshops on integrating skills and content in teaching about religions. Fortunately, state-legislated demands for school

accountability have been met by school districts' demands to show them the money for implementation – program development, teacher training and student remediation. Many districts are reaching out to the scholarly community to participate in these efforts. One notable benefit of standards-based education reform is that it has raised the profile and increased investment in social studies and/or history education. No longer viewed as the curriculum caboose, it has received similar amounts of attention and funding as the other core subjects in most states.

Instructional materials

Textbook publishers, who have made significant strides in coverage of religions in history and geography textbooks over the past two decades, now have more reason to ensure that textbooks are aligned with general state requirements on this topic. Studies of textbooks undertaken over the past decade, however, have indicated that persistent efforts are still required. Textbooks continue to be too tentative or insipid in discussing world religions and their histories, often omitting references to religious influences in US and world history.¹⁰ Moreover, long lag times hinder incorporation of recent scholarship into school lessons, so that the information provided on world religions is often outdated, unscholarly and inaccurate.¹¹

Textbooks remain weak in covering developments in religious thought and social practice of world religions over time, mainly because of the way instruction on religions other than Western European Christianity is inserted into the world history narrative. Because the account of each tradition is bounded within a chapter or unit on the origin and initial spread of the faith, only the rudiments of its cultural, institutional and intellectual development are given. This treatment often results in a fairly static impression of the religions, which can lead to oversimplification or even stereotyping. Because at least some discussion of the historical development of Christianity in European and American history is found in the textbooks, students have experience with the dynamic effects of changing ideas about religion, changing religious institutions, and the implications for science, law, government, art and social mores. By contrast, students might easily gain the impression that because such changes are not mentioned in connection with other faith traditions, they may not have occurred, or that these traditions are shallower or more rigid than Western Christianity. Textbooks thus support the default assumption that once these other faiths originated, their beliefs, practices, customs and traditions remained static until the modern period, when they threatened to become irrelevant though the pressures of modernization and secularization. Despite the lack of detail and precision in standards documents, textbook editors must fully and responsibly interpret these broad mandates to include religion among the cultural and spiritual expressions of every society they cover. In doing this, they are not only fulfilling clear mandates in the state standards, they are also providing the background for serious understanding of the role religion plays in contemporary life across the globe.

¹⁰ Nord, *Religion and American Education*, pp. 138-159; American Textbook Council, *History Textbooks* (New York: Center for Education Studies/American Textbook Council, 1994), pp. 32-34; Paul Gagnon, *Democracy's Untold Story* (Washington DC: American Federation of Teachers, 1987), pp. 59-63; Paul Gagnon, *Democracy's Half Told Story* (Washington DC: American Federation of Teachers, 1989), pp. 38-40; Douglass, "God Spoke: Guidelines and Coverage of Abrahamic Religions in World History Textbooks," *Religion & Education*, 25:1 & 2, pp. 45-58.

¹¹ Douglass, *Strategies and Structures for Presenting World History, with Islam and Muslim History as a Case Study* (Beltsville, MD: Council on Islamic Education/Amana Publishing, 1994), pp. 81-122.

Until world history textbooks structure coverage of all regions, cultures and civilizations around a chronological model of eras across the globe, however, such information will be difficult to integrate into the narrative, and comparison of religious continuity and changes over time and among cultures will not be meaningful to students. A model for such coverage, however flawed, already exists in the integration of discussion about religion into European history over the period from the rise of Christianity to the Enlightenment. It remains only to apply and expand it to include other traditions.

Supplementary materials can fill these gaps to some extent. Publishers and organizations are providing expanded information on topics that textbooks only mention briefly. Trade books, teaching units, workshops, community speakers and exhibits, both in museums and on the Internet, offer instructional material to teachers inclined to delve into these topics. To the degree that textbooks remain a backbone of instructional content in classrooms in the near future, however, major improvements in their structure and content still provide a major key to enhancing teaching about religion.

