

# Maintaining the Validity of the NAEP Frameworks and Assessments in Civics and U.S. History

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## SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

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In July 2019, the National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) released a revised schedule of subjects that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) will assess. According to the release, the revised schedule “retains the focus on its flagship national assessments of Reading and Mathematics ... and prioritizes the information needs of the nation.” The announcement also noted that the revised schedule “prioritizes updates to the frameworks that drive the assessment content—critical investments to ensure the program keeps pace with changing expectations for students,” with a plan to introduce new assessment frameworks for U.S. history and civics in 2029 (National Assessment Governing Board, 2019).

The new schedule removed three assessments “that provided results only at the national level and were not administered frequently,” including economics and geography, while adding state-level results for voluntary assessments in civics (without mentioning U.S. history) for Grade 8 in 2029.

Other “major changes” highlighted in the revision include the following:

- “Moving the next assessments of Civics and U.S. History from 2022 to 2021, and postponing the grade 12 until 2029
- Conducting national assessments in grades 4, 8, and 12 for Writing, U.S. History, and Civics in 2029” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2019)

NAGB later updated the assessment schedule in March of 2021 “to Reflect Congressional Waiver Postponing NAEP in 2021 Due to [the] Pandemic” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2021a). The update moved NAEP civics and U.S. history from 2025 and 2029 to 2026 and 2030.

This paper offers the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), the Governing Board, and the NAEP community information that may help maintain the validity and utility of the NAEP assessments for civics and U.S. history as revisions are planned to the NAEP frameworks that will inform the U.S. history and civics assessments now scheduled for 2030.

The overarching questions addressed in this paper are as follows:

- How old are the NAEP assessment frameworks for civics and U.S. history? Why does this matter?
- What important developments in the fields of civics and history have occurred since the current frameworks were written?
- To what extent are the NAEP assessments aligned or disconnected to what is, and will likely be, occurring in the states?
- Based on the findings, what recommendations should those who will be reviewing the frameworks consider to ensure the validity and utility of NAEP assessments in civics and U.S. history?

## SECTION 2: HISTORY OF NAEP SOCIAL STUDIES FRAMEWORKS AND ASSESSMENTS

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### ***Brief History of NAEP Civics***

The NAEP civics assessment dates back half a century. The first national “citizenship” assessment was administered in 1969–1970. Citizenship continued to be assessed either as part of, or as well as, the whole field of social studies from 1972 to 1982. Starting in 1988 and continuing through the most recent assessment in 2018, attention has focused solely on civics and government. In total, citizenship/civics has been assessed 10 times between 1970 and 2018. From 1970 to 2010, these assessments were administered in Grades 4, 8, and 12, then for the two most recent administrations, in 2014 and 2018, in Grade 8 only (National Assessment Governing Board, 2021b; National Assessment Governing Board, 2018a, p. 11).

The publication of the *National Standards for Civics and Government* by the Center for Civic Education in 1994 was somewhat of a defining moment in the history of the NAEP civics assessment (Center for Civic Education, n.d.). One year after its publication, the NAEP Civics Project began. NAGB unanimously approved the Project’s recommendations in March 1996, after which the framework used for the 1998 NAEP civics assessment was developed. That framework, largely informed by the National Standards for Civics and Government, is the same framework used to develop the most recently administered 2018 NAEP civics assessment (Grade 8 only). The influence of the National Standards for Civics and Government is worth noting in light of the potential influence that documents subsequently developed may have on civics teaching and learning. Read more about this in the pages that follow.

According to *The Next Generation of Citizens: NAEP Civics Assessments—1988 and 1998*, the civics assessment underwent a series of major changes in 1998 (Weiss et al., 2001, p. 4). The changes included the following:

- **New topics**—More emphasis would be placed on the gap between the goals and reality of American democracy, the skills needed by citizens for monitoring government, and the place of the United States in world affairs.
- **Enhanced format**—Nearly half of the new assessments would be short- or extended-response items, and there would be more use of stimulus materials such as political cartoons and documents (Weiss et al., 2001, p. 4).

Beginning in 2018, both selected-response and constructed-response items were presented on a digital platform (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018a, p. 45).

### ***Brief History of NAEP U.S. History***

U.S. history was first assessed as a separate subject in NAEP in 1986 (Grade 11 only). Prior to that, history was assessed three times as part of the whole field of social studies starting in 1972. The shift to conducting assessments in Grades 4, 8, 12 began in 1994 and continued through 2010. Since then, U.S. history has been assessed in 2014 and 2018 in Grade 8 only, with the trend line that started in 1994 continuing through the most recent administration in 2018 (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018b, pp. 1–3).



The assessment framework in U.S. history for the 1994–2018 NAEP was developed by NAGB under a contract with the Council of Chief State School Officers in 1991–1992. NAGB made “relatively minor revisions” to that framework in 2003 (for the 2006 assessment) “to make it more useful to the general public, to delete outdated and extraneous information, and to include released NAEP questions to illustrate more clearly the content and format of the assessment” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018b, p. vii). Other than these minor revisions and the switch to a digital format in 2018, the framework used for the 2014 history assessment was the same one used for the most recent administration in 2018, enabling NAEP to report on trends in student achievement since 1994.

“The framework reflects the conviction of the National Assessment Governing Board that any broadly accepted examination in U.S. history must be a careful balance of ... what is commonly taught ... and what students need to know” (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018b, p. viii).

Table 1 below provides an overview of the frameworks used to develop NAEP’s most recent (2018) civics and U.S. history assessments, as well as the age of the frameworks.

**Table 1. NAEP Civics and U.S. History Assessment Frameworks Overview**

<b>Subject</b>	<b>Most Recent NAEP Assessment</b>	<b>Framework Used</b>	<b>Age of Framework</b>
<b>Civics</b>	2018 NAEP civics assessment	1996 (based on 1994 <i>National Standards for Civics and Government</i> )	25 years
<b>U.S. history</b>	2018 NAEP U.S. history assessment (Grade 8 only)	1994 (with relatively minor revisions introduced in 2003)	18 years

The use of frameworks that are decades old has sound justification, as their continued use makes it possible “to report on trends in student achievement.” But, if one purpose of NAEP assessments is to measure achievement as it relates to a particular field and that field has changed, serious consideration should be given to changing the frameworks to align with changes in the field while also preserving the ability to report on relevant trends. Developments within the fields of civics and history education over the past two decades support such thinking.

## SECTION 3: DEVELOPMENTS AND PLANS IN THE FIELD OF SOCIAL STUDIES

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### **Curriculum Guidance Developments**

Since the development of the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks in 1994 and 1998, respectively, the social studies community has published three documents that have influenced, or appear likely to influence, civics and U.S. history curricula, teaching, learning, and assessment in the United States, including one launched in March of 2021. A fourth document—*Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies*—contains additional expectations that have also influenced the development of social studies standards, curriculum, and assessment. These documents and their relative influence are described below.

### **Social Studies Curricula**

Due in part to a long tradition of local control and the politically charged nature of social studies, there are no nationally embraced/adopted curricula or standards for social studies, or any of its related disciplines or content areas (i.e., civics, economics, geography, history) in the United States. Nor is there a single curriculum or set of standards embraced by a majority of states. Instead, there are separate voluntary national standards for civics and history, as well as two “frameworks” and a “Roadmap” for social studies intended to offer states guidance as they develop or revise their state standards. The two “frameworks” and “Roadmap” include guidance for civics and history.

As far as we know, only one state has adopted any of these national documents in their entirety. The rest are using them as resources to guide thinking as state education agencies (SEAs) develop their own standards, sometimes weaving content or features of the national documents into their own standards.

The use of the terms “frameworks” and “Roadmap” to describe the documents reflects, in part, the keen awareness that even the suggestion of a “national” social studies curriculum would invite considerable resistance, which might undermine standards work and acceptance.

The two frameworks include the 2010 *National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessment* and the 2013 *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards*, both published by NCSS. The title of the 2010 NCSS document, which includes the terms “National Curriculum Standards” and “Framework,” invites confusion around its role and whether the 2010 or the 2013 C3 Framework should be considered preeminent for states as they develop or revise their standards. The NCSS position is that their “standards and C3 are complementary, and one does not supersede the other. Both are active guidance documents for states” (e-mail communication, Larry Paska, May 13, 2021).

In March 2021, the bipartisan CivXNow Coalition unveiled the Educating for American Democracy (EAD) Roadmap, which presents “one integrated account of what, why, and ways to teach history and civics” (Educating for American Democracy, n.d.a, p. 3). Although the Roadmap had significant support and momentum after its release, it soon roused

opposition from some on the right (more about this to follow). The EAD Roadmap has also prompted discussions around what civics and history education might look like in coming years, as the field now has voluntary national standards, two frameworks, and a Roadmap—all of which currently or appear likely to soon influence standards, teaching, learning, and assessment to varying degrees. Table 2 below offers an overview of these major documents.

**Table 2. Major Curricular Documents Influencing Social Studies Curriculum**

Year Published	Status	Intended Use	Grade Bands Offered
<i>National Standards for Civics and Government</i> <sup>a</sup>			
1994	“voluntary National Standards”	“identify what students should know and be able to do in the field of Civics and government at the end of grades 4, 8, and 12”  “a model for state curricular frameworks and standards throughout the country”	K–4 5–8 9–12
<i>National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessments</i> <sup>b</sup>			
2010	Identified as both: “Curriculum Standards” “Framework”	“a framework for professional deliberation and planning about what should occur in a social studies program”	K–4 5–8 9–12
<i>Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts &amp; Literacy in History/Social Studies</i> <sup>c</sup>			
2010	“Standards” for “Grades 6–12 Literacy in History/Social Studies”	“promote the literacy skills and concepts required for college and career readiness in multiple disciplines”	6–8 9–10 11–12
<i>College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards</i> <sup>d</sup>			
2013	“Framework”	A resource to support states creating and updating social studies standards	K–2 3–5 6–8 9–12
<i>Educating for American Democracy Roadmap</i> <sup>e</sup>			
2021	“Roadmap”	Integrated account of what, why, and ways to teach history and civics	K–2 3–5 6–8 9–12

<sup>a</sup> Center for Civic Education, n.d.

<sup>b</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, n.d., para. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021, para. 3.

<sup>d</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, 2017.

<sup>e</sup> Educating for American Democracy, n.d.a, p. 3.

More detailed information relating to each of the four documents published in recent years and presented in Table 2 appears below.

***National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies: A Framework for Teaching, Learning, and Assessments***

NCSS published its national standards in 2010. Its president later described them as “a useful guide for developing or updating content standards” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. ix).

The NCSS curriculum standards are presented as “a framework for professional deliberation and planning about what should occur in a social studies program in Grades Pre-K through 12.” The document features 10 themes that “represent a way of organizing knowledge about the human experience in the world.” Simultaneously billed as curriculum standards and a framework, the document represents “a holistic lens through which to view disciplinary content standards and state standards, as well as other curriculum planning documents” and a “framework needed to educate students for the challenges of citizenship in a democracy” (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d.).

The **10 Themes**, or organizing strands for social studies programs, are as follows:

1. Culture
2. Time, continuity, and change
3. People, places, and environments
4. Individual development and identity
5. Individuals, groups, and institutions
6. Power, authority, and governance
7. Production, distribution, and consumption
8. Science, technology, and society
9. Global connections
10. Civic ideals and practices

These “highly interrelated” themes, drawn from “all social science disciplines,” represent strands that NCSS suggests can be threaded through a social studies program, from Grades Pre-K through 12, and provide a framework for social studies curriculum design and development. The “standards” are offered as “a framework for education for citizenship in a democracy and provide students with the **democratic dispositions, values, and attitudes** needed for civic engagement” (National Council for the Social Studies, n.d., para. 10). Theme 2 places particular emphasis on concepts and content most commonly associated with history, while Themes 6 and 10 focus on concepts and content associated with civics.

