

3. Social Studies: A culture war

[Article 3 of 10: The previous article asked whether education belongs to the individual or the government. This article shows how Social Studies designers believe education belongs to the government.]

The Social Studies Framework has set up Grade 8 students to be targets in a culture war. The New York version mandates 72 requirements. All but two foster social transformation:

- 44 push Identity Politics, Class Conflict and Culture Wars
- 12 push Business Oppression
- 19 push Internationalism, Anti-War, and Anti-Imperialism
- 4 push Environmental Issues
- 5 push the advantage of Centralized Government

Eighth grade covers a rich period of the American experience, from the close of the Civil War to the present.

While some Americans across history have been poorly treated by the politics of the day, requirements don't accurately map cultural experience. Dark chapters exist in American history, but they do not represent the entire book. Mandated curriculum requirements[1] repeatedly demean America. They elbow aside the wonderful things past Americans worked hard to achieve for their children. Students should be proud of American progress and the country's standing compared to the rest of the world. Instead they are left

embarrassed.

• 3 of 44 requirements that dwell on Identity Politics describe displacement of people by those with different views. [2] A more useful history would ask how to address inter-cultural conflict[3] issues yet to be resolved, like institutional fraud, government cronyism, property and political rights.

• 9 requirements foster anti-war internationalism[4] that is another name for political control by those who came to power using any means. It implies peace is the absence of war when peace is the absence of the need for war.

• 12 requirements magnify entrepreneurial oppressiveness[5] implying a need for further governmental intervention.

Social studies requirements are the operational level where content meets students. When those requirements are collected, repeated, tested, and assessed, the requirements are superficial, political, and self-serving. Rather than educate, framework training overwhelms useful patterns of experience and principles derived from them.

[Article 4 will examine explanations given by the Social Studies Frameworks to discover how they fail to justify what should be taught and maneuver their program astray.]

[1] Similar requirements in

others states follow the College, Career and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards guidelines.

[2] For example: "• Students will examine United States and New York State policies toward Native Americans, such as the displacement of Native Americans from traditional lands, creation of reservations, efforts to assimilate Native Americans through the creation of boarding schools, the Dawes Act, and the Indian Reorganization Act and the Native Americans' various responses to these policies."

[3] Comparing westward expansion to the present-day influx of other cultures, consequences of overwhelming cultures by sheer numbers is also worthy of discussion.

[4] For example: "• Students will examine Wilson's Fourteen Points and investigate reasons why the United States Senate refused to support the Treaty of Versailles, focusing on opposition to the League of Nations."

[5] For example: "• Students will explore the growth and effects of child labor and sweatshops." And "• Students will examine state and federal government responses to reform efforts, including the passage of the 17th amendment, child labor and minimum wage laws, anti-trust legislation, and food and drug regulations."