Summing Up

Awareness of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching about religion can help shape implementation of standards-based education in terms of both local curricula and state testing. It can aid the development of accurate, balanced and challenging instructional materials and assessment instruments based on sound scholarship, especially in history and religious studies. It can help instructional designers to align the next generation of textbooks to the state standards at a time when the status of curriculum across the nation is as transparent as it has been at any time in memory. It is hoped that the information provided here helps make sense of the diversity and commonalties in state and national mandates, allowing educators to concentrate on raising the level of scholarship and effectiveness in instruction. Most important, the information provided here may finally provide the impetus to those who shape teacher training programs to help prepare future educators at all levels to teach about religion, and to offer in-service training on religion. Finally, the shortcomings and strengths identified here can assist educators and advocates of improved educational standards to participate in the process of standards implementation, both by supporting implementation of current standards and by working toward revision of flawed standards documents and further progress. The newly mandated content in the states presents educators with a tremendous opportunity to enhance teaching about religion in public schools. It is hoped that the information in this study can help educators and other citizens to fashion the tools for accomplishing this important task.

APPENDIX I: CURRICULUM DOCUMENTS

National Standards Documents and Curriculum Models

Building a United States History Curriculum: Guides for Implementing the History Curriculum Recommended by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools (National Council for History Education, 1997)

Building a World History Curriculum: Guides for Implementing the History Curriculum Recommended by the Bradley Commission on History in the Schools (National Council for History Education, 1997)

Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies (National Council for Social Studies, 1994)

Geography for Life: National Geography Standards (National Geographic Research and Exploration, 1994)

National Standards for Civics and Government (Center for Civic Education, 1994)

National Standards for History, Basic Edition (National Center for History in the Schools, 1996)

Voluntary Standards for Teaching Economics (The National Council on Economic Education, 1994)

State Standards and Framework Documents

Alabama --

Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies, Draft 1997-98 Social Studies State Course of Study Committee,
Alabama Course of Study: Social Studies (Bulletin 1998, No. ?)

Alaska --

Alaska Content Standards: Geography, Government and Citizenship, History, Alaska Department of Education & Early Development, Adopted 1994-1995

Arkansas --

Arkansas Curriculum Frameworks, Arkansas Social Studies Curriculum Framework, © 1997 Arkansas
Department of Education, #4 Capitol Mall, Little Rock, AR 72201

Arizona --

Arizona Standards: Draft Social Studies Standards: Conceptual Standards with Performance Objectives, Arizona
Department of Education, July 1999

California --

History/Social Science Content Standards Grades K-12 , State of California State Board of Education, Pre-
Publication Version 1998, State Board of Education, 721 Capitol Mall, Fifth Floor, Sacramento, California 95814

Colorado --

Model Content Standards for Civics, Colorado Department of Education, Adopted Sept 10, 1998
Model Content Standards for Geography, Colorado Department of Education, Adopted 6-8-95; Amended 11-9-95
Model Content Standards for Economics, Colorado Department of Education, Adopted August 20, 1998
Model Content Standards for History, Colorado Department of Education, Adopted September 14, 1995

Connecticut --

Connecticut Common Core of Learning ; K-12 Curricular Goals and Standards, Connecticut State Department of
Education, March 1998

Delaware --

Delaware Social Studies Curriculum Framework: Content Standards, Volume One, June 1995, Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks Commission

Florida --

Sunshine State Standards: Social Studies, Florida Department of Education, 1996

Georgia --

Social Studies Quality Core Curriculum K- 12, December 12, 1997, Georgia Department of Education

Hawaii --

Hawaii Social Studies Essential Content, 1998; Social Studies Content Standards, 1999

Hawaii Department of Education

Idaho --

Idaho's Standards for Excellence, State Exiting Standards Draft II, Idaho State Board Of Education, 9/21/98

Illinois --

Illinois Social Science, State Goals 14-18, Illinois State Board of Education Adopted 7/25/97