### ***College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards***

Development of the C3 Framework was a major undertaking of the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) Social Studies Collaborative and a Task Force of Professional Organizations (see Appendix I), which began its work in 2010. Motivations to develop the C3 Framework included the marginalization of social studies and concerns over further contraction as the Common Core ELA and math standards were rolling out in 2010.

Originally conceived of as “Common State Standards for Social Studies,” they evolved over time into “a framework for development of standards” in response to concerns that they would be perceived as another federal encroachment on local control over education, potentially undermining efforts to gain acceptance of the Common Core state standards for ELA and math. CCSSO provided the space for the Framework’s development, but limited its role to supporting states that faced the challenge of upgrading their standards, and transferred ownership and control of the Framework to NCSS.

NCSS published the C3 Framework in 2013 as “a resource for members to assist them in upgrading their existing social studies standards” (National Council for the Social Studies,

2013, p. xii). As a framework, it “would assist all states in utilizing the document as either a companion to existing standards, as a foundation for new standards, or as a mandate to initiate a conversation about the importance of social studies in their states” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. xiii). While its original and stated intent was to offer states a resource for the development, revision, and updating of social studies standards, one state has adopted the document whole cloth, while others have woven elements of C3 into the fabric of their state standards.

Presently, the C3 Framework appears to be the most influential guide being used by states as they develop, update, and revise standards. Our survey of SEAs for this paper in winter–spring 2021 found that at least 21 out of the 29 SEAs that responded are using elements of C3 as their standards, or more commonly as guides to their development. More recently, a team that included members who oversaw development of the C3 analyzed standards documents from the 50 states and the District of Columbia and categorized the impact of the Framework on those standards into four levels. They report that 28 states either “excerpted ... framed ... modeled, or adopted the C3 Framework into their social studies standards document” (New et al., 2021). C3 is also referenced frequently in national conversations and publications focusing on the social studies.

The C3 Framework has had a considerable impact on state standards and practices in social studies, driving the field to inquiry. Describing itself as “groundbreaking,” the C3 Framework document is “inquiry based ... and establishes a crucial link between social studies disciplines and the Common Core State Standards by defining literacy in the context of social studies.” As its lead author wrote, “Although there are differences in its use, there is consistency in message—Inquiry is at the heart of good social studies!” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. xi).

### ***Educating for American Democracy (EAD) Roadmap***

In November 2019, the National Endowment for the Humanities, in partnership with the U.S. Department of Education, awarded a \$650,000 “cooperative agreement to the Civics education group iCivics to lead a coalition of experts in assessing the state of, and best practices in, the teaching of American history, civics, and government in K–12 education” (National Endowment for the Humanities, 2019).

The project involved a partnership between the Edmond J. Safra Center for Ethics at Harvard University, the School of Civic and Economic Thought and Leadership at Arizona State University, the Tufts University Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning and Engagement, and Jonathan M. Tisch College of Civic Life, and iCivics. “The initiative brought together a national network of more than 300 scholars, classroom educators from every grade level, practitioners, and students from a diversity of viewpoints, demographics, and roles, who pooled their expertise to create a strategy for providing excellent history and civics to all students” (Educating for American Democracy, n.d.c, para. 1). The partnership released the Roadmap amidst great fanfare on March 2, 2021.

The EAD Roadmap is presented as an “advisory document, intended to support a diversity of specific curricula, materials, lessons, and assessments and to work within a variety of state social studies standards.” The developers suggest that it will break new ground by presenting “one integrated account of what, why, and ways to teach History and Civics.” “As such,”

they continue, “it is meant to inspire and inform the authors of state standards, curricula, textbooks, other materials, as well as teachers themselves to rethink and reprioritize Civics and U.S. History education.” The authors of the EAD Roadmap suggest that the C3 Framework is “content agnostic” and that, rather than competing with the C3 Framework, the Roadmap’s “primary focus is on content, which is presented as a set of driving and supporting questions. It identifies high priority content centered around seven content themes and five design challenges. . . . The Roadmap prioritizes the history and civics content, approaches, and debates essential to robust and authentic civic participation” (Educating for American Democracy, n.d.a, p. 3).

There are too many Driving and Supporting Questions in the EAD Roadmap to list all of them here. However, Table 3 below provides some examples of Driving Questions for Grades 6–8 (Educating for American Democracy, n.d.b).

**Table 3. EAD Roadmap Themes and Sample Driving Questions**

<b>Theme</b>	<b>Sample Driving Questions for Grades 6–8</b>
<b>Civic Participation</b>	When and where have leaders and change-makers emerged in American History? What has motivated them and prepared them for civic engagement? What forms does civic participation take? Who has access to different forms of participation, and how has that access changed over time?
<b>Our Changing Landscapes</b>	How do borders change over time, and why?
<b>We the People</b>	In what ways and to what extent have the diverse people of the U.S. become one nation and faced challenges to that? How did the institution of enslavement and practices of Indigenous removal and even extermination affect national unity in the U.S., and to what extent have we addressed their impact over time?
<b>A New Government and Constitution</b>	How did the idea and debates about rights shape the American Revolution and drafting of the Constitution? What was the nature of the U.S. government when it was new? What were its central ideas? What were its shortcomings?
<b>Institutional and Social Transformation —A Series of Refoundings?</b>	How have the different legal statuses of different sections of the American population affected the development of the United States over time? How has the right to vote in the United States changed over time? How did people who could not vote organize to gain the right to vote?
<b>A People in the World</b>	Why do countries go to war—for what political, economic, territorial, and ideological reasons? What have treaties and other international agreements done across our history in addition to settling conflicts?
<b>A People with Contemporary Debates &amp; Possibilities</b>	What issues in current elections or local, state, national, or international decision-making are of most interest to you? How can you learn about their historical roots, particularly if History books haven’t been written yet to cover the most recent decades of U.S. History?

SOURCE: Educating for American Democracy, n.d.b.

Following the C3 Framework’s lead, the EAD Roadmap considers “inquiry as the primary process for learning” (Educating for American Democracy, 2021, p. 16). In those places that opt to embrace the EAD Roadmap in part or whole, the developers anticipate that social studies educators will “use the EAD roadmap inquiry prompts as entry points to teaching full and complex content,” while also cultivating “students’ capacity to develop their own deep and critical inquiries about American History and civic life, and their identities and communities” (Educating for American Democracy, 2021, p. 16). The inquiries are designed as entry points for developing students’ historical and civic knowledge, connecting that knowledge to themselves and their communities, and “help[ing] students cultivate empathy across differences and inquisitiveness to ask difficult questions, which are core to historical understanding and constructive civic participation” (Educating for American Democracy, 2021, p. 16). The impact of the EAD Roadmap on civics and history standards, curriculum, teaching, learning, and assessment remains to be seen.

### ***Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies***

The Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts (ELA) & Literacy in History/Social Studies remind us that reading is critical to building knowledge in history/social studies and that teachers in other content areas must have a role in developing students’ literacy skills. Therefore, the Common Core ELA standards include expectations for development of those abilities in a range of subjects, including history/social studies (civics included). Part of the motivation behind the approach to literacy is the “extensive research” establishing the need for college- and career-ready students to be proficient in reading complex informational text independently in a variety of content areas (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.a). This motivation resonates logically with many social studies educators who, cognizant of expectations that students engage with tools of the disciplines—including challenging primary source documents and other “stimulus” featured on assessments—understand the need to integrate literacy supports into their instruction.

As noted earlier, the C3 Framework was written at a time when the Common Core ELA standards were rolling out. Those developing the Framework viewed the Common Core standards as an “opportunity for social studies educators to re-frame literacy instruction in such a way as to allow social studies to regain a more balanced and elevated role in the K-12 curriculum” (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013, p. xxi).

The Common Core ELA history/social studies standards have found their way into social studies instruction and assessment. While they are not parsed into separate standards for civics and history, there are some that are particularly well aligned with the two content areas and that might be considered in future revisions to the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks and assessments. Table 4 below offers some examples drawn directly from these Common Core standards.

**Table 4. Common Core ELA History/Social Studies Standards of Particular Relevance to the NAEP Civics and History Frameworks and Assessments**

<b>Civics</b>	<b>History</b>
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.3	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.6-8.9
Identify key steps in a text’s description of a process related to history/social studies (e.g., how a bill	Analyze the relationship between a primary and secondary source on the same topic. (Grades 6–8) <sup>a</sup>

Civics	History
becomes law, how interest rates are raised or lowered). (Grades 6–8) <sup>a</sup>	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.4	CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.6
Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including analyzing how an author uses and refines the meaning of a key term over the course of a text (e.g., how Madison defines <i>faction</i> in <i>Federalist</i> No. 10). (Grades 11–12) <sup>b</sup>	Evaluate authors' differing points of view on the same historical event or issue by assessing the authors' claims, reasoning, and evidence. (Grades 11–12) <sup>b</sup>
Civics and History	
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RH.11-12.8	
Evaluate an author's premises, claims, and evidence by corroborating or challenging them with other information. (Grades 11–12) <sup>b</sup>	

<sup>a</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021a.

<sup>b</sup> Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021b.

Appendix IV offers an example of how a CCSS history/social studies standard is being assessed in one state's social studies assessment.

The sample Common Core history/social studies standard that overlaps civics and history may be especially notable to those who might consider incorporating such standards into frameworks and assessments. First, it highlights a national, research-informed trend that incorporates historical thinking skills, such as corroboration, into instruction and assessment (discussed further below). Second, in an environment where there are increasing concerns in civic life around “truth decay” and disagreements around “facts,” this standard offers opportunities to assess students' abilities and dispositions to corroborate possible misinformation. Performance results can then be used by SEAs or LEAs to inform curricular revisions relating to media/information literacy and civic online reasoning.

### **Degrees of Influence: National Guidance Documents on State Standards**

We reached out to every state social studies specialist to gain a sense of the degree to which the curricular guidance documents described above have informed the design and content of their state standards. We included the NAEP frameworks, despite their not being standards or curriculum guidance documents, to probe whether states might be using them. Twenty-nine state social studies specialists replied to the survey. Note that some states do not have specialists dedicated specifically to social studies, and some are so new that they likely would not have the information requested.

The C3 Framework emerged as the most common resource informing SEA standards, with half of them reporting its influence and 15 of them categorizing that influence as “considerable” or “significant/most influence.” Twelve states noted the influence of the National History Standards, while 9 mentioned the National Standards for Civics and Government. Somewhat surprisingly, 12 SEAs indicated that the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies have been used as a resource, but only 7 SEAs reported that they had either considerable or significant influence.



Notably, 85 percent of SEAs responding reported that the NAEP frameworks have had no influence (14 states), little influence (3 states), or uncertain influence (7 states) on their state standards.

## SECTION 4: ALIGNMENT OF NAEP CIVICS AND U.S. HISTORY FRAMEWORKS WITH DEVELOPMENTS AND PRACTICES IN THE FIELD

### Civics

Table 5 below shows the areas of alignment and disconnect among the NAEP civics framework and the major documents guiding civics and history standards development nationally since the latest revisions to the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks. While the comparison attends only to the overarching topics or themes of each document, it suggests areas of disconnect at the surface level.

**Table 5. Comparison of NAEP Civics Components to Themes and Categories Featured in National Documents Guiding Civics Standards Development**

NAEP's Civic Knowledge Components <sup>a</sup>	2010 NCSS National Curriculum Standards' 10 Themes <sup>b</sup>	2013 C3's Three Civics Categories <sup>c</sup>	2021 EAD Roadmap's Seven Themes <sup>d</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are civic life, politics, and government?</li> <li>• What are the foundations of the American political system?</li> <li>• How does the government established by the Constitution embody the purposes, values, and principles of American democracy?</li> <li>• What is the relationship of the United States to other nations and to world affairs?</li> <li>• What are the roles of citizens in American democracy?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Time, continuity, and change</li> <li>• People, places, and environments</li> <li>• Individual development and identity</li> <li>• Individuals, groups, and institutions</li> <li>• Power, authority, and governance</li> <li>• Production, distribution and consumption</li> <li>• Science, technology, and society</li> <li>• Global connections</li> <li>• Civic ideals and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic and political institutions</li> <li>• Participation and deliberation: applying civic virtues and democratic principles</li> <li>• Processes, rules, and laws</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic participation</li> <li>• Our changing landscapes</li> <li>• We the People</li> <li>• A new government &amp; constitution</li> <li>• Institutional &amp; social transformation—a series of refoundings?</li> <li>• A people in the world</li> <li>• A people with contemporary debates &amp; possibilities</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> National Assessment Governing Board, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>b</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, n.d., para. 8.

