

*A review of the proposed changes to Indiana’s history/social studies standards, by Jeremy A. Stern, Ph.D.*

**Introductory overview:**

- *The key role of core expectations and the key problem with the new proposed standards.*

Indiana’s state history standards have long been regarded as leaders in substantive rigor and meaningful guidance for teachers. In 2003, the Fordham Institute’s review of state US history standards ranked Indiana first in the nation. Fordham’s 2011 study – for which I was the principal author of the state reviews – ranked Indiana among the top tier of states. “Don’t mess with success” is a sound adage... yet Indiana has now decided to alter its hitherto successful approach. The results are a needless step backwards.

Substantive history standards must do more than point to broad “issues” or “themes.” They must, by their very nature, lay out *core substantive content* that any student or educated citizen should know. That was the key for the high-scoring states in Fordham’s 2003 and 2011 reviews – and the key to Indiana’s own success in those rankings.

Many of the historical specifics for which Indiana received high credit in the two Fordham studies were listed as “examples.” In conducting the Fordham reviews, we did not distinguish rigidly between mandatory and optional content, so long as explanatory detail was clearly linked to the standards and provided in a coherent, systematic, and consistent manner (particularly since most states lack any form of student assessment in history, and the concept of “required substance” is therefore vague to begin with). Nevertheless, a state’s emphatic insistence that detail is solely to be included at teachers’ discretion immediately becomes a problem... and Indiana is now moving in that direction. Worse still, it is also undermining the consistency and coherence of the detail it previously provided.

The detail offered in Indiana’s 2007 standards – whether presented as “examples” or in the text of the standards themselves – did a sound job of pointing out the core, common knowledge that informed students and citizens must share. The proposed new setup directly undermines that essential (and already all-too-rare) achievement.

Most specifics have been removed from the new draft revisions (although that removal is often haphazard; it is frequently far from obvious why some content remains in the standards while other content of equal or greater importance does not – see discussion of the specific draft documents below). Instead, there are to be attached (and as yet mainly incomplete) “resource guides,” in which web-links will be offered, offering optional material on aspects of the specific

history related to the broader standards – dependent, of course, on the availability and quality of websites.

In deleting detail from the standards and offering the separate web-links, the state explicitly stresses that whatever material makes it into the resource guides is *not* to be treated as core, basic information essential to the standards. The revised standards declare that “These resources are provided to help you in your work to ensure all students meet the rigorous learning expectations set by the Academic Standards. Use of these resources is optional – teachers should decide which resource will work best in their school for their students.” Yet how can expectations be “rigorous” if the core specifics, without which most of the broad standards are meaningless, are not only explicitly downplayed but unpredictably touched on only through optional outside resources?

In fact, the new structure is not applied consistently to all grades or courses (see, especially, discussion of grade 5 below) – raising further questions about the rationale for deleting examples in the first place. Yet even where examples are still provided, the standards now offer an explicit disclaimer downplaying their significance. The 2007 standards noted that examples were included “*when necessary*” – phrasing that clearly indicated the provided details were key to the meaning of the standards. Now, the documents that still contain examples emphatically declare “Please Note: Examples, when provided, are intended to help illustrate what is meant by the standards. They are only a starting point and are not exclusive. Many additional possibilities exist.” This is far from encouraging. In history, what can be “meant by the standards” other than substantive content, and analytical skills founded upon that content? Students can’t analyze what they don’t know! Examples are “only a starting point”? Indeed, teachers can and must go beyond standards’ core content in constructing their own courses, and broader optional examples can help them do so... but that does not mean basic content can be “optional” or that core, shared, common knowledge may simply be dispensed with at teachers’ individual discretion. And if the examples still presented in the standards are downplayed in this manner, what are teachers to make of the still-more-“optional” possibilities in a separate resource document?

Such strategies make more sense in more abstract strands such as geography and economics, subject areas that explore broad conceptual themes through specific case-studies. There, “examples” are exactly that – a choice to be made among many equally valid options. But history is an entirely separate matter, inseparable from its core factual foundations.