Indiana --

Indiana Social Studies Proficiency Guide: An Aid to Curriculum Development, 1996 Edition, Indiana Department of Education, and IX High School Course Descriptions and Proficiency Statements--Selected Courses

Kansas --

Kansas Curricular Standards For Social Studies February 9, 1996 Kansas State Board of Education

Kentucky --

Kentucky Core Content for Social Studies Assessment, Version 3.0, Division of Curriculum Development, Kentucky Department of Education, September 1999

Louisiana --

Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards, State Standards for Curriculum Development, Louisiana Department of Education, 05/22/97; see also arts and language arts

Maine --

Maine Learning Results -- Social Studies, July 1997 see also visual and performing arts, July 1997

Maryland --

Maryland School Performance Assessment Program, Clarification of Social Studies Outcomes and Indicators; Maryland State Department of Education, 1997

Massachusetts --

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Department of Education History and Social Science Curriculum Framework, Copyright 1997, Massachusetts Department of Education. See also Arts and Language Arts

Michigan --

Michigan Curriculum Framework Content Standards/Social Studies, CONTENT STANDARDS AND WORKING DRAFT BENCHMARKS,, June 12, 1998, Michigan Department of Education

Minnesota --

Minnesota Public School Social Studies Content Standards; The Profile of Learning Preparatory Standards, 1997 , Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning,

Montana --

The Montana Social Studies Model Curriculum Guide, Montana Board of Public Education, Office of Public Instruction, no date, available online since 1998

Mississippi --

Mississippi Social Studies Framework, 1998, Mississippi Department of Education

Missouri --

The Show-Me Standards, Approved as a final regulation by the Missouri State Board of Education, January 18, 1996

Nebraska

K-12 Social Studies Standards Adopted by the State Board of Education May 8, 1998

Nevada

Draft Social Studies Standards, April 1999, Nevada Department of Education

New Hampshire --

New Hampshire K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Framework, Based on New Hampshire Minimum Standards for Public School Approval, (Concord: State Board and Department of Education, 1993).

New Jersey --

New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards for Social Studies, New Jersey Department of Education, 1996

New Mexico --

New Mexico Social Studies K-12 Content Standards with Benchmarks, August 1996, New Mexico Department of Education

North Carolina --

Social Studies Standard Course of Study Framework and The Teacher Handbook - Social Studies K-12, 1997, North Carolina Department of Education

New York --

New York State Learning Standards for Social Studies, Revised Edition , The NY State Education Department , June 1996

Ohio --

Ohio Learning Outcomes, All Grades; Model Competency-Based Social Studies Program, November 1993, Ohio State Department of Education

Oklahoma --

Oklahoma Priority Academic Student Skills: Social Studies, Revised March 1997, Oklahoma State Department of Education.

Oregon --

Social Science Proficiency Standards, PASS: Proficiency-based Admission Standards System, Oregon University System, © Oregon University System, 1998, Office of Academic Affairs, 1431 Johnson Lane, Eugene, Oregon 97403-0175

South Carolina --

South Carolina Social Studies Curriculum Framework, South Carolina Department of Education, 1999.

Tennessee --

Tennessee Grades K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Framework, 1996-1999, Tennessee Department of Education

Texas --

Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Statutory Authority: issued under the Texas Education Code, §28.002, §11322 TexReg 7684. Source: The provisions of §113.1 adopted to be effective September 1, 1998, Texas Education Agency

Utah --

Utah Social Studies Core Curriculum, Utah State Office of Education, (UtahLINK web site posts “Action by the State Board of Education in January 1984 established a policy requiring the identification of specific Core Curriculum standards which must be completed by all students K-12 as a requisite for graduation from Utah's secondary schools.”)

Vermont --

Vermont's Framework of Standards and Learning Opportunities (Social Studies), Vermont Department of Education,

Virginia –

Standards of Learning for Virginia Public Schools, Board of Education, Commonwealth of Virginia, June 1995.

Washington --

Essential Academic Learning Requirements, Social Studies, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1995.