<sup>c</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, 2017, pp. 32–34.

<sup>d</sup> Educating for American Democracy, n.d.b.

Looking forward, the documents to pay most attention to when evaluating alignment to NAEP's five civic knowledge components are the C3 Framework's three civics "Categories" and the EAD Roadmap's seven themes. As mentioned earlier, the C3 Framework appears to be the most influential guide to the development of social studies standards, while the EAD Roadmap has the potential to become so. And while the C3's categories are relatively well subsumed under the umbrella of NAEP's five components, the EAD Roadmap—with its more novel, and perhaps timely, attention to themes such as Changing Landscapes, Refoundings, and A People with Contemporary Debates and Possibilities—offers interesting opportunities to broaden the NAEP components as planning for framework revisions begin.

## History

Table 6 below shows the areas of alignment and disconnect among the NAEP U.S. history framework and the major documents guiding civics and history standards development nationally since the latest revisions to the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks. While the comparison attends only to the overarching topics or themes of each document, it also suggests areas of disconnect at the surface level.

**Table 6. Comparison of NAEP U.S. History Components to Themes and Categories Featured in National Documents Guiding History Standards Development**

NAEP's Four Central Themes for History <sup>a</sup>	NAEP's Eight Time Periods for History <sup>a</sup>	NCSS National Curriculum Standards' 10 Themes <sup>b</sup>	C3's Four History Categories <sup>c</sup>	EAD Roadmap's Seven Themes <sup>d</sup>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change and continuity in American democracy: ideas, institutions, events, key figures, and controversies</li> <li>• The gathering and interactions of peoples, cultures, and ideas</li> <li>• Economic and technological changes, and their relationship to society, ideas, and the environment</li> <li>• The changing role of America in the world</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginnings to 1607</li> <li>• Colonization, settlement, and communities (1607–1763)</li> <li>• The Revolution and the new nation (1763–1815)</li> <li>• Expansion and reform (1801–1861)</li> <li>• Crisis of the Union: Civil War and Reconstruction (1850–1877)</li> <li>• The development of modern America (1865–1920)</li> <li>• Modern America and the World Wars (1914–1945)</li> <li>• Contemporary America (1945–present)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture</li> <li>• Time, continuity, and change</li> <li>• People, places, and environments</li> <li>• Individual development and identity</li> <li>• Individuals, groups, and institutions</li> <li>• Power, authority, and governance</li> <li>• Production, distribution, and consumption</li> <li>• Science, technology, and society</li> <li>• Global connections</li> <li>• Civic ideals and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change, continuity, and context</li> <li>• Perspectives</li> <li>• Historical sources and evidence</li> <li>• Causation and argumentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civic participation</li> <li>• Our changing landscapes</li> <li>• We the People</li> <li>• A new government &amp; constitution</li> <li>• Institutional &amp; social transformation—a series of refoundings?</li> <li>• A people in the world</li> <li>• A people with contemporary debates &amp; possibilities</li> </ul>

<sup>a</sup> National Assessment Governing Board, 2003, p. 3–4.

<sup>b</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, n.d., para. 8.

<sup>c</sup> National Council for the Social Studies, 2017, pp. 32–34.

<sup>d</sup> Educating for American Democracy, n.d.b.

A detailed analysis of differences between the NAEP U.S. history framework, the C3 Framework, and the EAD Roadmap would be a significant undertaking and is beyond the scope of this paper. Generally speaking, however, a notable difference between the NAEP and C3 Frameworks is C3's focused attention to historical thinking and inquiry. Whereas the NAEP framework devotes attention to content knowledge, and skills, C3 attends exclusively to thinking and inquiry skills.

In somewhat of a contrast, the EAD Roadmap follows a path carved by C3 with its attention to inquiry, but takes a turn as it shifts attention to content presented as a set of driving and supporting questions. Therefore, those considering revisions of the U.S. history framework should consider C3’s disciplinary concepts for history, especially as they contemplate new skills for the exercise pool, and EAD as they consider new content.

## ***Social Studies at the State Level***

### **State Scope and Sequences**

The Council for State Social Studies Specialists (CS4) recently created a spreadsheet with information about state social studies specialists, standards, and curriculum, and updated it in February 2020. CS4 graciously granted us permission to use and update the spreadsheet again for the purposes of this paper. Thirty-five SEAs, including those for the District of Columbia and Department of Defense Education Activity (DoDEA), provided additional updates through May 1, 2021.

The spreadsheet includes state social studies curriculum scopes and sequences (i.e., what is taught at each grade level and in what order). A few SEAs describe what is taught simply by using very general descriptors, such as social studies “topics.” Others take a standards approach (i.e., pointing out that different social studies standards are taught at different grade levels). The most common pattern is for states to describe the content or subject that is taught.

### ***U.S. History***

Recall that when NAEP has assessed U.S. history at the elementary level, it has done so at Grade 4, and that NAGB’s updated schedule calls for assessment of U.S. history in 2030 at Grades 4, 8, and 12. The spreadsheet includes information about the grades at which states offer instruction in U.S. history and what content is covered. Key findings appear below:

**Elementary Level:** In instances where SEAs clearly identify subject-specific descriptors (e.g., U.S. history) for various grade levels, nearly three-quarters of SEAs begin U.S. history instruction in Grade 5 or later, with just over half (15 out of 29) beginning specifically in Grade 5. In 11 of those 15 states, coverage ends at or before the Civil War.

**Grade 8:** Twenty-four SEAs offer a U.S. history course in Grade 8, with some variations on start and end points (e.g., colonization to Reconstruction vs. exploration to Reconstruction), but with most ending at Reconstruction.

To gather data from more SEAs and corroborate conclusions drawn from the CS4 spreadsheet, we followed up with a survey of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and DoDEA in August of 2021 asking when considerable coverage of U.S. history begins. Twenty-six SEAs responded directly to the survey. Two other SEAs responded via emails. “Considerable” was defined as opportunity to learn enough to perform reasonably well on an assessment of U.S. history content knowledge. Twenty of the 28 SEAs reported that coverage of U.S. history does not begin until Grade 5 or later (2 of the 28 SEAs responding by email explained that the levels of local control in their states are such that they are unable to give a definitive answer, as LEAs are “all over the place” in terms of what is taught and when).

We also asked which, if any, of Periods 6–8 of the NAEP framework for U.S. history are covered in Grades K–4 and 6–8. Table 7 below presents the number of SEAs reporting whether all, none, or some of the content associated with Periods 6–8 of the U.S. history framework is expected to be covered in Grades K–4 and 6–8.

**Table 7. Number of SEAs Reporting Whether Periods 6–8 Are Covered in Grades K–4 and 6–8 (n = 26)**

	Period 6	Period 7	Period 8
<b>Grades K–4</b>	19 no	21 no	21 no
	3 yes	1 yes	1 yes
	4 some	4 some	4 some
<b>Grades 6–8</b>	4 no	13 no	14 no
	12 yes	8 yes	8 yes
	10 some	4 some	3 some

The August 2021 survey data corroborate the earlier finding from winter–spring 2021 that less than a handful of SEAs include coverage of NAEP U.S. history framework Periods 6–8 in their Grades K–4 scopes and sequences. And while it is more common for SEAs to include all or some coverage of Period 6 in their scopes and sequences for Grades 6–8, the number of SEAs that do **not** include coverage of Periods 7 and 8 in their scopes and sequences equals (Period 7) or exceeds (Period 8) the number that do. One SEA failed to provide information about Periods 7 and 8 for Grades 6–8.

**High School:** There tends to be more flexibility at the high school level in terms of the grades at which social studies courses are offered. One district within a state might offer U.S. history in Grade 10, while another might offer it in Grade 11. With this noted, 27 SEAs report that courses or standards specifically focusing on U.S. history and civics/government are offered or required between Grades 9 and 12. One other SEA offers a course in U.S. history but not one in civics or government. Information for the remaining SEAs was left blank or unclear (e.g., reporting “No themes per grade but each strand has some topics across grades with increasing complexity level” or “[state] does not have a required scope and sequence at the state level”).

Ten SEAs report offering American or U.S. history courses but do not offer details about their scope or content. Nine SEAs report U.S. history courses covering the period from approximately Reconstruction to the present, and three others offer both a U.S. history I and II at the high school level, suggesting coverage of the entire span of U.S. history.

### **Civics**

It is common practice at the elementary level for SEAs to label what is taught at specific grade levels under the banner of topics or concepts associated with civics, such as “Children as Citizens,” “Living and Working Together in Family and Community,” or “Myself and My Community,” starting as early as kindergarten and continuing throughout the grade cluster.

**Grade 6–8 Civics Requirements:** Twenty-two out of the 28 SEAs responding to our August 2021 survey reported that they do not have a required course in civics or

government, but they do have civics standards that “must be taught.” Only 3 of the 28 SEAs reported that they do have a required civics or government course for Grades 6–8.

**Grade 9–12 Civics Requirements:** That same survey revealed that 20 SEAs have a civics or government course requirement, while 6 others do not have a course requirement but do have civics standards that “must be taught.” One of the SEAs that has civics standards but not a course added that .5 of a credit will be required under legislation for the class of 2026.

### **Key Takeaways**

There are two notable points about the civics and U.S. history scopes and sequences reported by the sample of SEAs as they pertain to NAEP assessments.

1. While NAEP plans to assess U.S. history in Grade 4 in 2030, many states do not appear to offer focused instruction in that content until Grade 5 or later.
2. The 2018 NAEP framework for U.S. history identifies “Eight periods [that] structure the assessment,” with Period 5 covering the period from 1850 to 1877. Periods 6–8 cover the period from 1865 to the present. Additionally, the context for one sample item on the NAEP website ([here](#)) is 20th century immigration, with one distractor anticipating that students have some understanding of the 1924 National Origins Act. Recall that the scope of content for more than a few eighth-grade U.S. history courses ends at about the time of the Civil War. Those charged with revising the frameworks for U.S. history should remain mindful of these potential disconnects between what is taught and what is assessed. (See Recommendation 1 below.)

## **Civics and U.S. History Assessments—NAEP and the States**

### **NAEP Civics and U.S. History Item Types**

The 2018 NAEP frameworks describe the types of items desired for the NAEP civics and U.S. history assessments. The following section offers a summary of the frameworks’ descriptions for the two content areas and compares them to a sample of assessment practices and released or sample items available on state department of education websites (or items provided by state social studies specialists upon request). The comparisons offer insights into current assessment practices, emerging trends, and ideas for alternative designs for NAEP assessments that reflect a range of state practices.

### **NAEP CIVICS—“Desired” Item Types**

According to the 2018 framework for the NAEP civics assessment, the desired item types include *selected-response* and *open-ended* items. New for 2018, both the civics and U.S. history assessments featured items on a “digital platform.” The selected-response specifications allow for *stand-alone* and *stimulus set* formats. The stand-alone questions can require students to read a brief excerpt or quotation, interpret a chart, or evaluate the significance of a document (sometimes described as “thinking with data”), while the stimulus set format could feature a series of several test questions related to a particular stimulus selection, such as a political cartoon, table of election results, or other material.

The NAEP 2018 civics assessment web page makes available four sample items, none of which illustrates the selected-response design featuring interactions with stimulus (data or

texts). One of the *open-ended* sample items, however, does feature the type requiring engagement with stimulus (thinking with data).

