Framework Review Process and Priorities

As described at previous Board meetings, the Department initiated the review process by soliciting public input on the 2003 framework through an online survey. In addition, the Department convened the History and Social Science Curriculum Framework Review Panel consisting of K-12 teachers, department heads and curriculum coordinators, K-12 administrators, higher education faculty, and representatives from professional organizations to make recommendations for the revision of the framework. In addition, the Department engaged a group of 35 higher education faculty and others with content expertise to review the accuracy of the content in the revised framework.

Input from the History and Social Science Curriculum Framework Review Panel and the results of the initial public survey and other sources established two key prioritiesfor the revision of the 2003 framework:

* Emphasize civics education
* Deepen understanding of history, civics, geography, and economics

The intent of the revision is to address these priorities while minimizing disruption to existing curricula and improving the rigor, clarity and coherence of the framework. The *Highlights of the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework*,one of the attachments with this memorandum*,* provides a detailed view of how the framework addresses these priorities. Here is a brief summary.

**The framework provides greater emphasis on civics education as follows:**

* A new full year course at Grade 8 provides a thorough study of civics.
* The framework emphasizes civics content throughout the Introduction and Vision statements as well as the Guiding Principles, the Standards for History and Social Science Practice, Pre-K-12, Appendices, and other features.
* The standards at each grade level and high school course integrate civics content.

**The framework supports students in deepening their understanding of history, civics, geography, and economics and strengthening their conceptual understanding through the following features:**

* Edited Content Standards reflect current scholarship, require deeper analysis and evaluation of concepts, and provide additional context for clarity.
* Standards for History/Social Science Practice, Pre-K-12 encompass the elements of the research process, and encourage analysis, comparison, and evaluation of sources.
* Sample questions at each grade support conceptual learning and inquiry.
* Instructional examples and references to primary sources at each grade set clear and challenging expectations for teaching and learning.
* Standards for Literacy in History and Social Science, by grade band, make explicit connections to expectations for reading, writing, speaking, and listening in history and social science.
* Guiding Principles address the development of the ability to reason well, the importance of historical thinking, the role of history and social science in improving reading comprehension, and other important skills.
* The Appendices support the expectation that all students will explore history and social science in depth.They include, for example, sections that address the applicability of the standards for English Learners and Students with Disabilities (Appendix A) and present updated and annotated primary sources aligned to the standards for United States and World History, setting the expectation that students will read and view challenging materials and encounter divergent perspectives on historical events (Appendices D and E).

**Public Comment – January 23–April 2, 2018**

The memorandum and presentation at the May Board meeting included a detailed summary of the results from the public comment period and the revisions made to address suggestions that we received. The *Highlights of the Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* that accompanies this memorandum includes that information. The following summary outlines some of the main findings:

| ***Public Comment: Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework***  ***Summary of Findings*** |
| --- |
| **Description:** Following the Board vote on January 23, 2018 to invite public comment on the revised framework, the Department established a survey to gather comments. Additional input came through conference calls, video conferences, and in-person presentations and discussions with stakeholders that took place on a regional basis in coordination with the Massachusetts Council for the Social Studies.  **Dates of Public Comment:** January 23, 2018 – April 2, 2018 |
| **New features of the framework**  A majority of respondents stated that the following features in the Public Comment Draft of the framework are an improvement on the 2003 framework: |
| * Guiding Principles, Practices, Literacy Standards, Guiding and Supporting Questions, Clarification Statements, Instructional Examples and Primary Sources * Grade 8 civics course |
| **Content standards and other features:**  A majority of respondents stated that the Public Comment Draft of the framework is an improvement on the 2003 framework in terms of: |
| * Providing a strong emphasis on civics |
| * Challenging students to deepen their understanding of the content |
| * Including historical thinking skills |
| * Providing greater emphasis on traditionally marginalized groups |
| * Improving the rigor of the 2003 Framework |
| * Improving the clarity of the 2003 Framework |
| * Improving the coherence of the 2003 Framework |

**Public comment – some key findings and responses**

The Department took the steps described below to address the comments submitted on the following issues:

**Assessment**

* Comments: A majority of respondents stated that the lack of clarity about the grade, content and design of the assessment in history and social science might mean many districts wait to implement the new standards.
* Response: The Department is working to establish funding and to hire the staff needed to move forward on planning for the assessment.

**Amount of content**

* Comments: A majority of respondents expressed concern about the amount of content.
* Response: Removed content at some grade levels (see “Highlights” document for grade-by-grade description). The Department considered the issue of content volume at each grade level and overall, and asked the review panel to weigh in on this issue. In the end, the Department removed some content from grades 6 and 7 and the high school courses US History I and US History II.

**High school courses**

* Comments: Approximately half of respondents expressed concern that the new grade 8 civics course has displaced existing content, creating concern about impact on electives.
* Response: Included a statement explicitly stating that districts may reconfigure the standards to establish courses that differ from those outlined in the framework.

**The history of women, African-Americans and other under-represented groups**

* Comments: A majority of respondents noted concern that some groups are under-represented in the framework.
* Response: Added standards that address the role of slavery in the economies of North and South, important historical figures, the roots of racial issues seen in contemporary society; added content and more primary sources on the history of Native Peoples, Latinos, women and other groups.

**World history**

* Comments: Approximately half of respondents expressed concern that the framework promotes a US/Euro-centric perspective, not providing equal treatment of certain regions of the world relative to the US and Europe.
* Response: Adjusted the balance to provide more content and more primary sources for under-represented regions in grades 6 and 7 and World History I; reorganized World History I by topic, drawing examples from regions around the world to address each topic; provided guidance on alternative models for teaching world history.

**Other changes made in response to public comment and input from Content Advisors**

**Overall, Pre-K-12**

* Added content and primary sources (including visual sources, such as art, artifacts, and videos) to address African and African-American history, Native Peoples, women, and the perspectives of other groups and world cultures; clarified the extent and number of references to “research” in many standards; revised guiding and supporting questions.

**Introduction**

* Drafted a new introduction to address concerns that the previous introduction was outdated and lacked recognition of the diversity of contemporary U.S. society.

**Guiding Principles**

* Revised some Guiding Principles to better address Pre-K (#3), media literacy (#8), use of digital tools (#9), and social-emotional learning (#10).

**News/Media Literacy**

* Drafted a new set of standards designed to address concerns about a gap in literacy in this area and its impact on civic life.

**Appendices**

* Updated primary sources and other teaching resources to include many new additions, especially on topics such as African/African American History, Native Peoples of the Americas, Women’s History, and World History.

**Resources**

* Created a separate Supplement to facilitate updating resources over time; reorganized and substantially expanded the resources to include new links to websites on a range of topics including African/African American History, Native Peoples of the Americas, Women’s History, and News/Media Literacy to address the call for a greater diversity of cultural backgrounds and to address other topics of concern.