

Evaluating the Support of Teacher Choice in State History Standards

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THE CULTURE WARS concerning what history should be taught in U.S. schools are often played out through the release of new state or national history/social studies standards¹ or the textbooks aligned with those standards.² Despite their oft-politicized status, every state now has history standards. However, these standards take on different forms in the states,³ and the amount of perceived control that history teachers have over content topics to teach varies from state to state.⁴ Studies have shown that standards can play an important role for teachers in deciding how and what is taught in classrooms.⁵ However, with the rise of the standards and accountability movements over the past few decades, less is known about how history standards present choice to teachers in what content they teach.

In this study, we use a content analysis of fifty-one secondary history state standards to advance an argument about the role that history content standards can play in history teaching and teacher education. While teachers may perceive state standards as necessary burdens to bear or obstacles to be avoided,⁶ we begin with the principle that they can be a tool that empowers teachers to make

reasoned planning and instructional decisions that meet the needs of their students—however, as our study found, the degree to which the standards function in this way currently varies among states.

Related Literature

To frame our investigation, we draw on three theoretical and empirical threads: sociocultural conceptions of tool-use and boundary objects, the instructional decision-making literature, and our previous work on instructional significance for teaching history.⁷

Teachers and teacher educators form communities of practice⁸ with shared tools, which can include language, concepts, and norms. They also interact with other educational communities, like administrators, state and federal education officials, policy makers and the like in larger sociocultural contexts. Content standards as tools seem to function as boundary objects⁹ that facilitate communication and cooperation across different communities of practice. As conceptualized by Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, boundary objects help “maintain a common identity across sites,” but are flexible enough to “adapt to local needs and the constraints of the several parties employing them.”¹⁰ Further, “the creation and management of boundary objects is a key process in developing and maintaining coherence across intersecting social worlds.”¹¹ Thus, content standards, as boundary objects, cross several communities of practice by serving as tools for teachers to plan instruction, guiding the design of assessments at the local and state level, expressing pedagogical stances, and helping to align “coverage” of content across locally controlled districts.¹²

A number of scholars have examined the decision making of teachers in the classroom with a focus on their agency in interpreting policy and enacting instruction. Teachers have been called, among other things, “street-level bureaucrats”¹³ and “instructional gatekeepers.”¹⁴ Given that teachers interpret and enact policy in their classrooms, we use this background to inform our investigation into how state history standards can (and do) offer choice to teachers in what history content to teach, and what this might mean for various stakeholders. We posit that certain features of content standards (including choice, which we focus on in this study) could impact the sense-making of teachers when interpreting them.

In a previous study, we found that a group of history teachers in the U.S. used different factors in identifying what history content is most significant for their students.¹⁵ We termed these collective factors “instructional significance” for teaching history. These factors are similar to what Cunningham found in her study of history teachers in England.¹⁶ Instructional significance can be seen as a facet of pedagogical content knowledge¹⁷ and is meant to capture features of historical content that give pedagogical heft to teachers and their students—features that might not align with pure historical significance or import. We outlined a tripartite model of instructional significance, which included student/community considerations, teaching considerations, and historical considerations, along with guiding questions a teacher could consider when thinking about content selection and learning experiences (see **Figure 1**).

For this study, we built on our instructional significance framework to investigate support of teacher choice in state history standards. We were interested in three sets of questions in our examination of state standards:

1. To what extent do state history standards frame and express choice for teachers and districts in making selections of what historical content to teach?
2. How is teacher choice articulated in state content standards?
3. How might standards better support teachers in making instructional decisions for teaching history?

We answer the first two questions with an empirical analysis of state standards documents. We then build upon our empirical findings to address the third question.