### **NAEP U.S. History—“Desired” Item Types**

The description of desired item types for the 2018 NAEP U.S. history assessment (National Assessment Governing Board, 2018b, pp. 43–45) is similar to the one for the NAEP civics assessment in a number of ways. It calls for *selected-response* items that require higher level thinking skills, thus probing students’ abilities to recall and comprehend, and *open-ended* items featuring both short-answer formats (which “may require lists, phrases, or sentences”) and extended-response formats (which “may ask students to generate more developed arguments, analyses, or explanations”). Additionally, the U.S. history framework states that “the assessment should use a variety of stimulus materials” in both selected-response and open-ended items, with two notable points made:

1. That “many [stimulus materials] resources are not equally available to all schools in all areas.”
2. “Recognizing that many students do not perform well on test items requiring long written responses, the item development committee should strive to construct the questions so that students can demonstrate performance on some items without writing extensively.”

Other than the NAEP assessments, there are no national assessments of civics or U.S. history (AP tests aside). At one time, the Joe Foss Institute at Arizona State University was successfully promoting a version of the citizenship test in some states, but that initiative appears to have lost momentum, leaving some states with legacies in the form of legislation mandating that students pass some version of the test. These assessments draw directly from questions found on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) study guide (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019), and rely overwhelmingly on the recall of factual information.

### **Overview of State Assessments**

Based on the survey of state social studies specialists conducted for this paper and the updated CS4 spreadsheet, we can report with confidence that at least 18 states assess social studies (“Joe Foss” USCIS test included), despite some inconsistencies in reporting.

These 18 states either assess social studies directly or offer assessments to districts that they can use to meet state assessment requirements. In 15 of these states, civics or relevant content (e.g., American government, the U.S. Constitution) and U.S. history are included as areas assessed. Local districts are free to choose which social studies content areas are assessed in one state.

Sixteen other states, plus the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity, reported that they do not require a social studies assessment.

Of the states that did report assessing social studies, most assess in Grades 4, 8, and 11. A few states create assessment grade windows (e.g., Grade 4 or 5; 7 or 8; anytime in high school) that allow local education agencies (LEAs) to choose the optimal time to administer assessments based on their scope and sequences and grade-level testing loads.

## Comparison of NAEP Civics/U.S. History and State Social Studies Item Types

The type of item featured most commonly on state assessments is multiple choice (12 states), followed closely by text or stimulus-based (10 states) and text set items (9 states).

A search of SEA assessment web pages for released or sample items uncovered a few item types that differ from the sample 2018 NAEP civics and U.S. history items and/or those described in the 2018 NAEP frameworks for civics and U.S. history. While not found among the sample items or frameworks for civics and U.S. history, ETS reports that multiple-select multiple choice, drag and drop, grid, drop down, color enhanced, and zone (selecting an area on a map) items were introduced in 2018 but remain secure. Table 8 below shows the types of NAEP and state assessment items found in our search. Appendix II provides examples of the item types used on state assessments.

**Table 8. Comparison of Item Types on NAEP Civics/U.S. History Assessments and State Civics Assessments**

NAEP Items	State Assessment Items
<b>Technology-Enhanced Items</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click on the correct response on multiple-choice items</li> <li>Type in responses for open-ended items</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Click on the correct response on multiple-choice items</li> <li>Type in responses for open-ended items</li> <li>Drag and drop (see sample state item 3 in Appendix II)</li> <li>Drop down (see sample state item 5 in Appendix II)</li> <li>Click chart or “Grid” (see sample state item 2 in Appendix II)</li> <li>Color-enhanced items (e.g., color added to maps) (see sample state item 4 in Appendix II)</li> </ul>
<b>Stimulus vs. Text Set Items</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One stimulus</li> <li>One or more prompts connected to the stimulus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Multiple stimulus (i.e., stimulus or text sets) (see sample state item 1 in Appendix II)</li> <li>One or more prompts connected to the stimulus</li> </ul>
<b>Item Prompt vs. Text Positioning</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stimulus/texts on top</li> <li>Prompts below</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stimulus/texts on left</li> <li>Prompt on right (see sample state items 1 and 2 in Appendix II)</li> </ul>

- Stimulus vs. Text Set Items**—Whereas NAEP sample items as well as the types of items “desired” in the NAEP frameworks permit stand-alone or stimulus sets featuring a *single* stimulus, state assessments reveal trends toward engagement with *text sets* in which one or more assessment prompts are connected to anywhere from four to six different stimuli or texts, depending on the grade level in which the testing occurs. While assessments featuring a single stimulus offer benefits, such as reducing cognitive overload while still measuring content and skills associated with civics and history, engagement with text sets offers additional benefits that engagement with a single text might not (e.g., assessing skills associated with corroborating information, comparing and contrasting).
- Item Prompt vs. Text Positioning**—The 2018 sample NAEP items for civics and U.S. history that are available for viewing place the stimulus above the prompt. States tend to place the stimulus to the left and the prompt to the right, with the multiple stimuli or text being accessible via tabs with labels such as “Source 1” or “Source 2.”



ETS reports, however, that layout is flexible in the digital assessment, with decisions related to use of the single screen versus split-screen decision being based generally on whichever layout avoids unnecessary scrolling.

This analysis, as well as information provided by ETS, suggests that the item types used in SEA assessments closely match those featured on NAEP civics and history assessments.

“Theme blocks” or “text sets” in which one or more assessment items are connected to two or more “stimuli” (source documents) are notable exceptions. ETS reports that theme blocks used to be part of the U.S. history assessment at Grades 8 and 12 but they were discontinued in 2018 with the idea that they would be replaced by digital scenario tasks or sets built around interactive item components that require engagement with multiple sources. However, ETS further reports that they were not implemented, and there will be no such tasks introduced prior to the new frameworks.

### Skills Assessed: NAEP and State-Level Assessments

To what extent are the intellectual or cognitive skills described in the NAEP 2018 frameworks for civics and U.S. history in alignment with those in state social studies assessments? Table 9 below shows the range of intellectual or cognitive skills that are described explicitly in the 2018 NAEP frameworks and those that SEAs report students are expected to bring to bear during state social studies assessments.

**Table 9. Intellectual or Cognitive Skills and Processes Measured on the NAEP 2018 Frameworks and State Social Studies Assessments**

2018 NAEP Civics Framework	2018 NAEP U.S. History Framework	State Social Studies Assessments
<p><b>NAEP Civics Intellectual Skills</b> (Described in NAEP 2018 civics framework p. 42)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying</li> <li>Describing</li> <li>Explaining</li> <li>Analyzing</li> <li>Evaluating, taking, and defending a position</li> </ul> <p><b>Participatory Skills</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Interacting</li> <li>Monitoring</li> <li>Influencing</li> </ul> <p><b>Civic Dispositions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Describe the importance of listening respectfully to the opinions of others</li> <li>Measure students’ ability to monitor the adherence of political leaders and governmental agencies to constitutional principles</li> </ul>	<p><b>NAEP Cognitive Skills or Processes</b> (Described in NAEP 2018 history framework p. 38)</p> <p><b>Historical Knowledge and Perspective</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing and understanding people, events, concepts, themes, movements, contexts, and historical sources</li> <li>Sequencing events</li> <li>Recognizing multiple perspectives</li> <li>Seeing an era or movement through the eyes of different groups</li> </ul> <p><b>Historical Analysis and Interpretation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explaining issues</li> <li>Identifying historical patterns</li> <li>Establishing cause-and-effect relationships, finding value statements</li> <li>Establishing significance</li> <li>Applying historical knowledge</li> </ul>	<p><b>Intellectual or Cognitive Skills Assessed (n = 18) With Percentage Doing So</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evaluate (86%)</li> <li>Identify (81%)</li> <li>Describe (81%)</li> <li>Explain (81%)</li> <li>Interpret (76%)</li> <li>Compare/contrast (76%)</li> <li>Cite evidence (67%)</li> <li><b>Predict</b> (57%)</li> <li>Defend a position (52%)</li> <li>Take a position (43%)</li> <li><b>Create</b> (43%)</li> </ul> <p><b>Others Identified by Individual States</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Source</b></li> <li>Contextualize</li> <li><b>Corroborate</b></li> <li><b>Develop questions</b></li> <li><b>Evaluate questions</b></li> <li>Summarize</li> <li>Make a claim</li> <li>Cause/effect</li> </ul>

2018 NAEP Civics Framework	2018 NAEP U.S. History Framework	State Social Studies Assessments
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Weighing evidence to draw sound conclusions</li> <li>• Making defensible generalizations</li> <li>• Rendering insightful accounts of the past</li> </ul>	

\*Red font indicates skills not mentioned explicitly in the NAEP civics or U.S. history frameworks or found as sample or released items.

SOURCE: National Assessment Governing Board, 2018a, 2018b.

This analysis suggests there is a considerable degree of alignment among the item types and intellectual or cognitive skills assessed on NAEP civics and U.S. history assessments and state assessments. However, our search suggests that there may be a few item types as well as skills assessed by states, but not by NAEP, that are worthy of consideration. Table 9 draws attention to such skills via the use of red font.

## ***Assessment in the Field: Additional Opportunities for NAEP Assessments***

### **Common Core History/Social Studies and C3 Framework Inquiry Standards**

Two other emerging trends in state social studies assessments that merit attention involve assessing student mastery of the Common Core ELA history/social studies standards (Common Core State Standards Initiative, n.d.b) and skills associated with inquiry, as described in the C3 Framework. Recall that the call for inquiry in social studies has grown since publication of the C3 Framework and that the new EAD Roadmap agrees with that call. In addition to applying disciplinary concepts and tools, assessments informed by the C3 inquiry standards might include questions that probe students' abilities to develop questions, plan inquiries, evaluate sources, use evidence, and take informed actions relating to content areas that include civics and U.S. history.

Examples of state assessment items that illustrate how inquiry skills might be measured appear in Appendix III (see sample state items **6** and **7**).

The Common Core history/social studies standards are applicable only to Grades 6–12, and focus on having students identify and cite key ideas and details, determining authors' craft and structure, and integrating knowledge and ideas. As Table 4 above indicates, there are expectations that fall under the umbrellas of these ELA/literacy skills that are more closely aligned to what is expected in the fields of civics and history.

An example of a state assessment item that illustrates how a Common Core history/social studies standard might be measured appears in Appendix IV (see sample state item **8**).

### **Stanford History Education Group Work**

Launched in 2002, the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG) has been developing free-access, research-based curricula and assessments that have been downloaded more than 10 million times in all 50 states and 127 countries. The wide use of SHEG resources commends their approach to those who may be charged with revising the NAEP

frameworks or assessments for civics or U.S. history. Summaries of SHEG resources appear below:

### ***Reading Like a Historian Curriculum***

The Reading Like a Historian curriculum (Stanford History Education Group, n.d.a) is built around Sam Wineburg’s research into the ways that historians read historical texts, and it contributes much to what we understand about disciplinary literacy in the field of history. He uncovered three practices of historians—sourcing, contextualizing, and corroborating—around which the Reading Like a Historian curriculum is built and that now inform what occurs in many of our nation’s history classrooms. In addition to these skills, many teachers and some states that assess history are incorporating measures of these historical thinking skills into their assessments (Stanford History Education Group, n.d.a).

If NAEP assessments are to be measures of what is occurring in the field and what many consider best and/or research-based practices, items that probe students’ inclinations and abilities to source, contextualize, and corroborate as they engage with texts/stimulus should be continued or considered.

### ***Civic Online Reasoning Curriculum***

Stanford’s Sam Wineburg and Sarah McGrew conducted a study in 2017 in a context that remains as relevant now as it was then. “The Internet,” the authors began their paper, “has democratized access to information but in so doing has opened the floodgates to misinformation, fake news, and rank propaganda masquerading as dispassionate analysis” (Wineburg & McGrew, 2017). The investigation contrasted how historians, professional fact checkers, and undergraduates determine the credibility of digital information and concluded that, despite the increased likelihood of being digital natives, “students ... struggle with nearly every aspect of gathering and evaluating information online.”

