

Pennsylvania Social Studies Standards: Grassroots Information Packet

Pennsylvania state law requires Pennsylvania to revise its statewide social studies standards at least once every 3 years. These standards govern social studies instruction in all Pennsylvania public schools. The revision of statewide standards is directed by the Pennsylvania State Board of Education (SBE). The Board directs the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to assemble a “Social Studies Content Committee” and “Steering Committee” to review current social studies standards and propose revisions. Members of these committees, who must be social studies experts, are first selected by the Department of Education in an application process and are then approved by the Board of Education at one of its periodical meetings. Since Pennsylvania state academic standards are considered State Board of Education Regulations, the Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) is also required to review and assist in revising Pennsylvania’s social studies standards. During the revision process, the IRRC is responsible for reviewing the State Board’s proposed revisions to existing academic standards and for reviewing the final version of the proposed standards before they are published as a final rule. Final adoption of proposed revisions to statewide standards, however, is considered and completed by the Pennsylvania Board of Education. Before this adoption takes place, the general public has the opportunity to review and comment on proposed revisions to existing social studies standards through public surveys on drafted revisions to standards, public hearings, and a 30-day public comment period.

Below we explain and list in sequential order:

1. Current Pennsylvania social studies standards and their current website location
2. How often Pennsylvania is required to review and revise its social studies standards
3. State laws and administrative codes governing social studies instruction in Pennsylvania public schools
4. Which state agencies and groups are responsible for writing and adopting social studies standards
5. The electoral or bureaucratic relationships these agencies have with the general public in Pennsylvania
6. What opportunity Pennsylvania community members and educators have to offer feedback and comment during a standards’ revision cycle

1. Current Pennsylvania social studies standards and their current website location

a. Current Pennsylvania K-12 Social Studies Standards by Content Band

[Adopted July 18, 2002]

- i. [Pennsylvania Civics and Government Standards](#)
- ii. [Pennsylvania History Standards](#)
- iii. [Pennsylvania Economics Standards](#)
- iv. [Pennsylvania Geography Standards](#)

b. Website Location

- i. [Pennsylvania Department of Education \(PDE\) Website](#)

c. Pennsylvania Social Studies Resources

- i. [Pennsylvania DOE Long Term Transfer Goals, Big Ideas, and Essential Questions](#)
- ii. [Pennsylvania DOE Social Studies Curriculum Frameworks](#)
- iii. Pennsylvania Voluntary Social Studies Standards [Adopted July 1, 2009]; from the Pennsylvania [Standards Aligned System \(SAS\)](#):
 1. [Civics and Government](#)
 - a. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Civics and Government Standards \(Primary\)](#) [Approved May 2012]
 - b. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Civics and Government Standards \(Elementary\)](#)
 - c. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Civics and Government Standards \(Secondary\)](#)

2. Economics

- a. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Economics Standards \(Primary\)](#)
[Approved May 2012]
- b. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Economics Standards \(Elementary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]
- c. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Economics Standards \(Secondary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]

3. Geography

- a. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Geography Standards \(Primary\)](#)
[Approved May 2012]
- b. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Geography Standards \(Elementary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]
- c. [Pennsylvania Voluntary Geography Standards \(Secondary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]

4. History

- a. [Pennsylvania Voluntary History Standards \(Primary\)](#)
[Approved May 2012]
- b. [Pennsylvania Voluntary History Standards \(Elementary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]
- c. [Pennsylvania Voluntary History Standards \(Secondary\)](#)
[Approved June 2009]

2. How often Pennsylvania is required to review and revise its social studies standards

Pennsylvania Academic Standards Revision Schedule: The Pennsylvania Board of Education is required by [22 PA. Code § 4.12](#) revise statewide academic standards every three years; However, despite this statutory law, Pennsylvania has not updated its social studies standards since 2002.