Method

Data Sources and Analysis

To inform our theoretical argument about the possible role of standards in teachers’ instructional decision making, we engaged in a qualitative, problem-driven content analysis¹⁸ of the secondary state history/social studies standards of the fifty states and the District of Columbia to identify places where the standards articulated “choice.”¹⁹ We engaged in two stages of analysis. First,

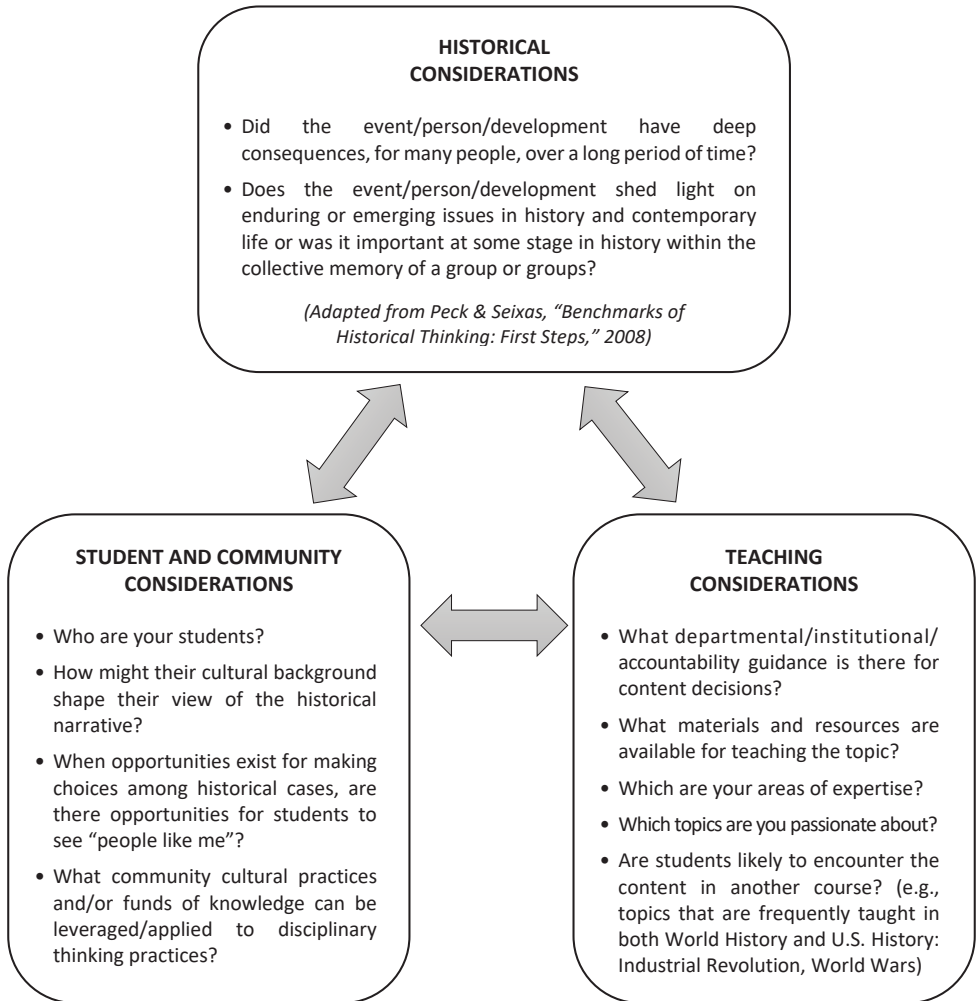


Figure 1: Instructional Significance Framework for Teaching History, with Guiding Questions. Information reproduced with permission from *The Journal of Social Studies Research*.

we created a data matrix²⁰ to record information from each state standard document related to choice (see **Figure 2** for an excerpt of the matrix). We included information from standard documents' framing, footnotes, or explanatory front matter where the document referenced choice. We then categorized the documents as providing "no stated choice," "teacher choice," and/or "district choice."