- *Wholly successful resource documents: the example of South Carolina.*

None of this means that the *basic idea* of shifting detail to a supplemental resource document is inherently flawed or unworkable – quite the reverse. Since it is indeed difficult to pack substantive detail – let alone actual explanation – into outline-format standards, a substantively

serious resource document can open up exciting new possibilities. This point has been made dramatically by the superb “support documents” now offered in South Carolina. In South Carolina’s most recent revision, the standards themselves have indeed been stripped of detail... but that is because detail *need not appear* in the broad, overarching standards when those standards mainly serve as section headings for the explanatory support documents (precisely the way the state official in charge of the documents conceives of them). Teachers are still free to approach the material creatively and individually. But the core factual content, inseparable from the “meaning” of the standards, is carefully laid out through sophisticated expository explanation. *Additional* detail and interpretive sophistication is also offered, laying out material teachers *might* include but do not *need* to include in order to achieve the state’s basic expectations – thus giving even further freedom to teachers to tailor their instruction to particular groups of students. With these documents, South Carolina has gone far beyond outline standards, using resource documents to transform the very idea of what standards can be and can achieve. Substance has thereby been immeasurably enhanced, rather than being demoted, isolated and made “optional.”

Resource documents need not go as far as South Carolina’s to provide a meaningful step beyond typical outline standards – beyond even the very good outline standards that California, Massachusetts, the District of Columbia and other jurisdictions, very much including Indiana, have hitherto provided. Even a few sentences of explanatory content, linked to each standard and invoking key names and events in the process, could achieve far more than a bare list of examples ever could – truly unpacking the *meaning* of a given standard, and making it clear that basic factual detail is not “optional” but intrinsic to that meaning.

- *What Indiana’s new “resource guides” appear to do.*

This, unfortunately, is not what the new Indiana “resource guides” appear designed to do. Only one draft document – for 8<sup>th</sup> grade US history – is presently available for review. The examples provided in the 2007 standards – which were, as I have stressed, key to its high Fordham grade – are not consistently transferred to the new guide. Thus, not only are examples downgraded to mere options, to be used or ignored as teachers choose, they are not even consistently preserved. Instead, the top driving factor in selecting resource content seems to be the availability of attractive websites. Such lists of websites can, at least incidentally, point out key people, events and issues linked to a given standard... but they do not do so consistently, and, most importantly, they are explicitly *not* given as “necessary” examples (as the 2007 standards termed them) or part of the state’s core expectations. They are simply optional resources, that teachers may or may not use to find information related to a given period addressed in a given broad standard.

Even setting aside the important issue of options vs. expectations, the proposed new arrangement risks hinging content knowledge on the simple availability of adequate websites on a given topic: indeed, a fair number of headings in the draft document still lack links, highlighting the difficulty of finding adequate sites on all desired topics. The state will also be dependent on websites of inevitably uneven quality, reliability, and longevity, and even on the priorities and knowledge of whoever locates and chooses the resources. While many details mentioned in the 2007 8<sup>th</sup> grade standards are mentioned in the draft resource guide's lists of links, there are worrying gaps. For example, the critical invention of the telegraph – among the examples in 2007 and now dropped – does not get a reference in the resource guide. The equally critical rise of railroads, also missing from the new standards, is only obliquely mentioned in the guide (a journal chosen to illustrate a geography theme happens to bear on the transcontinental railroads).

In a few cases, again looking beyond the demotion of examples to merely optional and external status, the draft resource guide works reasonably smoothly as a replacement for examples deleted from the 2007 standards. For instance, the standard on the Marshall Court receives a list of that court's key cases, each linked to a PBS website with a summary of that case. But even in such an instance, there are problems. In my own experience, even PBS websites are not always entirely accurate. And the list of links includes more cases than any 8<sup>th</sup> grade teacher is ever likely to include in a course. As it stands, the choice of cases is thus left random – if, indeed, a given teacher chooses to use this optional resource-list at all. Shouldn't the most fundamental cases be singled out in the standards, or in a substantive discussion – even a brief one – in the resource guide, so that the most important court decisions remain part of the state's core expectations?