West Virginia --

West Virginia Instructional Goals & Objectives, West Virginia Department of Education, 1900 Kanawha Boulevard East, Charleston, WV 25305, established by Policy 2520, original effective date July 1, 1997, revised date February 28, 1998.

Wisconsin –

Model Academic Standards and Proficiency Standards, State of Wisconsin, Department of Public Instruction 125 S. Webster St., P.O. Box 7841, Madison, WI 53707-7841 USA, Copyright 1997-1998.

Wyoming --

Wyoming Social Studies Standards, Wyoming Department of Education, Draft #5, 2/10/99

APPENDIX II: GUIDELINES FOR TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

From: A Teacher's Guide to Religion in the Public Schools, (First Amendment Center, 1999)

The guide has been endorsed by the following organizations:

American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
American Jewish Committee
American Jewish Congress
Anti-Defamation League
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs
Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights
Christian Educators Association International
Christian Legal Society
Council on Islamic Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of Evangelicals
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A.
National Council for the Social Studies
National Education Association
National PTA
National School Boards Association
Union of American Hebrew Congregations
Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof ...”
Religion Clauses of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution

Each day millions of parents from diverse religious backgrounds entrust the education of their children to the teachers in our nation's public schools. For this reason, teachers need to be fully informed about the constitutional and educational principles for understanding the role of religion in public education.

This teacher's guide is intended to move beyond the confusion and conflict that has surrounded religion in public schools since the early days of the common school movement. For most of our history, extremes have shaped much of the debate. On one end of the spectrum are those who advocate promotion of religion (usually their own) in school practices and policies. On the other end are those who view public schools as religion-free zones. Neither of these approaches is consistent with the guiding principles of the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment.

Fortunately, however, there is another alternative that is consistent with the First Amendment and broadly supported by many educational and religious groups. The core of this alternative has been best articulated in “Religious Liberty, Public Education, and the Future of American Democracy,” a statement of principles issued by 24 national organizations. Principle IV states:

Public schools may not inculcate nor inhibit religion. They must be places where religion and religious conviction are treated with fairness and respect. Public schools uphold the First Amendment when they protect the religious liberty rights of students of all faiths or none. Schools demonstrate fairness when they ensure that the curriculum includes study about religion, where appropriate, as an important part of a complete education.¹

The questions and answers that follow build on this shared vision of religious liberty in public education to provide teachers with a basic understanding of the issues concerning religion in their classrooms. The advice offered is based on First Amendment principles as currently interpreted by the courts and agreed to by a wide range of religious and educational organizations. For a more in-depth examination of the issues, teachers should consult *Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education*.¹¹ This guide is not intended to render legal advice on specific legal questions; it is designed to provide general information on the subject of religion and public schools.

Keep in mind, however, that the law alone cannot answer every question. Teachers and administrators, working with parents and others in the community, must work to apply the First Amendment fairly and justly for all students in our public schools.

Teaching about Religion in Public Schools

1. Is it constitutional to teach about religion?

Yes. In the 1960s school prayer cases (that prompted rulings against state-sponsored school prayer and Bible reading), the U.S. Supreme Court indicated that public school education may include teaching about religion. In *Abington v. Schempp*, Associate Justice Tom Clark wrote for the Court:

[I]t might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

2. Why should study about religion be included in the curriculum?

Growing numbers of educators throughout the United States recognize that study about religion in social studies, literature, art, and music is an important part of a well-rounded education. "Religion in the Public School Curriculum: Questions and Answers," issued by a coalition of 17 major religious and educational organizations—including the Christian Legal Society, the American Jewish Congress, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the American Association of School Administrators, the Islamic Society of North America, the National Council for the Social Studies, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, the National Association of Evangelicals, and the National School Boards Association—describes the importance of religion in the curriculum thus:

Because religion plays a significant role in history and society, study about religion is essential to understanding both the nation and the world. Omission of facts about religion can give students the false impression that the religious life of humankind is insignificant or unimportant. Failure to understand even the basic symbols, practices, and concepts of the various religions makes much of history, literature, art, and contemporary life unintelligible.