State	Code(s)	Example(s)
Texas	Teacher Choice	“Statements that contain the word ‘including’ reference content that must be mastered, while those containing the phrase ‘such as’ are intended as possible illustrative examples.” (p. 1)
Utah	Teacher Choice District Choice	“The Core should be taught with respect for differences in learning styles, learning rates, and individual capabilities without losing sight of the common goals. Although the Core Curriculum standards are intended to occupy a major part of the school program, they are not the total curriculum of a level or course.” (p. vii) “E.g.” used to suggest examples in standards. “The remaining standards can be taught either chronologically or thematically. Although the emphasis of this course is on the 18th and 19th centuries, additional content may be covered as time permits.” (p. 5)
Vermont	Teacher Choice District Choice	“The purpose of using grade clusters is to provide additional flexibility for alignment of local curriculum and local comprehensive assessment systems.” (p. 3) “‘E.g.s’ are examples (not requirements or limited sets) of student demonstration or further clarification of a GCE.” (p. 5)
Virginia	District Choice	“The History and Social Science Standards of Learning do not prescribe the grade level at which the standards must be taught or a scope and sequence within a grade level. The Board of Education recognizes that local divisions will adopt a K-12 instructional sequence that best serves their students.” (p. 3)
Washington	Teacher Choice	“Examples: Provide specific illustrations of the learning. Most of the examples included in the document were written to correspond with the suggested unit (see explanation below). However, these examples are not exhaustive and educators are encouraged to find multiple ways by which learners can demonstrate what they know.” (p. 13)

Figure 2: Data Matrix Excerpt: Choice in State Standards Documents.

Second, using conventional content analysis²¹ to more closely examine the standards for teacher choice, we analyzed specific historical content common to almost all the standards documents—the Age of Revolutions (in world history) and the Civil War (in U.S. history). We eliminated four states from this analysis that did not contain standards specifying these content areas: Alaska, Montana, Vermont, and Wyoming (Maryland had standards on the Civil War, but not on the Age of Revolutions). For the remaining states, we created another data matrix and coded the content excerpts as containing “explicit choice,” “implicit choice,” and/or “opportunity for choice.” We also coded some excerpts as having “limitless choice” in that the standards were written in such a way that almost anything could be taught. Some states included more than one type of teacher choice in their standards. Last, to begin consideration of our third research question, we noted instances where the standards provided additional forms of support for teachers.

Choice in History Standards Documents

We found that forty of fifty-one state standards documents contained some type of choice for districts and/or teachers in their framing, footnotes, or explanatory front matter (see **Figure 3**). Although teacher choice was the main object of inquiry in our study, we first briefly discuss standards that contained district choice.

How States Frame District Choice

Twenty-six state standards documents contained language that indicated choice of content or course organization for districts. Standards documents tend to express district choice with statements of the recognition of local control of schools. For example, Connecticut’s standards include this statement:

In a “local control” state such as Connecticut, each district can use the document as it sees fit. However, there is much that is new and exciting in these frameworks, and it is highly recommended that this document be used as a model of curriculum change in any district.²²

Other states make clear that standards are different from curricula; for example, the New Hampshire standards state:

District Choice (n=26)	Teacher Choice (n=27)	No Stated Choice (n=11)
AR, CA, CT, ID, IL, IN, IA, KS, KY, ME, MA, MI, MN, MS, NE, NH, NY, ND, OK, PA, RI, SD, TX, UT, VT, WA,	AK, AZ, AR, CT, DC, KS, MD, MA, MI, MN, MT, NE, NV, NH, NM, NC, ND, OH, OR, PA, RI, SC, UT, VT, VA, WV, WY	AL, CO, DE, FL, GA, HI, LA, MO, NJ, TN, WI

Figure 3: Types of Choice in State Standards Documents. Note: standards may be coded as both “district choice” and “teacher choice.”

The framework does not establish a statewide curriculum. It is the responsibility of local teachers, administrators and school boards to:

- Identify and implement approaches best suited for the students in their communities to acquire the skills and knowledge suggested in the framework.
- Determine the scope, organization, and sequence of course offerings.
- Choose the methods of instruction, the activities, and materials to be used.²³

Here, the New Hampshire standards lay out what is under the control of teachers and districts, but also stress that the skills and knowledge in the framework are *suggested*.