- “Resource guides” that would enhance, rather than weaken, Indiana's standards.

Providing web-based resource links is not, of course, a bad idea or inherently problematic in itself. The problem comes when such purely optional and unavoidably uneven links are given *in place* of expectations for students' core, common factual knowledge. The two, it should be stressed, are not mutually exclusive. Providing optional web-links to information sources would be commendable if it *supplemented* rather than *replacing* core expectations and explanation. Again, web-links by themselves *do not indicate what information is key for all students to know*.

Even more, a resource document that provided some expository, substantive discussion of each standard *followed* by optional supplemental web-links could be a considerable success – going beyond the limits of outline standards, while *also* providing teachers with web resources for further exploration. (It should be noted, however, that a solid bibliography would be a highly desirable complement to web resources: the internet is not, by any means, always the most reliable or comprehensive source of information!)

- *Broader educational trends and issues.*

The broader context of Indiana’s current proposed standards’ revisions suggests a wider shift towards a local-control philosophy – a viewpoint often deleterious to strong common state-wide expectations. A similar pattern has been widely criticized in the state’s proposed ELA standards, which strip specific suggested examples from the CCSS documents in favor of generic description of unanchored skills.

The Fordham Institute’s Kathleen Porter-Magee recently noted of Indiana’s ELA proposals that “in striving to avoid being overly prescriptive, the authors have lost an opportunity to provide useful—and wholly optional—guidance to teachers and curriculum developers.” In the case of history content, the state is still providing some “wholly optional” guidance. But in the case of history, wholly optional guidance is almost as inadequate as *no* guidance would be for ELA. ELA skills can, as Porter-Magee correctly notes, be taught equally well from any of a wide choice of texts (just as geography and economics can invoke many different illustrative examples with equal validity). But core historical knowledge cannot be acquired equally well from any of a wide choice of basic facts. A huge variety of case-studies, exercises and texts exist for teachers and districts to choose from, giving ample room to creatively construct unique classroom experiences. But basic core knowledge remains basic core knowledge – an indispensable foundation for the historical comprehension that all literate citizens should share in common.

- *Changes – or lack of changes – relating to criticisms in the 2011 Fordham report.*

I should note, in passing, criticisms of the 2007 standards raised in the 2011 Fordham review (which were relatively few), and how they are addressed, or not addressed, in the new revisions. Some specific factual errors were noted, and have been corrected (see below). Gaps in specific detail were also noted. Here, the problem has been dramatically compounded by the removal of all but scattered factual details into the optional resource guide... hardly the answer the Fordham review was intended to promote. And, of course, the broadest criticism remains unaddressed: along with a number of other states (including some, such as California, with otherwise high-quality standards), Indiana still sequences US history as a single course across grades 5, 8 and high school. Thus, inevitably, earlier periods are seriously short-changed, studied only when children are less able to understand, absorb or retain sophisticated information. Required review in later grades naturally helps, but the arrangement remains far from ideal.

**Discussion of individual standards documents:** (the draft 8<sup>th</sup> grade resource guide is discussed above, and invoked below as appropriate in relation to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade standards)

**Grade 5, US history (and other strands):**

The introduction to the grade 5 document has been lengthened... but not to add or emphasize substance. Instead, the original introductory paragraph, focused heavily on what students should *know*, has been supplemented with a still-heavier emphasis on “skills” and on customization of content to individual student groups – rather than on the achievement of common core learning among *all* students. The original enjoinder that students acquire skills for “participation in a democratic society” gives way now merely to skills for “participation.” Participation in what? Classroom activities? A worrying shift away from core common substance to students’ individual preferences – whatever they may be – is suggested.

Nonetheless, in contrast to the treatment of US history the document that follows has on the whole been *improved* from 2007, with *more* detail added in many cases and very little deleted... a sharp contrast to the practice in grade 8 and high school.

In the early sections of grade 5 US history, little is changed. In one instance (5.1.7), a point of detail is actually added – a new reference to the three major regions of British colonial settlement. (Though what exactly is gained by dropping Nathaniel Bacon – alone – from 5.1.8 as an example of early colonial conflict, when other specifics are meanwhile being added?)