An optimally functioning democracy depends upon a citizenry that is well informed. The development of the knowledge, skills, and dispositions needed to become and remain well informed is a core function of our schools and, in particular, of civics education. In the wake of reports such as Wineburg and McGrew’s, groups such as the Stanford History Education Project and the News Literacy Project, which seek to improve how civics and history are taught while keeping pace of societal changes, now offer well-regarded professional learning and resources to help our K–12 citizens become more effective consumers of news and information. The *U.S. Media Literacy Policy Report 2020*, which conducted a state-by-state survey of the status of media literacy education laws for K–12 schools, reveals that there are now 14 states with some media literacy–related language on the books and other states that have taken legislative action by introducing bills, holding public and committee hearings, and conducting floor votes. Other states have added media literacy standards to their versions of the Common Core standards or infused them into the principles that guide their history and social science standards (Media Literacy Now, 2020).

At the national level, the U.S. Department of Education published a [proposed rule](#) in April 2021 for a pair of small grant programs in American history and civic education. The rule proposes two new priorities for these grants. The first priority is to promote “information literacy skills” that will help students “meaningfully participate in our democracy and distinguish fact from misinformation” (Packer, 2021).

SHEG launched its Civic Online Reasoning (COR) curriculum in December 2019. COR aims to help middle and high school students become more skilled evaluators of online content—a skill that has gained more attention in civics education recently due to the increased presence and dissemination of misinformation, fake news, and deep fakes within our culture (Civic Online Reasoning, n.d.). Three questions lie at the heart of the COR curriculum:

- Who’s behind the information?
- What’s the evidence?
- What do other sources say?

Moving forward, the need to encourage greater attention to equipping students with the dispositions and skills needed to vet the onslaught of information bombarding them through social media begs for the inclusion of assessments that measure the extent to which students have mastered the skills associated with civic online reasoning and media literacy.

Although unable to find examples of state assessments that attend to civic online reasoning, SHEG offers examples on its COR website, with two featured in Appendix V that might serve as guides.

### ***Beyond the Bubble***

Beyond the Bubble assessments (Stanford History Education Group, n.d.b) were developed as a series of “new generation, alternative version” assessments that offer a middle ground between multiple-choice and document-based questions (DBQs). Multiple-choice assessments are brief and easy to score but provide insufficient insight into students’ thinking. The larger, “gold standard” DBQs present students with as many as 10 documents, and require extensive use of assessment time as well as a “complex orchestration of skills.” Beyond the Bubble assessments—referred to as “History Assessments of Thinking” or “HATs”—are “designed to help students develop the abilities to analyze documents by engaging with them one at a time in ways that measure students’ historical thinking rather than recall of facts” (Wineburg, Smith, & Breakstone, 2012).

Like NAEP assessments that require engagements with stimuli (thinking with data), HATs ask students to engage in historical reasoning as they critically examine primary sources. What distinguishes HATs, in some instances, are the historical thinking skills assessed (see Table 10 below).

In addition to the fact that they are open educational resources, what makes HATs attractive is that they require only short written responses, which can be completed in a few minutes; they can be scored with relative ease; they offer deeper insights into how students are thinking compared to responses that require filling in a bubble; and they allow for improved formative feedback. Teachers are provided with scoring rubrics, samples of students’ work, and “going deeper” videos that extend understanding of the assessments and what they aim to measure.

Table 10 below identifies the historical thinking skills assessed in the Beyond the Bubble assessments and what students are expected to do as evidence of possessing each skill.

**Table 10. Historical Thinking Skills Assessed in Beyond the Bubble Assessments**

<b>Historical Thinking Skill Assessed</b>	<b>Skill-Related Expectations</b>
<b>Background Knowledge</b>	Whether students can identify the historical event depicted in a source (e.g., photograph)
<b>Contextualization</b>	Using context inferred from documents to place them in correct chronological order
<b>Sourcing</b>	Analyzing who created a document and when to determine its value as evidence
<b>Corroboration</b>	Comparing information found in two different sources to make judgments about the sources' reliability
<b>Use of Evidence</b>	Making judgments about whether evidence supports a historical argument
<b>Periodization</b>	Being able to categorize and situate events into appropriate chunks of time based on shared characteristics (this explanation provided by authors)
<b>Significance</b>	Students have to explain why an event is or is not historically significant

SOURCE: Stanford History Education Group, n.d.b.

Based on what we were able to uncover, the NAEP assessments in civics and U.S. history measure most of the historical thinking skills featured in the SHEG assessments. Closer and more explicit attention to sourcing, corroboration, and periodization merit consideration.

In the big picture, developments in the area of social studies assessment subsequent to the creation of current NAEP frameworks for civics and U.S. history—including the C3 Framework, Common Core history/social studies standards, and the Stanford History Education Group's assessment work—offer additional and worthy opportunities for NAEP civics and U.S. history assessments. See Recommendation 2 below.

## SECTION 5: CONSIDERING MERGED ASSESSMENTS

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As the time for making decisions about possible revisions to the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks and assessments draws near, some have expressed interest in considering the merits of merged assessments (i.e., ones that would assess content areas such as civics and U.S. history together).

Among the potential benefits of a merged assessment might be reduced costs of developing, administering, and reporting on a single assessment. Additionally, merging assessments might reduce testing time, concerns around eating further into instructional time, and reluctance to administer NAEP assessments in spaces where some complain of over-testing.

One wonders, however, whether a merged assessment could (or should) effectively and efficiently measure the range of knowledge, skills, dispositions (civics) and themes, periods, and ways of knowing and thinking (U.S. history) desired.

Another reason why a merged assessment might be considered is much more speculative. If the Educating for American Democracy Roadmap gains national traction in the coming years, it may influence curriculum and instruction in ways that cause teaching and learning to shift away from separate subject approaches and toward “one integrated account” of the way developers of that Roadmap envision civics and history being taught. Should this happen, logic suggests that a merged assessment would become a more appropriate way to measure achievement in those subject areas. Time will tell.

Another factor to consider, and one that will be developed below, is that new or reprioritized initiatives and calls to action in civics and history have evolved since the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks were revised. Should new revisions occur, those revising will have to consider if and how all or some of the knowledge, content, skills, themes, and ways of knowing associated with those initiatives might become part of the frameworks and whether a reasonably sized merged assessment might be capable of producing reliable performance results for those “components” or “elements.”

Following NAGB’s decision to remove economics and geography from the NAEP assessment schedule, some in the field who are disappointed by that decision contemplate a more comprehensively merged social studies assessment that would include civics, economics, geography, and history with renewed interest. This “assessment of the whole field” approach occurred twice in the late 1970s and early 1980s, after which it was abandoned for the single-subject approach.

Obvious and significant advantages of the single-subject approach might include the ability to measure a larger number of elements/components for each subject area; to include more items measuring each element, thereby allowing for greater reliability in reporting; and to allow those taking an assessment to focus their thinking.

In our survey of state curricula and assessment norms, seven states reported that they assess all four social studies content areas on their tests. Two states test multiple, but not all four, social studies content areas, while two other states indicated that it varies by the grade level

at which the assessment is administered (with merged assessments occurring in some grades, separate subject assessments in others).

After weighing arguments for and against single versus merged assessments, the scale appears to tip in favor of retaining single assessments. See Recommendation 3 below.

## SECTION 6: POLITICALLY CHARGED NATURE OF THE WORK

The work of revising anything connected to social studies is not for the faint of heart. Nor is it for those who fail to anticipate what have become predictable controversies that can delay or obstruct efforts to update and improve social studies standards, curriculum, and assessments. Those who might engage in the work of revising NAEP frameworks and/or NAEP assessments for civics and U.S. history should become acquainted with, or remind themselves of, the competing visions and desires for teaching, learning, and assessment in those content areas. Failure to do so could draw significant criticism of NAGB, require prolonged and time-consuming overhauls of first iterations, and add to the costs of revisions.

### ***Civics and History Education: Competing Visions and Approaches***

In recent years there have been a number of publications (Clemmitt, 2017; Hess & Rice, 2020; National Association of Scholars, 2021) that suggest fundamental and significant areas of disagreement between the political right and left over desired features of civics and history education. It is reasonable to assume that these disagreements about how civics and history should be taught also have implications for how civics and U.S. history might be assessed. Table 11 below highlights some of the key areas of disagreement found in the literature. While some points of disagreement listed appear well substantiated, others fall into the category of allegations that are less so but still carry weight within influential segments of the two communities, thereby serving as flashpoints in national debates.

**Table 11. Competing Visions and Characteristics of Civics and U.S. History Education**

<b>Civics and History Education The Political Left</b>	<b>Civics and History Education The Political Right</b>
Emphasis on learning rights of citizenship	Emphasis on learning responsibilities of citizenship
Encourages projects and “action civics” activities with the assumption that students learn better by doing	Argues that project-based civics teaching is a stealth attempt to turn students into activists for liberal causes. The right supports “traditional civics” or “civic literacy” with factual knowledge, historical dates, and documents being taught or used. There is a distrust of the motivation for activities as consistently favoring left-leaning causes. Also argues that too much time spent on activities comes at the expense of cultivating civic knowledge.
Draws more attention to national shortcomings	Places more emphasis on national progress and achievement
More inclined to focus on much needed corrections to the dominant narrative	Concerned about overcorrections
Perceived of as viewing slavery and racism as defining elements of the American creed	Slavery and racism viewed as betrayals of the American creed



<b>Civics and History Education The Political Left</b>	<b>Civics and History Education The Political Right</b>
<p>Teaching patriotism is viewed with skepticism as an excuse to downplay America’s failings. More disposed to think that love of country should arise organically.</p> <p>More likely to support national or state standards and testing.</p>	<p>Generally opposed to federal control of curriculum standards and testing. Views this as falling within the realm of local authority.</p>

While the areas of disagreement between left and right cause some to wonder whether any initiatives around civics and history education might escape controversy, there is cause for optimism, as there appear to be points on which the two sides agree. Both sides agree, for instance, that there is a need for students to spend more time on civics education. They also agree that the civic/history education should point out that there are agreed-upon American values, including liberty and equality, that schools should cultivate, and “that ‘American values’ are aspirational—something for students to pursue against a backdrop of imperfection” (Hess & Rice, 2020, para. 11).

Both sides also agree that America’s triumphs and shortcomings merit attention and that there is a need to find a middle ground between the two. There are fewer who suggest that critical efforts such as the 1619 Project might be acceptable as supplements to history curriculum. Even among this smaller group, it is generally acknowledged that any hint of the supplanting of the more traditional curriculum will be met with significant opposition.

An important question for those tasked with developing new frameworks or assessments is this: How might the worthy aspects of the competing visions or approaches be reconciled in ways that keep pace with societal changes, that preserve the esteem in which NAEP is held, and that buffer its work from the kinds of opprobrium experienced by other initiatives or undertakings in the social studies?

Examples of recent, highly publicized, and costly (monetary and otherwise) flare-ups on the social studies education front of our nation’s culture war follow.

## ***Recent Initiatives Embroiled in Controversy***

### **Advanced Placement U.S. History Framework Controversy**

In 2014, the College Board released a new framework for its Advanced Placement U.S. history (APUSH) test. Reactions from some were immediate, negative, and consequential. An open letter circulated condemning the College Board president for the changes. The Republican National Committee voted to formally condemn the framework as “radically revisionist” at its summer meeting. Major criticisms focused on “limiting content” and the inclusion of some but not other content (e.g., Black Panthers mentioned but not the Founding Fathers or George Washington); the development of historical thinking skills, such as having students create their own interpretations; and a shifting emphasis toward social and cultural history (Curry, Sabina, & Loffi, 2015, p. 5).

In response to ongoing threats from some states to defund AP classes, the College Board released a revised version of the framework in 2015 that removed many controversial parts, such as charged terms like “racist” and “xenophobic” to describe Americans, and softened its judgement on Ronald Reagan.