How States Frame Teacher Choice

We found that twenty-seven state standards documents contain language referencing teacher choice. For example, in the front matter of the California standards, there is this statement:

The standards include many exemplary lists of historical figures that could be studied. These examples are illustrative. They do not suggest that all of the figures mentioned are required for study, nor do they exclude the study of additional figures that may be relevant to the standards.²⁴

It is clear from this statement that teachers have choice in what they teach (at least in regard to historical figures).

We found that where standards did articulate choice, it was often tied to state assessments. For example, Vermont justifies the layout

of their standards by “grade clusters” as such: “The purpose of using grade clusters is to provide additional flexibility for alignment of local curriculum and local comprehensive assessment systems.”²⁵ Arizona specifies which examples *will* be used in a “testing situation” and which examples *may* be used.²⁶ We also found additional justification for providing choice for teachers:

- So that teachers can use local examples (CT, TN)
- To meet the individual needs of students (NV, TN, UT)
- So that teachers can choose current events to illuminate local, national, or global events (NY)
- So that teachers can apply historical significance criteria (OK)
- To capitalize on teacher expertise or innovation (NV, TN)

Interestingly, the South Dakota standards explicitly state that teachers should choose content to benefit tribal and local communities:

Teachers, however, are not restricted to only the content represented. The depth and breadth of the social studies should provide teachers endless possibilities to create enlivened lessons that foster student advancement in social studies skills....The foundation of these state standards is designed to foster responsible decision making that benefits the local and tribal community, state, nation, and world.²⁷

Types of Teacher Choice within Content Standards

Looking more closely at the particular language of the standards related to historical content revealed different kinds of choice available to teachers, where they might apply the logic of choice provided by the states, and how they might utilize professional judgment to consider instructional significance. We found four broad categories of teacher choice embedded in the language of the standards across the states: *explicit choice*, *implicit choice*, *opportunity for choice*, and *limitless choice*.

Explicit choice. Within the explicit choice category, standards specifically call out a range of options that a teacher might consider. For example, Michigan’s standards have students “Analyze the Age of Revolutions by comparing and contrasting the political, economic, and social causes and consequences of at least three political and/or nationalistic revolutions (American, French, Haitian, Mexican or

other Latin American, or Chinese Revolutions).”²⁸ Here, teachers can select from a range of clear options to meet the needs of their students, their own expertise, or other concerns.

Implicit choice. Implicit choices are constructed so that while no options are provided (as with explicit choice), a teacher would have to make a content decision in order to fulfill the standard. For example, California calls for students to “consider the influence of the U.S. Constitution on political systems in the contemporary world,” but it is left to the teacher to select which political systems to use.²⁹ Arkansas similarly has students “Analyze the historical significance of selected Civil War battles, events, and people on various regions of Arkansas.”³⁰ In this example, the standards indicate that the teacher needs to select the battles that the students analyze. Additionally, the teacher must decide on which regions of Arkansas to focus.

Opportunity for choice. Opportunity for choice is seen when a standard is open-ended in a way that a teacher *could* go beyond the foundation provided, or where a range of possibilities are included, but without a clear indication of what is mandatory and what is choice. For example, Michigan calls for students to investigate Lincoln’s speeches and writings, but only specifies the Gettysburg Address: “Examine Abraham Lincoln’s presidency with respect to...the role of his significant writings and speeches, including the Gettysburg Address and its relationship to the Declaration of Independence.”³¹ The inclusion of the word “including” in this standard signifies that a teacher could make additional selections from Lincoln’s writings and speeches when planning to meet the standard, and given that it is stated as plural (“writings and speeches”), presumably, teachers can go beyond just the Gettysburg Address.

