

MEMORANDUM

Date: April 19, 2023

To: Superintendents, Assistant Superintendents, and Curriculum Directors at Accredited Schools

From: Joseph Graves, Secretary of Education

Re: State Support for Social Studies Standards Implementation

As you are aware, the South Dakota Board of Education Standards approved new Social Studies standards earlier this week. The board had previously approved an extended implementation period of two years, with the standards to be taught for the first time in SY 2025-26.

Understanding that these standards are a significant shift from current Social Studies standards, the Department of Education plans to provide support to school districts throughout the implementation process. That support will be focused in several areas, and it will be **completely voluntary** for districts:

- Professional development in the form of conferences, workshops, South Dakota history road trips (ongoing throughout the two-year period)
- Development of instructional materials and classroom resources for teaching South Dakota history, government, and geography
 - Materials to be housed on a new website that is a repository for resources that are easily accessible to educators and students
- Development of a guide outlining best practices for selecting curriculum and instructional materials aligned to the standards
- Availability of classroom book sets that cover some of the standards at the elementary level
- Collaboration with the Board of Regents to ensure educator preparation alignment

While DOE did begin some early planning of summer 2023 professional development events, our staff could do little until board approval. At this point, we will be moving forward quickly to fill in the details of upcoming learning opportunities. One of these efforts will be to solicit educators to be a part of work groups to help inform the department's support, as outlined above. This would include, at least, work groups on classroom book set selection.

With concerns about the volume of standards, DOE will be looking for ways to help teachers incorporate the standards in other subject areas, primarily in English language arts (ELA). The department had already been working on a statewide literacy initiative

for more than a year. This initiative is based upon the ‘science of reading’ research, which is being adopted by a number of states. It is a solid approach; one we are proud of.

As to the new literacy initiative, the department collaborated with a team of educators to develop a framework for improving reading instruction in our state. It will become a blueprint for the state’s professional development as well. To be clear, South Dakota school districts are free to continue with their ELA curriculum reviews, pause them, or take some third option, whichever they find advisable. The literacy initiative we will be releasing is intended to assist districts who find it helpful or useful. No district will be required to participate. We will be sharing more about the literacy initiative in the weeks ahead.

In closing, the department wants its implementation supports to be relevant, and we look forward to working with school leaders and teachers on that front.