

Social Studies in Nebraska and Critical Race Theory (CRT)

The Social Studies Standards were updated in 2019, the same year the Nebraska Department of Education (NDE) created the “Equity Lens”, changed references on their website from “Equality” to “Equity”, and hired an “Equity Officer”. CRT concepts were clearly on the minds of the State Board of Education (SBOE) and the NDE when they put the Social Studies standards together, based on their recommended curriculum. The standards in the lower grades are non-specific but could easily encourage discussions of CRT, depending upon the classroom teacher. The High School curriculum does seem to be more leading--encouraging teachers towards “Anti-Racism”.

During the April 2021 State Board Of Education meeting, board members seemed to agree that some themes found in Draft #1 of the Health Sex Education standards would fit better in Social Studies, and so would likely just be moved in the future. These themes were consistent with CRT and prompted our concern and review of the current Social Studies Standards.

Multiple Perspectives - 4th Grade

SS 4.4.2 Analyze and explain multiple perspectives of events in Nebraska, including historically marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 4.4.2.a Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: The Homestead Act, Oregon Trail diaries, military journal of Ponca Removal, Standing Bear testimony SS 4.4.2.b Identify and describe how various sources relate their perspectives of Nebraska history. For example: texts and primary documents, primary documents from differing groups of people

Multiple Perspectives – 5th Grade

SS 5.4.2 Describe and explain multiple perspectives of historical events in the PreColumbian era through the Constitution including marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 5.4.2.a Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: The Boston Massacre, Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, historical biographies SS 5.4.2.b Identify and describe how multiple perspectives facilitate the understanding of US history. For example: Battle for the Old Northwest, Atlantic Slave Trade.

Multiple Perspectives – 6th Grade

SS 6.4.2 Use multiple perspectives to identify the historical, social, and cultural context of past and current events.

SS 6.4.2.a Identify evidence from multiple perspectives and sources to better understand the complexities of world history.

For example: Macedonian Empire, Persian Empire

SS 6.4.2.b Explain the use of primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: foundational texts of world religions

SS 6.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 6.4.3.a Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

For example: religious, ethnic and racial groups

SS 6.4.3.b Interpret perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented regions around the world.

For example: inclusion of non-Eurasian civilization

Multiple Perspectives – 7th Grade

SS 7.4.2 Use multiple perspectives to examine the historical, social, and cultural context of past and current events.

SS 7.4.2.a Analyze evidence from multiple perspectives and sources to better understand the complexities of world history.

For example: caste system, partition of India, Ibn Battuta, Zheng He, Marco Polo, Mansa Musa, Mongol Empire, Berlin Conference, Arab-Israeli Conflict, Latin American revolutions, Columbian Exchange SS 7.4.2.b Compare and contrast primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: foundational texts of world religions

SS 7.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 7.4.3.a Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

For example: religious, ethnic and racial groups

SS 7.4.3.b Interpret perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented regions around the world.

For example: civilizations from all regions of the world

Multiple Perspectives – 8th Grade

SS 8.4.2 Use multiple perspectives to evaluate the historical, social, and cultural context of past and current events.

SS 8.4.2.a Compare and interpret evidence from multiple perspectives and sources to better understand the complexities of US history.

For example: Dawes Act, Santee Mankato Executions (Dakota Uprising), Chinese Exclusion Act, Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo, Reconstruction Acts and Amendments, The Emancipation Proclamation, organized labor, Women's Suffrage Movement

SS 8.4.2.b Evaluate the relevancy, accuracy, and completeness of primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: The Bill of Rights, slavery, Gettysburg Address, "The New Colossus" poem

SS 8.4.3 Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS 8.4.3.a Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

For example: Compare primary accounts by American Indian peoples and American settlers regarding the expansion of the United States.

SS 8.4.3.b Interpret how and why marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals might understand historical events similarly or differently.

For example: Compare how differing Native American groups and Spanish-speaking peoples responded to the Indian Removal Act and the Mexican-American War.

Multiple Perspectives – High School

SS HS.4.2 (US) Analyze the complexity of the interaction of multiple perspectives to investigate causes and effects of significant events in the development of history.

SS HS.4.2.a (US) Identify and evaluate how considering multiple perspectives facilitates an understanding of history.

For example: Nineteenth Amendment, 1924 National Origins Act, Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, Bracero program, Civil Rights Movement

SS HS.4.2.b (US) Evaluate the relevancy, accuracy, and completeness of primary and secondary sources to better understand multiple perspectives of the same event.

For example: Theodore Roosevelt's New Nationalism and Woodrow Wilson's New Freedom, Indian Reorganization Act and responses from tribal leaders, differing strategies in the struggle to gain black equality

SS HS.4.3 (US) Examine historical events from the perspectives of marginalized and underrepresented groups.