A Minnesota U.S. history standard provides another example of opportunity for choice: “Describe the content, context, and consequences of the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments; evaluate the successes and failures of the Reconstruction, including the election of 1876, in relation to freedom and equality across the nation.”³² Here, the standard specifies one aspect of Reconstruction (the election of 1876), but there is an opening for teachers to include other successes and failures from the period, presumably, those that bear a connection to freedom and equality (or lack of progress thereof).

Limitless choice. A few of the standards documents contained statements that were so vaguely written or vast so as to suggest almost limitless choice as to what could be taught. For example, some of Nebraska's standards give wide latitude to teachers, but did not contain much guidance for content selection; for example: "Analyze and evaluate the impact of people, events, ideas, and symbols, including various cultures and ethnic groups, on history throughout the world (e.g., Middle Ages: Charlemagne, Reformation, Mongol Empire, Renaissance; Global Interaction: Columbian Exchange; Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Montezuma; Age of Revolutions: French Revolution, Industrial Revolution, Simon Bolivar...)."33 This type of standard points to the political nature of standards, as it might be the result of the state trying to honor local control and keeping the footprint of the standards relatively light (see **Figure 4** for more examples of articulations of teacher choice).

Language Use in Indicating Teacher Choice in Standards

Looking across the state standards, we detected nuanced language in the construction of the standards that have ramifications for teacher choice. A number of states rely on language distinctions to provide choice. For example, North Dakota, Michigan, and Arizona differentiate between "i.e." (no choice) and "e.g." (choice). Texas uses "such as" to indicate choice and "including" to indicate that all of what follows must be taught. Rhode Island specifies that conjunctions have specific meaning in the standards document:

Because GSEs [grade span expectations] identify "assessable" content and skills, the use of conjunctions throughout this document have specific meaning. The use of the conjunction "or" means that a student may be expected to be assessed on all or some of the elements of the GSE at a given time. The use of "and" between elements of a GSE means that the *intent* is to assess all parts of the GSE together.³⁴

Other states such as Maryland indicate that "including" signifies recommended, but not required content. Still other states, such as Wisconsin and New Jersey, use language such as "e.g.," "i.e.," "including," or "such as," but do not specifically address what they signify. Given the variety of meaning (and potential high-stakes repercussions) that these terms hold, states that explicitly define them provide more clarity for teachers in the choices that they can make.

State	Code	Example(s)
New Jersey	Implicit Choice	“Compare and contrast the impact of the American Civil War and the impact of a past or current civil war in another country in terms of the consequences for people’s lives and work.” (p. 22)
California	Implicit Choice	“Consider the influence of the U.S. Constitution on political systems in the contemporary world.” (p. 42)
Florida	Opportunity for Choice	<p>“Explain major domestic and international economic, military, political, and socio-cultural events of Abraham Lincoln’s presidency.” (p. 103)</p> <p>“Examples may include, but are not limited to, sectionalism, states’ rights, slavery, Civil War, attempts at foreign alliances, Emancipation Proclamation, Gettysburg Address, suspension of habeas corpus, First and Second Inaugural Addresses.” (p. 103)</p>
Michigan	Opportunity for Choice	“Examine Abraham Lincoln’s presidency with respect to...the role of his significant writings and speeches, including the Gettysburg Address and its relationship to the Declaration of Independence.” (p. 77)
Arizona	Explicit Choice	“Contrast the development of representative, limited Government in England with the development and continuation of absolute monarchies in other European nations: a. absolute monarchies (e.g., Louis XIV, Peter the Great, Philip II).” (p. 7)
Utah	Explicit Choice	“Identify the contributions of key individuals in the Civil War, e.g. Lincoln, Davis, Lee, Grant.” (p. 10)
Nebraska	Limitless Choice	“Evaluate how decisions affected events across the world (e.g., revolutions, alliances, treaties).” (p. 12)

Figure 4: Data Matrix Excerpt: Articulations of Teacher Choice in State Standards Documents.

