

April 21, 2023

Re: LWVCO Inquiry re State Social Studies Standards Compliance

Dear Ms. Smith,

My name is Kathy Wilson, and I am the Co-Director of Action & Advocacy for the League of Women Voters of Colorado. I also head the state League's Legislative Action Committee Education Issues Group and am writing to you in those capacities. We in the Colorado League fully support public education and applaud the adoption of the newly revised Social Studies Standards because they reflect the diversity of our state and nation, honor our history in its many dimensions, and include aspects of the social studies that have not previously been taught equitably.

I understand that Colorado public schools districts have until Fall 2024 to be in compliance with the new Social Studies Standards and, if a district chooses to adopt alternative standards, those standards must meet or exceed the newly revised Colorado Social Studies Standards. The Colorado State Board of Education considered the American Birthright standards in their deliberations and rejected them when debating which standards to adopt.

The Woodland Park School District has chosen to adopt the American Birthright standards for their district's social studies standards. The League members would like to understand what recourse the Colorado Department of Education and the Colorado State Board of Education will have in enforcing compliance by the Woodland Park School District should the district choose not to comply? What steps would the district need to take to demonstrate they have enhanced the American Birthright standards sufficiently to be in compliance?

Thank you for considering my request for these clarifications.

With warm regards,
Kathy Wilson

Kathy Wilson, Ph.D.
Co-Director of Action & Advocacy
League of Women Voters of Colorado

LWVCO Legislative Action Committee
Education Issues Group Lead

Dear Ms. Wilson,

Thank you for reaching out to the Colorado Department of Education with your questions about the Colorado Academic Standards in Social Studies.

As you know, local boards have until fall 2024 to adopt their own standards that meet or exceed the revised Colorado Academic Standards in social studies. They have a few different ways of approaching this requirement. They can adopt the Colorado Academic Standards as is, they can create their own, or they can adopt one or more other sets of standards and supplement them as necessary to ensure that their final standards meet or exceed the Colorado Academic Standards.

The Colorado Department of Education reached out to the Woodland Park School District to understand their intent with the standards after we received inquiries about their decision. This was his response:

“While American Birthright is not adequate as curriculum in itself, the Woodland Park School District has adopted American Birthright as curriculum guidance, against which we will review, select and potentially develop instructional materials to use in the classroom. This curriculum guidance, along with our additional district requirements for education on the Holocaust and Financial Literacy, will ensure our curriculum meets or exceeds state standards.”

You may already know this, but in Colorado, local school boards have the authority to choose curriculum that is sufficient to meet the learning goals described in the standards. In fact, our state constitution has protected local districts’ control over curriculum and textbooks since the very beginning of our state in 1876.

For more background information about standards and curriculum, visit this webpage: <http://www.cde.state.co.us/communications/standardsvscurriculum>.

Families or organizations that have concerns about their district’s academic standards or curriculum should contact their district leaders and the elected members of their local board of education directly. While we expect districts to meet the statutory requirements related to the standards, neither the State Board of Education nor CDE are granted authority by the Colorado General Assembly to review local curricula or standards. Ultimately, the voters in each district have the power to elect local board members that share their vision for public education in their community.

I hope this information is helpful. If you have any additional questions, please feel free to contact me again.

Sincerely,

Dana

Dana Smith, Chief Communications Officer

Colorado Department of Education