Study about religion is also important if students are to value religious liberty, the first freedom guaranteed in the Bill of Rights. Moreover, knowledge of the roles of religion in the past and present promotes cross-cultural understanding essential to democracy and world peace.

A number of leading educational groups have issued their own statements decrying the lack of discussion about religion in the curriculum and calling for inclusion of such information in curricular materials and in teacher education.

Three major principles form the foundation of this consensus on teaching about religion in public schools:

1. As the Supreme Court has made clear, study about religion in public schools is constitutional.
2. Inclusion of study about religion is important in order for students to be properly educated about history and cultures.
3. Religion must be taught objectively and neutrally. The purpose of public schools is to educate students about a variety of religious traditions, not to indoctrinate them into any tradition.

3. Is study about religion included in textbooks and standards?

“Knowledge about religions is not only characteristic of an educated person, but is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity.”

National Council for the Social Studies

Agreement on the importance of teaching about religion has begun to influence the treatment of religion in textbooks widely used in public schools, as well as state frameworks and standards for the social studies. The current generation of history textbooks mention religion more often than their predecessors, and, in world history, sometimes offer substantive discussions of religious ideas and events.

State frameworks and standards are also beginning to treat religion more seriously. Most state standards in the social studies require or recommend teaching about religion through specific content references and general mandates, and many also include such references in fine arts and literature standards. In California, for example, the History-Social Science Framework and the new History-Social Science Content Standards require considerable study of religion. Students studying U.S. History in California are expected to learn about the role of religion in the American story, from the influence of religious groups on social reform movements to the religious revivals, from the rise of Christian fundamentalism to the expanding religious pluralism of the 20th century.

Teaching about religion is also encouraged in the National Standards for History, published by the National Center for History in the Schools. The elaborated standards in world history are particularly rich in religious references, examining the basic beliefs and practices of the major religions as well as how these faiths influenced the development of civilization in successive historical periods. While the U.S. history standards include religion less frequently, many historical developments and contributions that were influenced by religion are nevertheless represented.

Geography for Life: The National Geography Standards, published by the Geography Standards Project, and the National Standards for Civics and Government, published by the Center for Civic Education, include many references to teaching about religious belief and practice as historical and contemporary phenomena. Study of religion in the social studies would be expanded considerably if curriculum developers and textbooks writers were guided by these standards.

4. How should I teach about religion?

Encouraged by the new consensus, public schools are now beginning to include more teaching about religion in the curriculum. In the social studies especially, the question is no longer “Should I teach about religion?” but rather “How should I do it?”

The answer to the “how” question begins with a clear understanding of the crucial difference between the teaching of religion (religious education or indoctrination) and teaching about religion. “Religion in the Public School Curriculum,” the guidelines issued by 17 religious and educational organizations, summarizes the distinction this way:

- The school’s approach to religion is academic, not devotional.
- The school strives for student awareness of religions, but does not press for student acceptance of any religion.
- The school sponsors study about religion, not the practice of religion.
- The school may expose students to a diversity of religious views, but may not impose any particular view.
- The school educates about all religions; it does not promote or denigrate religion.
- The school informs students about various beliefs; it does not seek to conform students to any particular belief.ⁱⁱⁱ

Classroom discussions concerning religion must be conducted in an environment that is free of advocacy on the part of the teacher. Students may, of course, express their own religious views, as long as such expression is germane to the discussion. But public-school teachers are required by the First Amendment to teach about religion fairly and objectively, neither promoting nor denigrating religion in general or specific religious groups in particular. When discussing religion, many teachers guard against injecting personal religious beliefs by teaching through attribution (e.g., by using such phrases as “most Buddhists believe ...” or “according to the Hebrew scriptures ...”).

5. Which religions should be taught and how much should be said?

Decisions about which religions to include and how much to discuss about religion are determined by the grade level of the students and the academic requirements of the course being taught.