Discussion: Using and Developing History Standards

In 2001—about ten years into the standards movement in the U.S.—social studies education researcher Stephen Thornton queried, “Since it appears we are stuck with national standards and their state counterparts, how might teachers be educated to use them intelligently rather than as laundry lists to be covered?”³⁵ Since then, national content standards for history have all but disappeared—although skills-based standards are still available.³⁶ Presumably, state standards are now one major place where teachers look to determine what history content to teach, and where textbook publishers and curriculum developers look in developing their products.³⁷ However, as our findings demonstrate, how much guidance and choice standards provide teachers in content selection is very much determined by the state in which they teach. This variation has implications not only for teachers, but also for teacher preparation and the development of new standards.

Teacher Use of Standards

Instructional choice has certainly been limited by the rise of the accountability context in the United States.³⁸ However, even with the existence of standards documents and state exams, teachers have the ability, power, and the professional responsibility to make purposeful choices about the content they teach.³⁹ The edTPA assessment,⁴⁰ as one example, requires aspiring teachers to be able to make instructional decisions in light of “students’ prior academic learning and personal, cultural, and community assets.”⁴¹

As mentioned above, in previous work, we defined instructional significance for teaching history as a lens through which teachers can view the content they teach that contains three areas: student/community considerations, pedagogical considerations, and historical considerations (see **Figure 1**).⁴² Based on our findings on the amount of choice in state standards, we see even more opportunity and necessity for teachers to use the instructional significance framework to guide instructional decision making. For example, New Jersey asks students to “Compare and contrast the impact of the American Civil War and the impact of a past or current civil war in another country in terms of the consequences for people’s lives and work.”⁴³ In order for students

to meet this standard, teachers would need to decide which other war to use for comparison, and could consider their students' interests and backgrounds, current events in light of the local community context, their own areas of expertise, and other teaching factors (e.g., how easy is it to find materials and information on a particular civil war).

Even in states with more constrained content decision making in their standards, teachers still make informed curricular decisions by determining, for example, how long to spend on a period or event, who and what to foreground and background, or where to have students go into depth through independent research.

Teacher Preparation

Being able to use pedagogical considerations, such as in the instructional significance framework, requires training and knowledge, and we see this as the provenance of teacher education courses, and potentially as a facet of history instruction at the collegiate level. History teacher educators should expose preservice teachers to the types of choice offered in standards—drawing attention to how the standards articulate choice as well as discussing particular content choice examples—and discuss what that means for teachers' agency in planning for instruction. Studies have shown that teachers can be ambitious in their planning and teaching despite being in high-accountability environments.⁴⁴ Preservice teachers could approach the standards with the instructional significance framework (see **Figure 1**) and particular contexts in mind and discuss the types of content choices they would make in light of their students, community, and other teaching goals like skill development. This discussion would also allow for connections among methods courses and other common elements of the teacher education curriculum. For instance, courses in Cultural Foundations of Education and/or Multicultural Education provide the sort of knowledge and practice that should aid prospective teachers in answering student and community considerations.

We also encourage historians who have teacher candidates in their courses to familiarize themselves with state standards and help candidates navigate the standards and explore, in particular, the “historical significance” consideration. This could be accomplished in collaboration with colleagues in education. Prospective history

teachers could use more guidance on what historical cases to include in their teaching and what, perhaps, to omit—an important consideration in teaching history.⁴⁵

Development of Standards

Despite the ubiquity of state standards, as well as efforts at national standards like the Common Core and the C3 Framework from the National Council for the Social Studies, we could not find much in the way of guidance for any organization or state department looking to revise and improve their history standards. Many state and national organizations create supplementary materials for teachers after standards have been published or articles describing how standards could be used,⁴⁶ but within standards documents themselves there is rarely much support. Because state standards can operate as boundary objects⁴⁷ across several communities of practice (teachers, policy makers, curriculum designers), we believe that it is important for policy makers and standards writers to pay attention to how or if teacher choice is expressed in standards.

