

# Delaware

(Sources: *Social Studies Curriculum Framework, 1995*; updated in *Social Studies Standards, End of Grade Cluster Benchmarks, Performance Indicators*, 3 volumes: Grades K-5, 6-8, 9-12, Delaware Department of Education, 2001)

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## The five criteria: An overview

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Are the essentials of a civic core specified clearly?	Are the topics teachable within the allotted timeframe?	Do the documents provide a scope and sequence?	Is the essential content required of all students?	Are the important facts and ideas presented coherently across subjects?
★	☆	★	★	☆

Standards that largely meet the criteria are designated with a full star [★]; standards that partially meet the criteria are designated with a half star [☆]; and standards that do not meet the criteria are designated with an empty star [☆].

### Summary:

Delaware's 1995 framework itself partially meets Criterion #3 on course order, and only indirectly under its history standard #4 ("content"), dividing the eras of U.S. and world history between grades six to eight and nine to twelve. The updated standards and benchmarks (called "expectations" in 1995) are as vague and general as the originals and do not fully satisfy Criterion #1. Only sections on "performance indicators" in the updated documents present specifics in the four subjects of civics, economics, geography, and history. But there are so many indicators, especially in history, that they would fail Criterion #2 as unteachable in the school time at hand. Statewide tests at grades three, five, eight, and eleven suggest that state standards are required of all students, partially satisfying Criteria #3 and #4. Criterion #5 on integration is not met; economics and geography indicators are unlinked to the history being covered at the same grade level.

### Particulars:

From performance indicators, teachers could find a common core of learning for citizenship, but only (a) if they have local authority to choose and (b) state tests are aligned with the indicators and offer a choice of questions. The Delaware documents confuse the relationship between tests and indicators. On the one hand, they say that historical specifics in performance indicators "will not be measured independently" by the Delaware Student Testing Program (DSTP), which are aligned to standards and benchmarks too vague to help teachers design courses. On the other hand, they say indicators—too many to teach—will "set parameters" for the content assessed and students will "use their knowledge of these time periods and topics" to support and explain their responses to the DSTP.

Depending on the role of performance indicators, Delaware has a social studies program that is either too vague or too overloaded to be teachable or testable in ways that are fair to students and their teachers. On the vague end is history standard #1: "Students will employ chronological concepts in analyzing historical phenomena" with its grade eight benchmark, "Examine historical materials relating to a particular region, society, or theme, analyze change over time, and make logical inferences concerning cause and effect," and its grade eleven

benchmark, “Analyze historical materials to trace the development of an idea or trend across space or over a prolonged period of time in order to explain patterns of historical continuity and change.” On the overloaded end are grade eight’s 100 main topics (performance indicators) in U.S. history, plus some 40 separate subtopics, following upon some 49 U.S. topics in grade four and 53 in grade five. Grade eleven U.S. history has 131 main topics and grade nine (or ten) world history has 100 separate topics, many of them complex but still missing the events and ideas central to a civic core for the political education of citizens.

As with many other states, Delaware has complicated documents with the roots of teachable, testable standards, but not yet in a form that offers real help to teachers for developing and teaching their courses. The work of selecting content and setting priorities across the grades still must be done.