In the elementary grades, the study of family, community, various cultures, the nation, and other themes and topics may involve some discussion of religion. Elementary students are introduced to the basic ideas and practices of the world's major religions by focusing on the generally agreed-upon meanings of religious faiths—the core beliefs and symbols as well as important figures and events. Stories drawn from various faiths may be included among the wide variety of stories read by students, but the material selected must always be presented in the context of learning about religion.

On the secondary level, the social studies, literature, and the arts offer opportunities for the inclusion of study about religions—their ideas and practices. The academic needs of the course determine which religions are studied. In a U.S. history curriculum, for example, some faith communities may be given more time than others but only because of their predominant influence on the development of the American nation. In world history, a variety of faiths are studied in each region of the world in order to understand the various civilizations and cultures that have shaped history and society. The overall curriculum should include all of the major voices and some of the minor ones in an effort to provide the best possible education.

Fair and balanced study about religion on the secondary level includes critical thinking about historical events involving religious traditions. Religious beliefs have been at the heart of some of the best and some of the worst developments in human history. The full historical record (and various interpretations of it) should be available for analysis and discussion. Using primary sources whenever possible allows students to work directly with the historical record.

Of course, fairness and balance in U.S. or world history and literature is difficult to achieve, given the brief treatment of religious ideas and events in most textbooks and the limited time available in the course syllabus. Teachers will need scholarly supplemental resources that enable them to cover the required material within the allotted time, while simultaneously enriching the discussion with study of religion. Some schools now offer electives in religious studies in order to provide additional opportunities for students to study about the major faith communities in greater depth.

6. May I invite guest speakers to help with study about religion?

When teaching about religions in history, some teachers may find it helpful to invite a guest speaker for a more comprehensive presentation of the religious tradition under study. Teachers should consult their school district policy concerning guest speakers in the classroom.

If a guest speaker is invited, care should be taken to find someone with the academic background necessary for an objective and scholarly discussion of the historical period and the religion being considered. Faculty from local colleges and universities often make excellent guest speakers or can make recommendations of others who might be appropriate for working with students in a public-school setting. Religious leaders in the community may also be a resource. Remember, however, that they have commitments to their own faith. Be certain that any guest speaker understands the First Amendment guidelines for teaching about religion in public education and is clear about the academic nature of the assignment.

7. How should I treat religious holidays in the classroom?

Teachers must be alert to the distinction between teaching about religious holidays, which is permissible, and celebrating religious holidays, which is not. Recognition of and information about holidays may focus on how and when they are celebrated, their origins, histories and generally agreed-upon meanings. If the approach is objective and sensitive, neither promoting nor inhibiting religion, this study can foster understanding and mutual respect for differences in belief. Teachers may not use the study of religious holidays as an opportunity to proselytize or otherwise inject personal religious beliefs into the discussion.

The use of religious symbols, provided they are used only as examples of cultural or religious heritage, is permissible as a teaching aid or resource. Religious symbols may be displayed only on a temporary basis as part of the academic lesson being studied. Students may choose to create artwork with religious symbols, but teachers should not assign or suggest such creations.

The use of art, drama, music or literature with religious themes is permissible if it serves a sound educational goal in the curriculum. Such themes should be included on the basis of their academic or aesthetic value, not as a vehicle for promoting religious belief. For example, sacred music may be sung or played as part of the academic study of music. School concerts that present a variety of selections may include religious music. Concerts should avoid programs dominated by religious music, especially when these coincide with a particular religious holiday.

This advice about religious holidays in public schools is based on consensus guidelines adopted by 18 educational and religious organizations.^{iv}

8. Are there opportunities for teacher education in study about religion?

Teacher preparation and good academic resources are needed in order for study about religion in public schools to be constitutionally permissible and educationally sound.