One consideration for states is how much choice they will give to teachers in the standards and how this choice will be articulated to teachers. As mentioned above, states that describe how they are using language conventions such as “e.g.,” “i.e.,” “including,” “such as,” and the like provide a clearer pathway for teachers in using the standards. However, we found that discussion of these conventions were often in the front matter of standards documents and could be overlooked by teachers. In a few states, such as Maryland and Arizona, this information was included in footnotes on every page, making it more visible.

Additionally, a guiding principle that may be of use originated in science education: the notion of *educative curriculum materials*.⁴⁸ These researchers have explored the impact of “curriculum materials designed with the intent of supporting teacher learning as well as student learning.”⁴⁹ While standards are not the same as curricula, the notion that standards could support teacher learning is worth exploring, and perhaps aligns or is adjacent to Walter Russell Mead’s notion of “teachability” in his review of the quality of state world history standards.⁵⁰ Some of the techniques used in educative curriculum matters are probably not appropriate for standards, like

reading guides or assessment rubrics. However, some techniques might be fruitfully adapted, like supporting teachers learning of subject matter (including both historical facts and events as well as historical thinking processes), “making visible the developers’ pedagogical judgments,” and promoting teachers’ *pedagogical design capacity*—the ability for teachers to use supports in documents to adapt the curriculum for their classroom.⁵¹

One example of this kind can be found in the New Jersey and Connecticut history standards, which seem to have taken seriously the insight of an “understanding by design” approach⁵² and thus framed the standards with a set of essential or compelling questions to drive inquiry in courses. Furthermore, for each era in world history and U.S. history in the New Jersey secondary standards, there are large-scale “content statements” that are of a scale reminiscent of an “enduring understanding” that highlights key concepts and gives a large-scale understanding to organize and provide coherence for the more specific content expectations.⁵³ These types of additions to standards documents may provide teachers—particularly preservice or beginning teachers—with additional guidance in making instructional choices using the standards.

States also need to consider how the standards will be assessed. There are differences in the history assessment contexts in U.S. states. Some states test history/social studies on the state level, while others do not. We found that states that had state-level assessments were more likely not to explicate teacher choice in their standards.⁵⁴ For example, of the eleven states that we found to have no stated choice in the standards (see **Figure 3**), eight had state history/social studies assessments at the time of Daisy Martin, Saúl I. Maldonado, Jack Schneider, and Mark Smith’s *A Report on the State of History Education* (2011).⁵⁵ This makes some sense, as those states need focus on what might be on the state assessment. Not surprisingly, history/social studies teachers perceive significantly less curricular control in tested states than in those that do not test.⁵⁶ However, there are states that have incorporated choice into their standards while making clear what could be assessed, locally or at the state level. Six of the twenty-seven states that we found articulated teacher choice (see **Figure 3**) had state history/social studies assessments at the time of the Martin et al. report.⁵⁷ For example, Michigan specifies choice in relation to state assessments:

The expectations specify teachable content in two different ways. On numerous occasions, the expectations will offer examples for teachers to help clarify teachable content. Typically, these examples or suggestions appear in parentheses. The document always identifies such optional content with an “e.g.” or “for example.” These are simply suggestions and teachable options. Teachers may use other examples to meet the expectations. In short, these examples are not required content. In other places, the expectations identify specific content that students should study. This content is never preceded by “e.g.” or “for example.” Unlike the optional examples, a statewide assessment might assess the required content.⁵⁸

This paragraph explicitly lays out expectations for how teachers should read and use the standards. Nevertheless, it may not be clear to teachers that this is the case, or that the test developers are attending to this span of choice. It is highly problematic if standards provide for choices, but local or state assessments do not take such choice into account.