In the section on the Revolution, the trend is towards *additional* detail. A new standard (5.1.9) adds direct reference to political, religious, and economic ideas behind the American Revolution and adds, as examples, previously absent references to the Stamp, Townshend, and Coercive Acts. An item on foreign aid to the US during the Revolution (5.1.12) adds a reference to Franklin’s negotiations with the French (though the old standard’s clearer reference to the French provision of soldiers and supplies is deleted). Phillis Wheatley is appropriately added as an example of women and minorities involved in the Revolutionary era (5.1.13). Reference to the Articles of Confederation (5.1.14) is expanded with a helpful reference to its “strengths and weaknesses.”

With the new Constitution (5.1.15), there are new references to the “great compromise” and three-fifths compromise. With discussion of formative 1790s politics, a reference to George Washington’s 1789 election has been added. A general reference to “political debate about the role of the federal government” has been replaced with a more useful reference to “beliefs of Thomas Jefferson and Alexander Hamilton about the role of the federal government” (5.1.17).

The pattern continues in the section on chronological thinking, comprehension, analysis, etc., where a reference to “slavery” is properly expanded into “issues regarding the origins of slavery in the colonies” (5.1.20).

(Two mistakes I pointed out in the 2011 Fordham review – the incorrect assignment of John Adams’s election to 1798 and a reference to John Singer Sargent among colonial cultural figures where John Singleton Copley was plainly meant – have both been corrected.)

In the civics thread, in listing key early civic documents, the Mayflower Compact and Fundamental Orders of Connecticut are retained, but the very important Massachusetts Body of Liberties and Pennsylvania Charter of Privileges are dropped (5.2.2). Other sections remain largely the same (including retention of a rather odd item in 5.2.3 associating New England town meetings specifically with “New Hampshire.” New Hampshire’s early origins are complicated, but it was not one of the first stable New England colonies, nor the first setting of such meetings – simply saying “New England” would be preferable, and is perhaps what was originally intended). Geography is likewise little-changed; some material is rearranged but little is substantively altered – including specific references to the impact of geography on various Revolutionary campaigns, which are retained. The economics strand is again much the same.

### **Grade 8, US history (and other strands):**

With grade 8, the pattern from grade 5 is reversed completely. Now, the introduction tells us directly that “examples have been removed,” to be replaced by a “resource guide.” The issues raised by that decision are discussed in the introduction above; the specific changes that result are discussed below.

In the 2007 version, it was not always obvious why some specifics appeared in the standards themselves while others appeared as “examples” – but with all of the specifics presented together, the distinction was not of any great moment. Now, with the “examples” cut off and (sometimes) relocated to the “resource guide,” the inconsistent handling of specifics becomes far more noticeable. Beyond the key question of deleted specifics, changes to the standards themselves are mixed. Some are clearly positive. A 2007 reference to Native Americans and European settlers as “the two cultures” (8.1.1) is wisely dropped: neither ‘side’ in any way approached a single unitary culture.

In some instances, former “examples” are now rolled into the standards themselves. For instance, the “examples” for the development of American constitutionalism are shifted into standard 8.1.6 itself (except direct reference to the state ratifying conventions, which is dropped – apparently, and needlessly, subsumed within broader reference to the federalist vs. anti-federalist debate). Yet if these “examples” are now fundamental to the standard itself, what about others that are now separated off into the resource guide?

Some standards that never had “examples” are also altered, again with mixed results. An item on the establishment of the new government after 1789 (8.1.7) now refers directly to the

Washington administration – although the 2007 item’s helpful use of the term “federal government” is dropped. Standard 8.1.8, discussing the politics of the 1790s, now specifically mentions Jefferson and Hamilton, which the 2007 version did not – but the 2007 version’s important reference to the Federalist and Democratic-Republican parties is dropped. The Democratic-Republicans are still mentioned in 8.1.9, but the Federalists are not named at all (reference to the earlier pro-constitution federalists does not count – the 1790s party is quite distinct from the constitution’s advocates; both Hamilton and Jefferson had been “federalists” in that sense). The Federalists are at least named in the resource guide links. But why are they separated off from core requirements while the Democratic-Republicans are not?