The First Amendment Center supports initiatives in several regions of the country designed to prepare public-school teachers to teach about religion. The most extensive of these programs is the California 3Rs Project (Rights, Responsibilities, and Respect). Co-sponsored by the California County Superintendents Educational Services Association, the project has created a network of resource leaders and scholars throughout the state providing support for classroom teachers. Teachers trained by the project give workshops for their colleagues on the constitutional and educational guidelines for teaching about religion. Religious studies scholars from local colleges and universities are linked with school districts to provide ongoing expertise and periodic seminars on the religious traditions that teachers are discussing in the curriculum.

The Utah State Office of Education co-sponsors a Utah 3Rs Project that is currently building a network of resource leaders in all of the state's school districts. Other states and districts have similar programs in various stages of development.^v

Harvard University and the University of Pennsylvania offer master's level programs that are excellent opportunities for both current and prospective public- and private-school teachers interested in learning more about the study of religion and religion-liberty issues in American public life.^{vi}

Other colleges and universities offer assistance to teachers, including in-service programs focused on teaching about religion. A notable example is the Religion and Public Education Resource Center at California State University – Chico. This center provides resources, including curriculum guides and sample lessons in several subject areas.^{vii} Other organizations, such as the Council on Islamic Education, offer academic resources and workshops on teaching about specific religious traditions.^{viii}

9. What are good classroom resources for teaching about religion?

Teaching about religion in the public schools requires that sound academic resources be made readily available to classroom teachers. Fortunately, good classroom resources, especially in the social studies, are now available for helping teachers integrate appropriate study about religion.

Finding Common Ground: A First Amendment Guide to Religion and Public Education, published by the First Amendment Center, provides an extensive list of organizations and publishers that offer classroom resources for teaching about religion in public schools.

Two recent publications are examples of what is now available for study about religion in a secondary school classroom:

Religion in American Life is a 17-volume series written by leading scholars for young readers. Published by Oxford University Press, the series includes three chronological volumes on the religious history of the U.S., nine volumes covering significant religious groups (Protestants, Catholics, Jews, Orthodox Christians, Mormons, Muslims, Hindus, Buddhists, Native Americans and others), and four volumes addressing specific topics of special importance for understanding the role of religion in American life (women and religion, church-state issues, African American religion, and immigration).^{ix}

Columbia University Press has published a CD-ROM entitled *On Common Ground: World Religions in America*. This multimedia resource uses text, primary sources, photographs, music, film, and the spoken word to bring alive the extraordinary religious diversity in the United States. Fifteen different religions in various regions of America are represented, from the long-established Christian, Jewish, and Native American traditions to the more recent arrivals such as Hinduism and Buddhism.^x

10. What is the relationship between religion and character education?

As discussed above, the First Amendment prohibits public-school teachers from either inculcating or inhibiting religion. Teachers must remain neutral concerning religion, neutral among religions and neutral between religion and non-religion. But this does not mean that teachers should be neutral concerning civic virtue or moral character.

Teachers should teach the personal and civic virtues widely held in our society, such as honesty, caring, fairness, and integrity. They must do so without either invoking religious authority or denigrating the religious or philosophical commitments of students and parents.

When school districts develop a plan for comprehensive character education, they should keep in mind that the moral life of a great many Americans is shaped by deep religious conviction. Both the approach to character education and the classroom materials used should be selected in close consultation with parents and other community members representing a broad range of perspectives. When care is taken to find consensus, communities are able to agree on the core character traits they wish taught in the schools and how they wish character education to be done.