Our review of choice in state history standards suggests that policy makers and standards writers should consider three, sometimes competing, factors in deciding how to present history standards: clarity, teacher autonomy, and guidance for teachers. Although clarity should always be a goal, states need to decide to what extent standards will provide guidance and autonomy for teachers, taking into account that teachers at different points in their careers may need more or less guidance, and that no individual can be an expert in all of U.S., let alone world, history. As our instructional significance framework tries to illustrate, there are many features of historical content that might lead a teacher to select it over other, equally important, content. By allowing for some content selection, states can leverage teacher expertise and interest as well as potential student engagement and community resources to provide the best possible learning opportunity. However, being too open can be paralyzing or frustrating, so some narrowing is necessary (and, again, few teachers are experts in all history). It is unclear from our review of standards how purposeful the inclusion of teacher choice has been for some states in their standards; however, as states revise their standards, we recommend that discussions about choice occur and that teachers are privy to and part of that discussion.

Limitations

There are several limitations to this study. First, analyzing the content of state standards documents does not tell us what teachers *do* with those standards in instruction and assessment. There are many additional factors that influence teachers' instruction, including district curriculum, assessments, textbooks, and other resources, as well as students and local contexts. However, state standards can influence state assessments as well as textbooks and state or district curriculum, so examining their content is important. Additional research needs to be conducted on how teachers perceive and utilize choice in history standards and how that might differ given the amount of content teachers are expected to teach in a course. Second, we limited this study to examining state standards documents and not the curricular frameworks that some states have created to accompany standards. We limited our study in this way so that we could compare like documents across all states—currently, in the states that have them, curricular frameworks lack consistency for meaningful comparison. Third, in addition to state standards, there are other guiding documents/curricular frameworks that influence history instruction in U.S. schools. Although beyond the scope of our analysis, documents such as Advanced Placement course descriptions, International Baccalaureate curricula, and the National Council for the Social Studies' C3 Framework could be analyzed for teacher choice in a similar way.

Conclusion

Our analysis of fifty state standards documents found that there is inconsistency with how history standards clarify choice. Some degree of choice in state standards can be good for teachers, and it is probably impossible to remove all choice. In particular, teachers' sense of agency may be enhanced when they are able to take into account historical, teaching, and student and community considerations in deciding what is instructionally significant for their classrooms. However, too little or too much choice may be alternately stifling or disorienting. What teachers then do with the curricular choices that they have is an important question that we will pursue in future work. Additionally, the notion of providing learning supports for teachers within history standards documents, with features akin to the ideas of educative curriculum, seems fruitful to explore in history education research.

Notes

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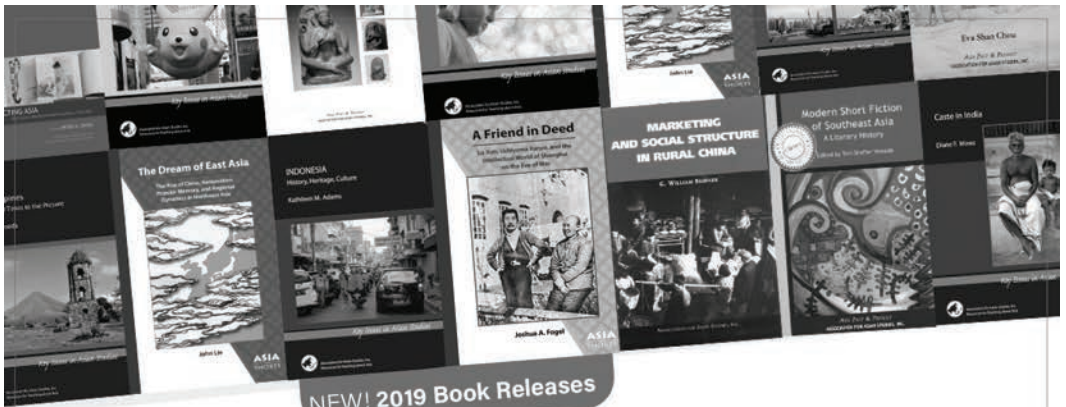
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