(The appearance of Jacksonian democracy *after* the Compromise of 1850, which I criticized in the 2011 Fordham review, has been corrected by an improved arrangement of standards.)

The Monroe Doctrine, which was *not* just an example but part of the old standard, has been dropped from 8.1.15... why, when the Louisiana purchase and Lewis & Clark expedition are, for instance, named in standard 8.1.12? The nullification crisis and national bank (unmentioned in the old standards) and Jackson’s Indian policies have been added to the new 8.1.16 – and commendably so. But why those and not the Monroe Doctrine? Furthermore, the Monroe Doctrine *does not appear* even in the resource guide, further highlighting the problems raised by this new approach.

The Mexican War is named in the new 8.1.19 – but not the Texas annexation that was key in triggering it, and which did appear as an example in the 2007 standards. Likewise, the Missouri Compromise, Compromise of 1850 and Kansas-Nebraska Act, all examples in the old standard 8.1.16, are now missing completely (they were included, as part of a standard, in an earlier version of the new revision I was first shown). Indeed, there is now *no* direct reference at all to the expanding sectional crisis or to the issue of slavery in the territories, the key wedge issue that sparked the Civil War – and a vital piece of basic historical knowledge. The new 8.1.20 is a positive addition, emphasizing the complex role of immigration before the Civil War. Yet the critical Dred Scott case and 1860 election – examples in the old standard 8.1.20 – now disappear completely – except as “options” in the resource guide.

The next section – Civil War and Reconstruction – suffers particularly badly in the new revision. Here, essentially all specific substance is deleted. Without examples, a standard like 8.1.25 – “Identify the factors and individuals which influenced the outcome of the Civil War and explain the significance of each” – becomes appalling vague. If such a standard became simply a heading for a real discussion of those issues in a resource document (precisely the case in South Carolina), the lack of detail in the standard itself would become irrelevant. But simply offering some links to outside websites discussing some aspects of the period does not amount to guidance, let alone to setting core common expectations.



Again, what are “the three plans for Reconstruction” mentioned in 8.1.26? The resource guide does, at least, explain that this means Lincoln’s, the Congressional Republicans’, and Andrew Johnson’s competing visions... but shouldn’t that have some explanation aside from “optional” outside resources? Why are the 13<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> amendments, listed in the old standard 8.1.22 – in the text of the standard itself, not as examples – now missing entirely? The new standard 8.1.27 refers specifically to Johnson’s impeachment, the Black Codes and the Compromise of 1877. So why are the crucial Reconstruction amendments AWOL? Yes, they appear in the draft resource guide with a link to outside content... but with other specifics listed in the standards, the amendments seem clearly demoted to optional extras, again highlighting the many problems with the “resource guide” approach.

The final part of this section has been heavily trimmed since the 2007 standards. Some of these cuts are wholly appropriate. Discussion of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century immigration, social change and technological innovation do not belong in a course that ends in 1877. Yet the old standards 8.1.25-27 also included important material on the period before 1877. Some parts of this material have been advantageously moved: the old standard 8.1.26, on the role of women and minorities, has been moved to the new and far more chronologically appropriate 8.1.19, merged with immigration... a clear improvement. References to industrialization have been moved to the new 8.1.11 and 8.1.15... another chronological improvement. But the invention of the telegraph and the expansion of railroads, which very much belong in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade course, are now dropped. Neither appears even under economics... and, as noted in the introduction above, they are similarly neglected in the new resource guide.

Under civics, specifics are again heavily cut: not only the systematically-removed examples, but also deletions from the actual standards. Some changes are positive, such as a new direct reference to separation of powers (8.2.2). Others are less so, such as the deletion of specific key documents from 8.2.1, or the removal of comparison between the Constitution and the Articles of Confederation in 8.2.4.