### **1619 vs. 1776**

*The New York Times* published the 1619 Project in August of 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the arrival of enslaved Africans on the shores of what would become the United States. The goal of the project was “to reframe American history by considering what it would mean to regard 1619 as our nation’s birth year.” Doing so would situate the “consequences of slavery and the contributions of black Americans at the very center of the story we tell ourselves about who we are as a country” (Silverstein, 2019, para. 3).

As with the APUSH controversy, reactions were swift, coming primarily from the political right as well as some prominent historians. The controversy grew when the Pulitzer Center turned 1619 into a curriculum that became available to schools in September 2019.

Key controversies centered on the effort to date the nation’s origin to 1619 as opposed to 1776, quoting President Lincoln out of context, and claiming that “one of the primary reasons some of the colonists decided to declare their independence from Britain was because they wanted to protect the institution of slavery.”

In response to the 1619 Project as well as increased national tensions triggered by the killing of George Floyd, President Trump established an 18-member commission, which released a report on January 18, 2021—Martin Luther King Jr. Day. The stated purpose of the President’s Advisory 1776 Commission was to “enable a rising generation to understand the history and principles of the founding of the United States in 1776 and to strive to form a more perfect Union.” This would require a restoration of American education grounded on a history of those principles that would be “accurate, honest, unifying, inspiring, and ennobling” (The President’s Advisory 1776 Commission, 2021). The 1776 report was swiftly criticized by many historians who argued that it included factual errors, that no historians were involved in its development, and that it did not include citations or footnotes or identify its lead author.

The 1619 Project remains highly controversial and a flashpoint in the debates over what should be taught, learned, and by implication assessed. Bills have been introduced in several state legislatures that include provisions banning the teaching of the 1619 Project and imposing sanctions on LEAs that do.

### **Educating for American Democracy Roadmap**

Less than a week after the launch of the EAD Roadmap and one week after the Civics Secures Democracy Act of 2021 was introduced in Congress, a piece appeared in the *National Review* entitled “The Greatest Education Battle of Our Lifetimes.” After claiming that the legislation was “a backdoor effort to impose a de facto national curriculum in the politically charged subject areas of history and civics,” contributing editor Stanley Kurtz went on to allege that “The Civics Secures Democracy Act of 2021 is very much part of an effort to use NAEP to force a revisionist history and civics curriculum down the throats of unsuspecting states and localities” (Kurtz, 2021, para. 18).

Then, on March 22, 2021, the National Association of Scholars circulated an open letter announcing a new “Civics Alliance” that would stand in opposition to the alleged goals of the federal government and private organizations, such as the CivXNow Coalition and its members, which include Generation Citizen and iCivics. Writing to express their objections to the “subordination of Civics education,” the authors asserted, “The teaching of American Civics in our schools faces a grave new risk. Proponents of programs such as *action civics* seek to turn the traditional subject of Civics into a recruitment tool of the progressive left” (National Association of Scholars, 2021, para. 1).

### **Standards “Wars” in States**

In recent years a number of states have become embroiled in highly contentious debates as they engage in the processes of revising and updating standards and curricula. The controversies typically involve history standards, with criticisms coming from individuals and groups of varying backgrounds and political affiliations. At issue is a battle over which story or stories of American history will be taught.

The controversies have prompted local and national groups on both sides of the political spectrum to enter the fray—monitoring standards and curriculum development, and advocating forcefully for different approaches and content (e.g., Center for the American Experiment, Educators for Excellence in Ethnic Studies, Liberated Ethnic Studies Model Curriculum Coalition, and the Foundation Against Intolerance and Racism).

Notwithstanding what are often largely favorable reactions to the first round of revisions, some of the groups have launched aggressive opposition campaigns that have required additional rounds of review and revision (Groves, 2021). In a few instances, revision committee members have asked that their names be removed from acknowledgment sections in response to subsequent versions that run counter to original drafts. Additionally, opposition to revisions has led to the introduction of bills in state legislatures, some of which sanction schools and teachers for teaching content or approaches that are opposed, and requiring teachers to post their lesson plans online.

Points of disagreement in these controversies have been wide in scope, and include both what is included in revisions as well as what is left out. Among the controversial inclusions are attention to gender identity matters, ethnic studies, policing, climate change, and Israeli persecution of Palestinians; “special treatment” given to some perspectives, such as tribal history and culture; suggestions of systemic racism and oppression; alleged incorporation of critical race theory (a major flashpoint); criticisms of Whites and capitalism; and the inclusion of historical figures such as Angela Davis and Mumia Abu-Jamal.

Among content left out of revisions or updates and serving as flashpoints are attention to the Holocaust; contributions of indigenous tribes and other minority groups; the rise of anti-Semitism; and mention of historical events and persons such as the Civil War, World War II, John Lewis, and Thurgood Marshall. At least one complaint argued that proposed revisions prevent students from believing in the “Big Lie” surrounding the 2020 election. From the left have come criticisms that revisions offer students a narrow “Eurocentric narrative.”

## **Fordham Institute’s “The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021”**

Although not nearly as contentious as the developments just described, it is worth mentioning the Fordham Institute’s “The State of State Standards for Civics and U.S. History in 2021” report released this past June. The report offers a review of civics and history standards in the 50 states plus the District of Columbia, assigning grades for what the Institute views as quality. “Thirty-five states ... earned Cs or worse, including twenty that got unsatisfactory marks (i.e., Ds or Fs) in both subjects.” By Fordham’s calculations, schools in those states serve “roughly half the country’s total public school enrollment.” (Stern et al., 2021, p. 4) The report goes on to suggest that the “distribution roughly mirrors what the Nation’s Report Card (NAEP) has shown about students’ knowledge and understanding: as of 2018, not quite a quarter of eighth graders were proficient in civics, and even fewer ... in U.S. History.” A central argument in the report is that standards “should specify what students should *know* in both subjects, in addition to the essential skills and dispositions that educators should seek to cultivate” (Stern et al., 2021, p. 6).

While questions about the methodology used to prepare the Fordham report merit consideration, an important point for the present paper is that any work in the areas of social studies standards, curriculum, or assessment that hopes to minimize criticisms surrounding state initiatives will be well served to balance attention to what students should *know* (“content”) as well as to their skills and dispositions.

## SECTION 7: RECENT CALLS TO ACTION RELATING TO NAEP

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### ***Civics Secures Democracy Act***

Earlier this year the Civics Secures Democracy Act (CSD) of 2021 was introduced into Congress (HR 1814 and S 879), cosponsored in each chamber by members of both parties. The bills' stated intent is to "protect the health of our constitutional democracy by prioritizing history and civics education in our nation's schools" and by reversing "chronic underinvestment" in civic and history education. Among the CSD Act's most relevant provisions is a call for \$585 million annually over five years for grants to states to support education in American civics and history education. States receiving the funds must agree to participate in the NAEP civics and U.S. history assessments and to the public release of disaggregated NAEP performance data.

The bill also directs NAGB and the U.S. Department of Education to administer NAEP assessments in civics and U.S. history "using a methodology sufficient to provide accurate, disaggregated, statistically significant state level data on student proficiency for every state ... at least once every 2 years, in Grades 4, 8, and 12 in Civics and History" (Healy, n.d., para. 19).

As NAEP considers revising the frameworks and assessments for civics and U.S. history, it will be important to bear in mind the provisions of the CSD Act and the benefits and controversies surrounding the bill. In Stanley Kurtz's *Greatest Education Battle of Our Lifetimes* piece, he alleges that "some have dreams of using NAEP as a way of imposing what amounts to a national curriculum on the states. If NAEP," Kurtz continues, "could be aligned to specific history or civics standards, and administered in such a way as to facilitate state-by-state comparisons ... the test could effectively force a federal curriculum on states and localities."

In response to what are labeled "myths" surrounding the CSD Act, CivXNow leaders emphatically deny any suggestions that the CSD Act mandates, or is part of an agenda to create, a national curriculum.

### ***Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse Report***

Responding to four overlapping challenges confronting the American people in the spring of 2021, including "a public health crisis, an economic recession, continuing racial injustice, and a climate crisis," the National Academy of Education released a report called *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse*. The authors write that its purpose is to "fill a void in conceptualizing the demands of preparing young people to engage in civic reasoning and discourse," viewing the work as "a useful and necessary corollary to the work currently under way in what is traditionally viewed as civics education" (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, pp. 1–2).

Civic reasoning, as defined in the report, "entails how people in a society think through problems that arise in the public domain" (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, p. 10). So, what knowledge, skills, and dispositions are needed to engage in civic reasoning and discourse?

To engage in civic reasoning, one needs to think through a public issue using rigorous inquiry skills and methods to weigh different points of view and examine available evidence. Civic discourse concerns how to communicate with one another around the challenges of public issues in order to enhance both individual and group understanding. It also involves enabling effective decision making aimed at finding consensus, compromise, or in some cases, confronting social injustices through dissent. Finally, engaging in civic discourse should be guided by respect for fundamental human rights. (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, p. 1)

The aim of the report is “to better prepare students to examine and discuss complex civic, political, and social issues by ensuring that the curricula, pedagogy, and learning environments that they experience are informed by the best available evidence and practice” (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, p. 6). As with the C3 Framework and the EAD Roadmap, one should note that the *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse* report reinforces the call for inquiry-oriented curriculum and practices, which lends credence to suggested implications for what and how civics and history might/should be assessed (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, p. 402).

The report also argues that “Especially in the age of social media and political polarization, the need to navigate through information overload and misinformation along with the sheer complexity of the issues highlight the importance of interdisciplinary knowledge . . . ,” which begs consideration by those who are thinking about the merits of a merged NAEP civics and U.S. history assessment (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021).

Notably, the 400-plus page report concludes with an extensive set of recommendations that reflect a synthesis of its eight chapters. Among them are “Recommendations for Practice,” including ones that draw attention to the intellectual skills associated with Civics and History education (see pp. 401–404). “Recommendations for Policy” include the following:

Research infrastructures and incentives should be developed to generate up-to-date data on teaching and learning in the area of civic reasoning and discourse, including (a) conducting a prioritized review and revision of existing content frameworks and background questionnaires for the National Assessment of Educational Progress in Civics and History . . .

The National Assessment Governing Board (NAGB) currently plans to test Civics and History in 2022 and 2025 at Grade 8 using the existing frameworks and assessments. Assessment of Civics and History at Grades 4 and 12 (in addition to Grade 8) is not scheduled until 2029 [now 2030], with reviews of the existing frameworks occurring prior to that administration. NAGB should prioritize a review of the existing content frameworks for civics and history with consideration toward the inclusion of measures on civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement detailed in this report as early as possible. Relevant areas to be addressed include the ability to engage in deliberative discussions in ways that value complexity and differing points of view as well as the ability to examine the reliability of evidence and sources. The assessments should cover these areas while retaining sufficient items to assess trends in other civic-related areas. This review should include an examination of the student and teacher background questionnaires to gather information on opportunities that

students have for acquiring civic reasoning and discourse skills (especially perceptions of classroom and school climates that encourage civic learning and participation). (Lee, White, & Dong, 2021, pp. 407–408)

### ***Calls for a Justice-Oriented Approach to Assessment***

Tragic and highly publicized episodes of racial injustice—including the killings of African Americans George Floyd and Breanna Taylor, the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement, and a surge of anti-Asian racist incidents highlighted by the killing of 84-year-old Vicha Ratanapakdee in San Francisco this past year—have led to what CNN reporter Faith Karimi described as a “national reckoning on race” (Karimi, 2021). The seriousness and proliferation of racial injustices are prompting many in social studies education to place curriculum under the microscope with an eye toward offering students an education that surfaces and foregrounds attention to the broader experiences and contributions of those who for too long have been marginalized, and in doing so, increases engagement and supports the development of positive student identities. At this time, there are widespread efforts throughout the United States to revise K–12 curriculum in ways that make it more culturally relevant, anti-racist, and oriented to social justice.

While calls to transform assessment in similar ways may not be new, the current national environment is resurrecting those calls.