3. State laws and administrative codes governing social studies instruction in Pennsylvania public schools

a. Pennsylvania Legislation

- i. *See:* [NAS Compilation of State Statutes concerning Social Studies Instruction for each US State](#)

b. Pennsylvania Code Title 22 (State Board of Education Rules and Regulations)

- i. [22 Pa. Code § 4.11](#) [*Purpose of public education*]
- ii. [22 PA. Code § 4.12](#) [*Academic Standards*]
- iii. [22 Pa. Code § 4.51](#) [*State assessment system*]
- iv. [22 PA. Code § 4.21](#) [*Elementary education: primary and intermediate levels*]
- v. [22 Pa. Code § 4.22](#) [*Middle level education*]
- vi. [22 Pa. Code § 4.23](#) [*High school education*]
- vii. [22 Pa. Code § 4.51b](#) [*Keystone Exams*]

4. Which state agencies and groups are responsible for writing and adopting social studies standards

a. Which agency writes Pennsylvania’s social studies standards?

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education is charged with reviewing Pennsylvania’s statewide academic standards ([22 PA. Code § 4.12](#)). The Board directs the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) to assemble a “Social Studies Content Committee” and “Steering Committee” to review current social studies standards and propose revisions. Members of these committees, who must be social studies experts, are first selected by the Department of Education in an application process and are then approved by the Board of Education at one of its periodical meetings.

- i. See: [Pennsylvania Academic Standards Revision Process during recent Computer Science Standards Revision Cycle](#)

b. Since Pennsylvania state academic standards are considered [State Board of Education Regulations](#), the Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) is required to review and assist in revising Pennsylvania’s social studies standards. During the standards revision process, the IRRC is responsible for reviewing the State Board’s proposed revisions to existing academic standards as well as any comments from the public and the Pennsylvania General Assembly. The IRRC is additionally responsible for reviewing the final version of the proposed standards before they are published as a final rule.

- i. See: [Pennsylvania Academic Standards Revision Process during recent Computer Science Standards Revision Cycle](#)

c. Which agency adopts Pennsylvania’s social studies standards?

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education adopts statewide academic standards ([24 P.S. § 26-2603-B](#)).

5. The electoral or bureaucratic relationships these agencies have with the general public in Pennsylvania

a. *How are the members of the Pennsylvania Independent Regulatory Review Commission (IRRC) appointed?*

There are five IRRC Commissioners, each of whom is appointed by different authorities, including: the Governor, the President Pro Tempore of the Senate, the Minority Leader of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives ([Pennsylvania 1982 Regulatory Review Act, §4](#)).

b. *How are the members of the Pennsylvania Department of Education appointed?*

The Pennsylvania State Board of Education (SBE) consists of 21 members. Seventeen are appointed by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate. The remaining four members of the Board are members of the Pennsylvania House and Senate Education Committees ([24 P.S. § 26-2602-B](#)).

c. *How is the Pennsylvania State Secretary of Education appointed?*

The governor nominates a candidate for the position of State Secretary of Education to the state Senate, which confirms the nominee by a two-thirds majority before they take the oath of office ([Pennsylvania Constitution, Article IV, §8](#)).

6. What opportunity Pennsylvania community members and educators have to offer feedback and comment during a standards' revision cycle

a. *Where does public input occur during Pennsylvania's standards revision process?*

Members of the public can first learn about a beginning standards' revision cycle through the State Board of Education's [Current Initiatives Information Page](#), where information concerning all standards or SBE regulations under revision and consideration is provided.

At the onset of a social studies standards' revision cycle, a survey concerning existing social studies standards is released to the public for purposes of receiving feedback and stakeholder sessions are held throughout the state where any member of the public, including parents and educators, can offer comment, suggestions, recommendations on statewide social studies standards and the revision process.

- i. See: [Pennsylvania Academic Standards Revision Process during recent Computer Science Standards Revision Cycle](#)

Proposed standards are later published in the *Pennsylvania Bulletin*, after which the public has at least 30 days to submit written comments to the State Board before it adopts these standards; comments on proposed standards may be submitted to the Board in writing at ra-stateboardofed@pa.gov or State Board of Education, 333 Market Street, 1st Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126.