Geography follows the same pattern, but little material with historical bearing is lost by the removal of examples. Economics does drop some useful historical examples (such as the Spanish quest for gold and the French fur trade as examples of early economic motivations, or the cotton gin as an example of technological impact). But unlike “examples” dropped from history, these really are *just* examples... options among many others to illustrate a broad overarching point, rather than basic facts fundamental to the standard’s core meaning. Separation of such examples into a resource guide would make little difference... which only highlights the intrinsic difference between broadly theoretical fields such as geography or economics and a subject such as history, which must be grounded on fundamental core factual content.

If (as in South Carolina) these new standards were the organizing outline for more in-depth coverage in another document, they would be quite solid: most key points are, very broadly, touched upon. But without such a meaningful supplement, the removal of specifics seriously weakens the new document.

### **High school US history:**

Again, “examples” have been dropped in favor of a (still-pending) resource guide – opening all the same problems discussed above in the context of grade 8.

In 1.1, a link to a government website replaces a list of key founding documents. That website (likely, at least, to remain online long-term) certainly offers documents – but it offers a huge list that will likely bewilder teachers. Such a list also sends a clear message that any choice of documents is equally valid, abdicating standards’ proper role in defining common basic knowledge for all students.

In 1.2, as occurred several times in grade 8, *some* 2007 examples are shifted into the standard itself... but not all. While federalism, sectionalism, nationalism and states’ rights, all shifted into the new standard, are certainly worthy of inclusion there, are they more important than, say, expansionism, a 2007 example *not* transferred into the new standard? The same thing happens in 1.4, discussing political crises of the Reconstruction era. Some examples from 2007 are moved into the actual standard, including Johnson’s impeachment, the Black Codes and the compromise of 1877. But why are the Reconstruction amendments – listed among the examples in 2007 – not given similar emphasis? (The same examples, again lacking the amendments, were given in grade eight’s new 8.1.27.)

Standards 2.1-2.6 omit all examples from 2007, leaving them alarmingly vague. Yet in standard 2.8, two of three examples (pieces of anti-trust legislation) from the old 2.5 are moved into the new standard itself. Why are these anti-trust acts still part of the state’s core expectations, while – for instance – the crucial Populist movement (included as an example in the old standards) is not? Indeed, why do these anti-trust acts rate direct reference when the Homestead and Pullman strikes and Haymarket riot, all of which appeared as examples in 2007 and are intimately linked to those acts’ context, are dropped? The inclusion of the Plessy v Fergusson case in 2.9 is, of course, entirely appropriate... but it again highlights why other key events are *not* included.

Shouldn’t the Spanish-American War (included as an example in 2007) appear in standard 3.1 on America’s transformation into a world power? Even specifics that appeared in the old standards themselves – not as examples – are sometimes edited out. 2007’s 3.2 specifically mentioned the Roosevelt Corollary... now it is seemingly subsumed into the vague new 3.1. The new 3.4 retains the list of Supreme Court cases from the old 3.9; the new 3.5 shifts several examples of

reformist individuals and organizations from the old 3.6's examples... yet why those here, and not the Spanish-American War in 3.1? If specifics are advantageous here, why not elsewhere? It makes sense that Progressivism is now discussed before WWI, rather than after as in 2007. But why are key SCOTUS decisions of the period included in 3.4, while the vitally important Progressive constitutional amendments aren't included in 3.2 (they were examples in the old 3.8)? The new 3.8 includes the 2007 version's reference to the Versailles treaty, but drops reference to the League of Nations... even though it *does* ask why the treaty was never ratified by the US, a question which makes no sense without the League.

Presidents Harding, Coolidge and Hoover are shifted from examples in the old 4.1 to the text of the new 4.1, but references to the Jazz Age and Harlem Renaissance vanish from 4.2. Some specifics are placed in the new 4.3 (including the Red Scare, which – as I noted in the 2011 Fordham review – should be placed under Wilson... the 1919 Palmer raids, similarly misplaced in 2007, are no longer named at all). But key issues such as the Klan, the Scopes trial, and immigration restrictions are dropped. Key events and consequences of the Depression vanish between the old 4.4 and the new 4.5. Even direct reference to the 1929 market crash – in the actual standard of the old 4.4 – now goes unmentioned.