In this context, scholars such as Jennifer Williams and Lorrie Shepard are advocating for what Williams refers to as “justice-oriented approaches to assessment” that do not further marginalize those who have been marginalized and that “leave no room for white supremacist practices.” This can be done, Williams argues, through “culturally sustaining assessments” in which “the cultural identities of BIPOC students are deliberately integrated (not simply valued, nor added as an afterthought) in every planning/development phase of the assessment.”

“Standardized testing,” argues Lorrie Shepard, “has a racist history” that involves the disaggregation of data in ways that are being used to characterize certain groups in negative ways in some part due to the White biases of tests. Though intending to help, Shepard argues, testing frequently perpetuates a deficit narrative that leads to questionable practices and barriers to opportunities such as special education placements, tracking, grade retention, and placement into kindergarten and gifted programs (NCME, 2021).

Such calls are certainly not without controversy. With some branding comparable efforts under the banner of “critical race theory,” there are growing efforts to halt and/or sanction efforts to transform curriculum in ways that are more culturally relevant, anti-racist, and social-justice oriented.

As the work of revising civics and U.S. history frameworks and assessments begins, those charged with this work should take time to reflect on past approaches to assessment development, how they might be improved through justice-oriented approaches, and how this might be done in ways that garner national approval. See Recommendation 4 below.

## Questions to Consider

- Do the processes by which assessments are developed center justice?
- Who is being privileged by an assessment? Who might be harmed and how might that harm be undone?
- Can we leverage new technologies to allow for more inclusive construct representations (e.g., translanguaging)?
- Have ways of knowing beyond those prominent in Western cultures been considered?
- How might those charged with developing frameworks and assessments address racism beyond just having individuals representing marginalized groups serve on bias and sensitivity review panels?



## SECTION 8: RECOMMENDATIONS

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### ***Recommendation 1: NAEP Should Address Alignment Issues Associated With Grade 4 and 8 U.S. History Assessments in Order to Ensure the Validity of Those Measures***

The framework for the NAEP Grade 8 U.S. history assessment states that “Eight periods structure the assessment. A series of questions directly related to the four historical themes establishes the content and interpretive emphasis for each period. The questions set the parameters of U.S. history for the assessment and will guide the development of assessment exercise.” This suggests that students might be assessed on an extensive range of content framed around questions that take up 20-plus pages of the framework and that span from “Beginnings” to “the present.”

The framework also describes the distribution of the exercise pool across historical periods in Grades 4, 8, and 12. Twenty-five percent of items are to be drawn from the period from 1865 to the present for Grade 4, and 30 percent of items are to be drawn from this period for Grade 8.

Information provided by a sample of SEAs for this paper suggests that many SEAs do not begin instruction in U.S. history until Grade 5 or later, and when that instruction occurs, the scope of coverage at the elementary level ends around the Civil War (i.e., in the 1860s). And while most SEAs dedicate Grade 8 instruction to U.S. history, more than half of the SEAs responding to the survey reported that neither Period 7 nor Period 8 is part of the middle school scopes and sequences.

Other factors should be considered. First, “Evidence suggests that social studies receives short shrift in the elementary schools resulting in the undermining of opportunities to learn the subject in meaningful ways” (Fitchett, Heafner, & VanFossen, 2014, p. 7). Secondly, the field has been moving more toward inquiry as well as “depth over breadth” approaches to teaching and learning—both of which require additional instructional time.

The breadth of NAEP time periods and themes when considered against reporting from the field raises questions around feasibility and validity. For Grade 4, the 2010 Assessment and Exercise Specifications for the NAEP civics assessment available on the NAGB website (National Assessment Governing Board, 1996) present 14 pages of specific content covering knowledge, skills, and dispositions for the assessment. For Grade 8, there are 26 pages. Meanwhile, the 2010 Assessment and Exercise Specifications for the NAEP U.S. history assessment (National Assessment Governing Board, 2003) present 27 pages of specific content for Grade 4, and 33 pages of specific content for Grade 8 (although the Grade 8 specifications “include all 4th Grade objectives.” In many states it is common at the elementary level for four core social studies content areas (civics, economics, geography, and history), not just civics and/or history, to be part of the curriculum in every grade. Is it possible for so much content to be covered well within the grades in which assessment occurs—particularly at the elementary level, where social studies has been marginalized? And given what SEAs report about their social studies scopes and sequences, is all of the content even covered prior to the grades when NAEP assessment occurs?

While NAEP has set the grade levels at which the NAEP U.S. history assessments will be administered in 2030, serious consideration should be given to rethinking the distribution of the exercise pools for Grades 4 and 8 in particular so that it spans Periods 1–5 only, thereby ensuring that the frameworks and assessments are better aligned to what is happening in the field.

To reiterate, NAEP should address the alignment issues associated with Grades 4 and 8 U.S. history assessments that are described above to ensure the validity of those measures.

## ***Recommendation 2: Expand on the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions That Might Be Assessed on the NAEP Civics and U.S. History Assessments***

A number of major initiatives in the field of social studies have been launched since the development of the NAEP U.S. history and civics frameworks (e.g., the C3 Framework, SHEG project, and EAD Roadmap). Additionally, there have been recent calls to action embedded in bills and reports, such as the Civics Secures Democracy Act and the *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse* report. With these in mind, those charged with developing a new framework and assessments are encouraged to consider expanding the content specifications for both the civics and U.S. history assessments. Expansions might include measurements of student achievement relating to the following:

**Inquiry:** One of the growing trends in civics and history education gained serious momentum with the publication of the C3 Framework in 2013 and its assertion that “Inquiry is at the heart of social studies.” Since its publication, more states have been pushing for inquiry as the field’s most powerful form of pedagogy. Moreover, some states have begun assessing students’ abilities to implement the four dimensions of the C3’s Inquiry Arc:

- Dimension 1: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries
- Dimension 2: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools
- Dimension 3: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence
- Dimension 4: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

While a number of states have not yet embraced the call for their standards to assess inquiry skills, many have, with at least one now assessing inquiry skills. Those revising NAEP frameworks for civics and U.S. history assessments in 2030 are encouraged to monitor trends relating to inquiry and consider the inclusion of related skills in both frameworks and assessments.

**Common Core History/Social Studies Standards:** Include the Common Core history/social studies standards in the Knowledge, Skills, and Dispositions to be assessed.

The Common Core history/social studies standards direct attention to skills that are receiving considerable attention in history and civics classrooms, in part because they are skills needed for students to engage successfully with the tools/texts of the disciplines and with the stimuli “desired” on NAEP assessments. To a considerable extent, the development

of one's civics and history content knowledge are facilitated by the content embedded in what are or should be appropriately rigorous texts. Moreover, texts are used as resources for formulating conclusions to inquiries, with primary sources being the evidence that supports credible interpretations.

Again, while there is some overlap among the content specifications found in the NAEP civics and U.S. history frameworks and the Common Core history/social studies standards, there also appear to be gaps in the types of skills each aims to measure in determining the meaning of words and phrases in texts, analyzing the relationship between sources on the same topic, and evaluating authors' different points of view on the same topic.

**Civic Reasoning and Discourse:** The National Academy of Education's new *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse* report calls on NAGB to "prioritize a review of the existing content frameworks for Civics and History with consideration toward the inclusion of measures on civic reasoning, discourse, and engagement." Such measures would include attention to students' abilities "to engage in deliberative discussions in ways that value complexity and differing points of view as well as the ability to examine the reliability of evidence and sources." Given the current polarized environment in which Americans on each side of the political spectrum appear increasingly unable to engage civilly or even agree upon the facts, civics education and assessment should prioritize learning targets aimed at fostering civil and evidence-based discussions that build understanding and restore a shared American identity.

The report draws attention to areas of assessments that might probe students' abilities to weigh different points of view, communicate effectively, identify, or describe opportunities for compromise or reaching consensus, and suggest when it might be appropriate to confront social injustices through dissent.

The report also calls for an examination of the student and teacher background questionnaires to gather information on opportunities that students have for acquiring civic reasoning and discourse skills in their schools.

**Information/Civic Online Reasoning:** This white paper shares research concluding that even our most elite university students who are digital natives and who we might reasonably assume are the most technologically skilled demographic group "struggle with nearly every aspect of gathering and evaluating information online." This is a dangerous state of affairs for a nation founded on the principle of popular sovereignty. As more and more states actualize their belief in the importance of teaching information literacy through legislation and standards updates, NAEP should follow suit by signaling and reinforcing the importance of developing a citizenry that is better equipped to consume and evaluate large quantities of information and misinformation efficiently and effectively.

Assessments that probe student knowledge, skills, and dispositions associated with questions such as "Who's behind the information?" "What's the evidence?" and "What do other sources say?" are surely ones meriting consideration in an era increasingly characterized by a public that receives much of its information—with much of that being misinformation—through social media.

**Historical Thinking: Sourcing, Corroboration, Contextualizing:** Due largely to the research and resources offered by Sam Wineburg and the Stanford History Education Group (SHEG), one would be hard pressed to find attentive and knowledgeable American social studies educators who are not incorporating sourcing, corroboration, and contextualization into history education instruction and assessment practices. Teaching students how to think and read like historians narrows the gap between what experts and novices do, equips students with authentic skills that apply beyond the classroom and serve well in civic life, and better prepares them for college-level work. NAEP U.S. history frameworks should call explicitly for measures of students’ dispositions to deploy these skills and their abilities to do so effectively, while also offering the nation’s history educators feedback on their efforts to accomplish these goals.

### ***Recommendation 3: Continue Single-Subject Assessments in Civics and U.S. History***

If the content specifications for the civics and U.S. history frameworks and assessments are to be broadened as recommended in this paper; if testing time is to be kept reasonable; if the goal is to report confidently on student performance on a range of knowledge, skills, and dispositions, the number of items measuring each construct on the assessments will need to be large enough to report out with confidence. So, while there are good reasons for merging assessments that have been discussed earlier, the benefits of single-subject assessments in civics and history appear to outweigh those associated with a merged subject approach.

The EAD Roadmap asserts that it breaks new ground by presenting “one *integrated* [italics added] account of what, why, and ways to teach History and Civics,” and its influence on teaching and learning may grow over time. This hints at a possible trend toward merging civics and history instruction. But the Roadmap’s driving and supporting questions are separated, not merged, into distinct civics and history categories, leading to uncertainty around where the field might be heading. Moreover, the proposed Civics Secures Democracy Act, which may also become influential, directs NAGB and the U.S. Department of Education to administer NAEP assessments in civics and U.S. history.

### ***Recommendation 4: Develop Frameworks and Assessments in Ways That Are More Attentive to Justice-Oriented Equity Issues***

In recent months, there have been efforts within states to revise curricula in ways that draw greater attention to the contributions and experiences of traditionally marginalized groups. While these efforts are not without controversy, it appears likely that they will continue into the near future. And while the focus in states has been largely on curricula, NAEP should give serious thought to aligning its efforts in these areas, particularly with regard to assessments of civics and U.S. history.

Might a more justice-oriented approach to assessment reduce or eliminate bias in ways that expose a partially manufactured achievement gap and help reduce questionable practices and barriers that the current processes and practices produce?

This justice-oriented approach to assessment should inform work at every stage of the framework and item development processes.

## ***Recommendation 5: Report Student Performance at the State Level***

Any effort that is the size and scope of NAEP and that requires considerable resources on several levels deserves justification. Among the most compelling justifications would be that NAEP assessment data are being used to inform adjustments to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, and that the impact of those adjustments can be measured over time to gauge their effectiveness. A number of leaders in the field of social studies are cognizant of recent questions surrounding the degree to which NAEP data are being used. If not, why do it?

Moreover, there are efforts underway to address concerns that NAEP data are underutilized and that this may be factoring into decisions to eliminate assessments in social studies content areas (e.g., economics and geography).

Information gathered for this paper suggests that NAEP data are not being used to the extent that they could and should be. The most common reason that states give for not using NAEP data, and one that merits serious attention, is that reporting is only done at the national level. Lacking state-level data, adjustments to existing curricula, instruction, and assessment based on NAEP performance data are speculative at best. State A might have every good intent and desire to use NAEP data, but would not know if national student performance is more or less related to practices within that state. Any changes might involve adjustments to curricula and/or practices that are actually already effective.

