



SC Council for the Social Studies

Developing critical thinkers, problem solvers, and engaged citizens

Testimony from SC Council for the Social Studies K-12 Subcommittee of the House Education and Public Works Committee

30 January 2019

The Honorable Raye Felder, Chair
K-12 Subcommittee of the House Education and Public Works Committee
South Carolina House of Representatives
P.O. Box 11867
Columbia, S.C. 29211

Dear Honorable Chairman Felder and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am Dr. Charles Vaughan, a 24-year veteran social studies teacher. On behalf of the South Carolina Council for the Social Studies, I am here to address PART IV Enhancements to Workforce Preparation, Subpart II Statewide Assessment Program Revisions of this bill.

Social studies teachers recognize the concerns with excessive testing. We applaud members of the General Assembly who have heeded the cries of educational professionals statewide to reduce testing; however, we do not believe that removing social studies testing at grades five, seven, and eleven will address excessive testing.

An old adage goes: *what gets tested gets taught*. “No Child Left Behind” (2002) and later “Every Student Succeeds Act” (2015) omitted annual social studies assessments. Ample research exist describing the profound effects the era of high-stakes testing has had on social studies.

One unintended consequence of state and federal accountability has been the dramatic increase of district and/or school- based formative assessments: benchmark testing, diagnostic testing, and formative testing. “The influence of testing goes far beyond one big end-of-year test. Beginning in the earliest grades, students also take tests throughout the school year that are supposed to predict their performance on the big tests. And they spend many hours on activities designed to prepare them for tests.”¹

¹ Wexler, Natalie. “If We Want To Boost Reading Scores, We Need To Change Reading Tests.” *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 15 Apr. 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/nataliewexler/2018/04/15/if-we-want-to-boost-reading-scores-we-need-to-change-reading-tests/#50c07211495a.

Recently, a local superintendent noted on Twitter that his third grade daughter will take at least 26 standardized tests before she graduates high school.² Not included in this total are the 10-15 annual district- mandated yearly formative assessments in grades 3-8, which increases the number to nearly 100! Eliminating three social studies assessments for her would be a mere 3% reduction.

Other consequences are reduced instructional time and narrowing of the curriculum. Teachers feel the stress of covering material to insure that their students will perform well on school, district level, and state-mandated assessments. Prior to inclusion of social studies on state-mandated tests, district and school administrators increased instructional time for ELA and mathematics by reducing instructional time for non-tested subjects: social studies, science, the arts, and physical education. Students suffer because there is little time in the day for the arts, physical education, and increasingly, social studies and science.

Lack of time denies students K-8 opportunity to learn South Carolina History, United States History, or World History. Third grade field trips to the State Museum or the State House to meet their legislators will be eliminated. School accreditation will be jeopardized without robust social studies instruction. The Education Oversight Committee will no longer review social studies curriculum standards.

In high school, elimination of the 11th grade United States History and Constitution EOCEP will not result in reduction of class offerings. Students must have US History, Government, Economics, and a social studies elective to graduate. High Schools offer more social studies-related Advanced Placement courses than any other content. Social studies content knowledge is essential if students are to perform well on the SAT and ACT; reading passages are related to humanities and science.

If eliminated, we want legislative guarantees of a defined minimum program in K-8, to include at least 30 minutes of daily instructional time be dedicated to social studies in K-2, 45 minutes in grades 3-5 and 60 minutes in grades 6-8.

“Thomas Jefferson, Horace Mann, John Dewey and other great educators understood, public schools do not serve a public so much as create a public. The goal of schooling, therefore, is not merely preparation for citizenship, but citizenship itself; to equip a citizenry with the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed for active and engaged civic life.” Social studies teachers strongly

² Little, Gregory (GLittle_Lex1). “Tiny Child is in the 3rd grade this year. For her to go to college, she will take at LEAST 26 standardized tests before she graduates. Twenty-six. In the next 10 years. Is this really the system we want for our students and teachers?.” 10 January 2014, 2:17 PM. Tweet.

support the position that the survival of our democracy depends upon quality social studies instruction in grades K-12.

Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can be of assistance.

Respectfully yours,

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