The same pattern continues in the same erratic manner in the coverage of the subsequent eras. Key Axis and allied leaders (except, oddly, for Churchill) are, for instance, named in 5.2, expanding 2007's reference to FDR and Hitler alone (though they were all, including Churchill, listed as examples in the old 5.3). Yet at the same time, all specific causes for and events of the war are deleted from 5.3 and 5.4. Even some changes which are inherently positive are blunted by the unnecessary loss of specifics. The old 5.5 discussed only the Japanese internment, while the new 5.6 appropriately broadens the focus to include African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics and women. But the specific reference to the SCOTUS cases in the old 5.5 disappears. The new 5.7 usefully introduces discussion of the central organization of the US war economy, absent in the 2007 standards. Yet if teachers are told, as in the new 5.8, to discuss "the impact of World War II on American culture," surely some of the basic examples from 2007 – workforce changes, rationing, mobilization of resources – should be invoked?

Just four brief and very general standards cover the postwar period: *Brown v. Board* at least survives as part of the new 6.3, but the section otherwise drops 2007's references to Rosa Parks, the Montgomery bus boycott, the Little Rock crisis, suburbanization, the baby boom and more – surely not mere "optional examples," but core and defining features of the era.

Section 7 is longer than 6, but without examples the standards are too-often vague and unanchored (for instance, 7.7: "Identify areas of social tension from this time period and explain how social attitudes shifted as a result"). The new 7.2 appropriately looks beyond Martin Luther King Jr. (the sole focus of the old 7.2) to contrast him with Malcom X and the Black Panthers.

But the new 7.1 drops SNCC, Medgar Evers, Birmingham, Selma and the specific issues they raise. 7.3 no longer mentions even the Civil Rights Act or Great Society, merely referring to unspecified federal and judicial action to improve Americans' lives. 7.8 mentions relations with the Soviets, but drops reference to the Cuban Missile Crisis, Berlin, and more – which were *included in the standard itself* in 2007. And why, given such vast deletions, do Watergate and US v Nixon rank inclusion in the new 7.11? (I might add that détente and Nixon's opening of China are not specifically addressed in *either* version – though the new version does mention China, along with Africa and the Middle East, in a general item on foreign policy.)

The same pattern of erratic inclusion continues in section 8. The new 8.2 includes NASA programs, DNA identification, the internet and climate change; 8.4 includes supply-side and Reaganomics. Yet the end of the Cold War is mentioned without referring to the fall of the Berlin Wall or breakup of the Soviet Union (also missing in 2007, incidentally). The first Gulf War (which *was* mentioned in 2007) is now missing. And so forth.

In section 9, “historical thinking,” the fundamental need is different. There, as in economics or geography, examples really are exactly that: case studies to illustrate a broad conceptual point. Since any of many cases might be used, removal of specifics is far less of an issue... especially if a resource guide adds links that examine particular case studies as examples. But again, such practices do *not* work for history itself, where the specifics are irreducibly part of the basic concepts.

### **High school US government:**

The 2007 version of this document was not rich with examples to begin with, so the changes are less dramatic. Like the grade 5 document, this document opens with the problematic head-note indicating that examples, when included, are not to be taken as constraints (let alone as core expectations). Yet, apart from a few specifics mentioned in the standards themselves (mostly court cases, and mostly transferred from the 2007 standards), all the 2007 examples seem to have been dropped. Despite the headnote, there aren't any examples to use or to ignore!

The lists of key documents in the old 2.2 and 2.3, running from Magna Carta up to MLK Jr.'s Letter from a Birmingham Jail, are now deleted from the new 2.4 and 2.6. The original lists were rather arbitrary... clearly always meant simply as possible examples. But some reference to the most basic texts – the Magna Carta, Mayflower Compact, English Bill of Rights, etc. – seems called for. (The US Constitution and Bill of Rights, included by name in the old 2.1, still are in the new 2.1 – and appropriately so.)