SS HS.4.3.a (US) Identify how differing experiences can lead to the development of perspectives.

For example: religious, racial or ethnic groups, immigrants, women, LGBTQ persons, and Native American nations

SS HS.4.3.b (US) Interpret how and why marginalized and underrepresented groups and/or individuals might understand historical events similarly or differently.

For example: Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965, Stonewall Riots, American Indian Movement, Equal Rights Amendment, Civil Rights Act of 1964, West Virginia v. Barnette, United Farm Workers

These standards, for the most part, are not equivalent to CRT. They sound overall well-balanced. However the direction and the very concerning views supported by the SBOE and the NDE are outlined in their accompanying resources available to instructors, within the Social Studies section of the NDE website.

Standards Instructional Tool and Framework indicates their goal of a greater emphasis on “Equity and Bias”.

A section on Anti-Racism and Equity Resources leads you directly to the curriculum for the following:

1. The 1619 Project <https://pulitzercenter.org/lesson-plan-grouping/1619-project-curriculum>
2. Antiracist APUSH <https://www.antiracistapush.com/> with lessons on “The New Jim Crow” and “The Case for Reparations”.
3. EVERFI's Anti-Racism Extension Guide https://2gag5314usvg3k1yhz13gzy4-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/K12_Anti-Racism-Extension-Guide-for-Teachers_February2021.pdf with lessons on “White Privilege” “Framing and Learning Anti-racism” “Systemic Racism in the US Criminal Justice System” “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, etc.
4. Great Lakes Equity Center <https://greatlakesequity.org/anti-racism-resources> (This quote must be highlighted, it sounds so “Pravda”- they even signed off with “solidarity”):

“For those who are white (non-disabled, Christian, non-LGBTQIA+, English-only speaking, US born, and otherwise privileged) educators/scholars, we urge you to focus your work on dismantling the racism and ableism, and other oppressions you engage to maintain this systemic trauma for our Youth of Color and intersectionally-marginalized youth, alongside your community of white educators and scholars.

For our Black, Indigenous, People of Color+ partners, including families and students, we will continue work to center your experiences, your leadership, your wisdom, your voices, and all other forms of your expression. We will work to create more healing and loving spaces for you in particular as we move forward in the immediate and long-term future.”

“In solidarity, Great Lakes Equity Center/Midwest and Plains Equity Assistance Center”

This Center recommends all of the CRT “bibles” such as “White Fragility” by Robin D’Angelo, “How to be an Anti-Racist” by Ibram X Kendi, etc. Also there is a link to the 1619 Project and a bonus section on “Anti-Asian Racism”.

5. Learning for Justice <https://www.learningforjustice.org/> “A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center”
6. PBS Tools for Anti-Racist Teaching <https://www.pbs.org/education/blog/tools-for-anti-racist-teaching> and Anti-Racist Learning Resources from PBS <https://www.pbs.org/foundation/blogs/pbs-programs/learning-resources-for-our-current-moment/> with lessons for middle and high school students on “Institutional Racism” “America in Crisis” and “Policing the Police”.
7. Welcoming Schools <https://welcomingschools.org/resources/lesson-plans-gender-identity-transgender-non-binary> “Make your school Gender and LGBTQ inclusive” with lessons for age 3 and up.
8. Zinn Education Project <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials> “For more than ten years, the Zinn Education Project has introduced students to a more accurate, complex, and engaging understanding of history than is found in traditional textbooks”. Like this lesson for example:

Blockadia: Teaching How the Movement Against Fossil Fuels Is Changing the World--Teaching Activity. By Bill Bigelow, Adam Sanchez, and Tim Swinehart. A role-play activity engages students in building solidarity among different groups and organizations fighting fossil fuels and searching for alternatives.

Time Periods: 21st Century, 2001 – Present, Themes: Climate Justice, Environment, Organizing

9. “Courageous Conversations”. In the lexicon of CRT, “Courageous Conversations” is when white people demonstrate public self-loathing, agree with reparations, and apologize for their whiteness.

In this section you can find lessons such as “Responding to Microaggressions in the Classroom”. Also “Leading Conversations After Crisis” such as when “Armed Insurgents flooded into the United States Capitol. The way white rioters were treated by law enforcement, the pervasiveness of antisemitic and racist slogans and symbols, the obvious entitlement of those attacking the capitol, and the clear backlash against recognizing the rights of Black voters are all facets of white supremacy that will need to be unpacked.”

Most of these incredibly biased lessons are brought to you by major U.S Universities. Overall, the resources supported by this SBOE and the NDE clearly reveal their support of CRT and their expectation of implementation in all schools across Nebraska.