While NAEP is billed candidly as “the Nation’s Report Card” and not a particular state’s, given the absence of a nationally adopted social studies curriculum, the utility of its performance data rests to a great degree on the data it can offer relating to local performance.

NAEP is commended for its decision to report state-level results for the NAEP civics assessment (Grade 8) beginning in 2030 (National Assessment Governing Board, 2019) and is encouraged to offer the same level of reporting for other grades as well as the NAEP U.S. history assessments.

State social studies educators value and desire data to inform their work. Given NAEP’s stellar reputation, there is considerable confidence that local performance data would be welcomed, valued, and utilized widely.

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## APPENDIX I. C3 FRAMEWORK TASK FORCE OF PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

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- American Bar Association
- American Historical Association
- Association of American Geographers
- Campaign for the Civic Mission of the Schools
- Center for Civic Education
- Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago
- Constitutional Rights Foundation USA
- Council on Economic Education
- National Council for Geographic Education
- National Council for History Education
- National Council for the Social Studies
- National Geographic Society
- National History Day
- Street Law, Inc.
- World History Association

# APPENDIX II. TYPES OF ITEMS USED ON STATE CIVICS AND HISTORY ASSESSMENTS BUT NOT ON NAEP CIVICS OR HISTORY ASSESSMENTS

## Sample State Item 1: Stimulus or Text Set Item

Supporting a claim using multiple sources from a text or stimulus set

While you are analyzing the sources, think about the compelling question "What makes a government good for people?"

Introduction Source 1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4 Source 5

These sources provide different perspectives on the creation of a new type of government. Analyze the sources to answer the compelling question "What makes a government good for people?"

Read the question carefully. Then enter your answer in the space provided. Using your knowledge of the U.S. Constitution, evaluate the following claim. Claim: The U.S. Constitution upholds the idea of popular sovereignty. Use evidence from **at least** two sources to support the claim. Explain your answer in **at least** two sentences.

**B I U** [List Icons] [Undo] [Redo] 5000

SOURCE: Kentucky Practice Tests (ePATS), Social Studies Practice Test, Grade 5 (Item 9 of 13). <https://ky.testnav.com/client/index.html>

## Sample State Item 2: Click Chart Item

Use the sources to answer the questions. Select the tabs to move between sources.

Source 1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4

This text is from *Defence of the Constitutions of Government of the United States of America*, written by John Adams in 1787. Adams used this text to explain his ideas about individual rights.

[It has been said] . . . "that the people . . . are the best keepers of their own liberties. . . ."

Almost all confine their benevolence to their families, relations, personal friends, parish, village, city, county, province, and that very few, indeed, extend it *impartially* to the whole community. . . . If a majority are capable of preferring their own private interest . . . to that of the nation collectively, some provision must be made in the constitution, in favor of justice, to compel all to respect the common right [and] the public good. . . .

The majority and their leaders . . . will as certainly oppress the minority, and make . . . laws for their own wealth, power, grandeur, and glory. . . .

Based on Sources 1 and 2, how do the ideas of John Adams and Ronald Reagan on minority rights in the American political system compare? Make a total of **three** selections.

Ideas	John Adams	Ronald Reagan
Favored protection of government authority	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Warned against majority tyranny	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Believed that civil rights secure political freedom	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

SOURCE: Delaware System of Student Assessments, Social Studies Training Test, Grade 7 (Item 7 of 23). <http://delaware.pearsonaccessnext.com/tutorial/ss-item-samplers/>

### Sample State Item 3: Drag and Drop Item

The Industrial Revolution was a time when people began using machines that provided the power they needed to do their work. These photographs show work being done using methods that existed before the Industrial Revolution and methods that were developed during the Industrial Revolution.

Drag each photograph into the box where it belongs.



**Work Before the Industrial Revolution**

**Work After the Industrial Revolution**

SOURCE: Delaware System of Student Assessments, Social Studies Training Test, Grade 4 (Item 14 of 16). <http://delaware.pearsonaccessnext.com/tutorial/ss-item-samplers/>

### Sample State Item 4: Color Enhanced Item

Source 1 | Source 2 | Source 3 | Source 4

Read Sources 1–4 to answer the questions. Use the tabs above to move between sources.

**The Punic Wars**

The Punic Wars were three wars fought from 264 BC to 146 BC between the Roman Republic and the Carthaginian Empire. Although the wars were hard-fought on both sides, Rome won all three and gained territory with the conclusion of each war. After the Punic Wars, the Roman Republic, then the Roman Empire, expanded even more, claiming land on three continents.

**Hannibal's Route, Second Punic War**

Using the sources, determine the effects of the Punic Wars. Select and drag each effect into the table.

Rome became the dominant power throughout the Mediterranean region.

Rome destroyed Carthage.

Rome possessed much of the western Mediterranean.

**Effects of the Punic Wars**

Effect of the First Punic War	Rome took possession of the island of Sicily.
Effect of the Second Punic War	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Effect of the Third Punic War	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>
Long-Term Effect of the Punic Wars	<input style="width: 100%; height: 20px;" type="text"/>

SOURCE: Colorado Department of Education, Colorado Measures of Academic Success, Social Studies Practice Resource, online CPR item set 1, Grade 7 (Item 4 of 15). <https://coassessments.com/practice-resources/soc/>

## Sample State Item 5: Drop Down Item

Use the sources to answer the questions. Select the tabs to move between sources.

Source 1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4 Source 5

This passage about European immigration between 1850 and 1920 is based on historical research.

From 1850 to 1880 most immigrants came from northern and central Europe and then settled in the Midwest and Northeast. Several economic factors had a role in the decision to immigrate. In Europe, the consolidation of land into large farms was occurring, which forced many small family farmers off their land. Some of these people found work in Europe's industrial cities. However, the supply of workers soon outpaced demand. The situation was different in the United States. A shortage of workers in the textile industry enabled many immigrants to find work in cities in the Northeast. Meanwhile, there was plenty of rich farmland in the Midwest, as well as a way to ship crops to northeastern cities via the Erie Canal.

During this period, immigrants to both areas of the United States typically settled near other recent arrivals from their home

Use Sources 1, 4, and 5 to answer this question.

This poster was created in 1919 by the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which provided housing and social services to female immigrants in urban areas across the United States.



Complete the sentence by selecting the correct responses from the drop-down menus.

This poster could **best** corroborate Source  because the poster supports an effort to .

SOURCE: Delaware System of Student Assessments, Social Studies Training Test, Grade 11 (Item 6 of 23).  
<http://delaware.pearsonaccessnext.com/tutorial/ss-item-samplers/>

# APPENDIX III. EXAMPLES OF STATE ASSESSMENT ITEMS THAT ASSESS INQUIRY SKILLS

## Sample State Item 6: Assessing Inquiry

A social studies class is answering the compelling question “Why do people choose to live in a place?” The class is using these supporting questions to investigate the thirteen colonies. Each question is from a different social studies discipline. Move each question into the box that matches its social studies discipline.

**What were some incentives that caused people to move from Europe to America?**

**How did people’s religious rights change when they moved to America?**

**How did the environment influence the types of dwellings that colonists built?**

Civics

Economics

Geography

SOURCE: Kentucky Practice Tests (ePATS), Social Studies Practice Test, Grade 5 (Item 2 of 13). <https://ky.testnav.com/client/index.html>

## Sample State Item 7: Assessing Inquiry

While you are analyzing the sources, think about the compelling question “How are people and places affected by rapid migration?”

Introduction Source 1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4

Source 5

According to data collected by the U.S. Census Bureau, Texas was the fastest-growing state in the United States from 2010 to 2016. About half of its growth was a result of migration to the state, with about 32 percent of migrants arriving from other states and 19 percent arriving from other countries. People are choosing to migrate to Texas for many reasons. Job opportunities are a big pull factor. The cost of living in Texas is lower than it is in other large states, such as California. Relatively low prices for goods, utilities, transportation, and housing make people’s paychecks go a lot further in Texas. Texans pay less in taxes than residents of many other states because Texas has no state income tax. Analyze these sources about Texas in order to investigate the compelling question “How are people and places affected by rapid migration?”

Which supporting question **best** helps answer the compelling question “How are people and places affected by rapid migration?”

- A. How many immigrants have businesses in Austin?
- B. How have shifting settlement patterns changed the Midland-Odessa region?
- C. Which economic and cultural factors are causing people to move to Austin?
- D. What natural resources are located in the Midland-Odessa region?

SOURCE: Kentucky Practice Tests (ePATS), Social Studies Practice Test, Grade 11 (Item 6 of 12). <https://ky.testnav.com/client/index.html>

# APPENDIX IV. EXAMPLE OF A STATE ASSESSMENT ITEM THAT ASSESSES A COMMON CORE ELA HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARD

## Sample State Item 8: Common Core ELA History/Social Studies Item

Use the sources to answer the questions. Select the tabs to move between sources.

Source 1 Source 2 Source 3 Source 4 Source 5  
Source 6

This passage about the Chicano Movement during the 1960s is based on information from a 2005 exhibit at Brown University.

The Chicano Movement (or movimiento) was one of the civil rights movements started by minority groups during the 1960s. The Chicano Movement protested for equal rights for Americans of Mexican descent. Young Mexican Americans had used the word "Chicano" as an insult. However, in the 1960s Mexican Americans began using the word as a symbol of pride in their cultural heritage. The Chicano Movement opposed anyone and any organization that discriminated or condoned discrimination against people with a Mexican heritage.

Historians recognize that the Chicano Movement actually included four related movements:

- a youth-led movement focused on ending discrimination that also participated in protests against the Vietnam War
- a farmworkers' movement, which created a labor union to

Use Source 1 to answer this question.

What is the **most likely** meaning of the word "condoned" as it is used in Source 1?

A. Allowed

B. Heard

C. Prevented

D. Trusted

SOURCE: Delaware System of Student Assessments, Social Studies Training Test, Grade 7 (Item 15 of 23).  
<http://delaware.pearsonaccessnext.com/tutorial/ss-item-samplers/>

# APPENDIX V. SAMPLE SHEG CIVIC ONLINE REASONING ASSESSMENTS

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## Sample Civic Online Reasoning Assessment 1

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Review this article: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George\\_W.\\_Bush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/George_W._Bush)

Form description

How trustworthy do you think this article is? Explain. \*


Long answer text

SOURCE: Stanford History Education Group, Civic Online Reasoning curriculum, *Evaluating Wikipedia*.  
<https://cor.stanford.edu/curriculum/assessments/evaluating-wikipedia/>



## Sample Civic Online Reasoning Assessment 2

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You are researching children's health and come across this website: <http://www.acped.org/>. Please decide if this website is a trustworthy source of information on children's health. You can open a new tab and do an Internet search if you want. Take about 5 minutes to complete this task.

Form description

Is this website a trustworthy source to learn about children's health? \*

Short answer text

Explain your answer, citing evidence from the webpages you used. Be sure to provide the URLs to the webpages you cite. \*

Long answer text

SOURCE: Stanford History Education Group, Civic Online Reasoning curriculum, *Website Reliability*.  
<https://cor.stanford.edu/curriculum/assessments/website-reliability/>

## APPENDIX VI. SAMPLE SHEG HISTORY ASSESSMENT OF THINKING (HAT) ASSESSMENT

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**Directions:** Examine the photograph and answer the questions that follow.

**Source:** The following photograph was taken in Georgia in 1903.



**Title:** “Cabins where slaves were raised for market – The famous Hermitage, Savannah, Georgia”

**Photographed by:** Underwood & Underwood, publishers

**Date:** 1903

**Question 1:** How might the photograph be useful as evidence of the living conditions of slaves?

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**Question 2:** What about this source might make it less useful as evidence of the living conditions of slaves?

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SOURCE: Stanford History Education Group, History Assessments of Thinking, *Photographs of Working Children*.  
<https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-assessments/photographs-working-children>