For guidance on how to develop and implement a quality character education program, contact the Character Education Partnership in Washington, D.C.^{xi}

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Notes

i. This shared vision of religious liberty in public education is remarkable both for who says it and for what it says. The National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, the National School Boards Association, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National PTA and the American Association of School Administrators joins with the Christian Legal Society, the American Center for Law and Justice, and Citizens for Excellence in Education in asserting these principles. People for the American Way, the Anti-Defamation League and the Union of American Hebrew Congregations are on the list, as are the Council on Islamic Education and the Christian Educators Association International, and the Christian Coalition. Free copies are available through the First Amendment Center.

ii. *Finding Common Ground* by Charles C. Haynes and Oliver Thomas is available at cost from the First Amendment Center. Call (615) 321-9588.

iii. Based on guidelines originally published by the Public Education Religion Studies Center at Wright State University.

iv. Religious Holidays and Public Schools: Questions and Answers” may be found in *Finding Common Ground*, available through the First Amendment Center.

v. For details about the “Rights, Responsibilities and Respect” programs, contact Marcia Beauchamp, Religious Freedom Programs Coordinator/First Amendment Center, Freedom Forum Pacific Coast Center, One Market St., Steuart Tower, 21st Floor, San Francisco, CA 94105, (415) 281-0900.

vi. For more information about the Program in Religion and Secondary Education at Harvard University, contact The Divinity School, 45 Francis Ave., Cambridge, MA 02138. Attention: Nancy Richardson, Director. Inquiries about the Religion in Public Life Certificate Program at the University of Pennsylvania should be addressed to Janet Theophano, Associate Director, Master of Liberal Arts Program, College of General Studies, University of Pennsylvania, 3440 Market St., Suite 100, Philadelphia, PA 19104-3335.

vii. Contact the Religion and Public Education Resource Center by writing to Dr. Bruce Grelle, Dept. of Religious Studies, California State University – Chico, Chico, CA 95929.

viii. The Council on Islamic Education may be reached by calling (714) 839-2929.

ix. For more information about the Oxford University Press series, Religion in American Life, call (800) 451-7556.

x. For more information about the CD-ROM On Common Ground: World Religions in America, call (800) 944-8648.

xi. The Character Education Partnership is located at 918 16th St., NW, Suite 501, Washington, DC 20006. Call (800) 988-8081. Web site: www.character.org

APPENDIX III: NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR SOCIAL STUDIES POSITION STATEMENT ON TEACHING ABOUT RELIGION

Study About Religions in the Social Studies Curriculum, (NCSS, 1981)

The National Council for Social Studies in its *Statement on Essentials of the Social Studies* declares that:

Students need a knowledge of the world at large and the world at hand, the world of individuals and the world of institutions, the world past, and the world present and future.

Religions have influenced the behavior of both individuals and nations, and have inspired some of the world's most beautiful art, architecture, literature, and music. History, our own nation's religious pluralism, and contemporary world events are testimony that religion has been and continues to be an important cultural value. The NCSS Curriculum Guidelines state that "the social studies program should draw from currently valid knowledge representative of human experience, culture, and beliefs." The study about religions, then, has "a rightful place in the public school curriculum because of the pervasive nature of religious beliefs, practices, institutions, and sensitivities."

Knowledge about religions is not only a characteristic of an educated person but is also absolutely necessary for understanding and living in a world of diversity. Knowledge of religious differences and the role of religion in the contemporary world can help promote understanding and alleviate prejudice. Since the purpose of the social studies is to provide students with a knowledge of the world that has been, the world that is, and the world of the future, studying about religions should be an essential part of the social studies curriculum. Omitting study about religions gives students the impression that religions have not been and are not now part of the human experience. Study about religions may be dealt with in special courses and units or wherever and whenever knowledge of the religious dimension of human history and culture is needed for a balanced and comprehensive understanding. In its 1963 decision in the case of *Abington v. Schempp*, the United States Supreme Court declared that study about religions in the nation's public schools is both legal and desirable. Justice Tom Clark writing the majority opinion stated:

In addition, it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religions or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historical qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistent with the First Amendment.

Justice William Brennan in a concurring opinion wrote:

The holding of the Court today plainly does not foreclose teaching about the Holy Scriptures or about the differences between religious sects in classes in literature or history. Indeed, whether or not the Bible is involved, it would be impossible to teach meaningfully many subjects in the social sciences or the humanities without some mention of religion.

If the public schools are to provide students with a comprehensive education in the social studies, academic study about religions should be a part of the curriculum.

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