Still, this is an outline for a “conceptual” course, not a history outline; examples are therefore less essential. By and large, since examples were already limited in 2007, the revisions are

relatively modest. Nonetheless, with all lists of examples cut, the arbitrary specifics that remain in the standards themselves sometimes seem rather oddly chosen. It is reasonable to include the election of Benjamin Harrison, Indiana's only president to date, in the state's history standards. But in US government (standard 3.14)? Does his election illustrate a fundamental point of governmental theory, while, say, the Magna Carta does not? Possible use of Harrison as a case-study seems to be precisely the sort of instance which *should* be left to teachers' choice – an option, rather than a fundamental standard. An item focusing on, for instance, the history of Indiana's own constitution would seem more pertinent to the fundamentals of a government course (the *provisions* of the Indiana constitution are already referred to in section 3, but not its origins and adoption.)

The supreme court cases included in 3.19 and 3.20 again seem rather random (except *Marbury v Madison*, unquestionably a fundamental case). And why is the Terri Schiavo case singled out when so many other core events in US political development are not? In 2007, including the Schiavo case made more sense – the story was fresh in people's minds, and would likely resonate with students. Also, with more examples provided in other 2007 standards, the case stood out less starkly as an object of focus – but now, included in the standard itself, while so many other specifics are excised?

#### **Notes on other documents:**

##### Early grades (especially US coverage):

*Kindergarten:* minor revisions, no change in basic approach.

*Grade 1:* Minor changes on the whole, with no change in basic approach. However, the deletion of grade 1's "Use the library and other information resources to find information that answers questions about history" is somewhat worrying – one hopes library skills are not being abandoned. On the other hand, an item on distinguishing between historical fact and fiction – deleted in an earlier draft revision I was first shown – has been reinstated, a welcome decision.

*Grade 2, on local civics:* Minor changes on the whole – but item 2.1.7, which originally asked students to "write paragraphs or draw illustrations" now reads "write or draw illustrations" – hopefully not a sign that "paragraphs" are considered too much of a challenge.

*Grade 3, on local history:* Again, revisions are mostly minor. The addition of a web-link on local Indian groups to 3.1.1 is an example of *appropriate* augmentation – the resource is supplied *in addition* to, not *in place of*, the standards' own core examples. It's also good to see that in 3.1.6 libraries are still listed (and listed first) among information sources. 3.1.7 (distinguishing historical fact from fiction) is notably improved from 2007 by suggesting actual exercises instead

of abstract examples. (2007 text: “Example: Abraham Lincoln, George Washington, John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) and Harriet Tubman.” New text: “Example: Compare fictional accounts of the exploits of George Washington and John Chapman (Johnny Appleseed) with historical accounts; Compare a piece of historical fiction about Abraham Lincoln or Harriet Tubman with a primary source.”)

*Grade 4, on Indiana history:* Again, in 4.1.2, a web resource on local Indians is *added* to the examples, instead of replacing them. As substantive historical outlining begins to appear for the first time, 2007’s specific examples are helpfully preserved. Historical coverage, including the examples, is largely unchanged from 2007.

*Non-US materials:*

*Grade 6, on Europe and the Americas:* Maintains the same basic approach as the grade 5 standards – substantive detail is maintained and the 2007 examples largely preserved. Some revision has occurred, but no fundamental change. Some revisions are clear improvements. For instance, as key examples of early American civilizations, the substitution of “Inca and Aztec” for “Olmec” makes sense – while the Olmec were a key foundational culture for Mesoamerica, the Inca and Aztec were the main cultures that engaged in European contact, and are the most familiar today. And, unlike in the high school government course, key documents are still directly mentioned, including the Magna Carta and English Bill of Rights.

*Grade 7, on Africa, Asia and Southwest Pacific:* As in grades 5 & 6, the 2007 approach is preserved – examples (despite the same problematic headnote as in grade 5) are still included, and revisions to the 2007 version are relatively modest – although some specifics are dropped without any obvious necessity (for instance, the sub-Saharan cultures of Ghana, Mali, Songhai and the center at Timbuktu, directly mentioned in standard 7.1.5 in 2007, are dropped from the new 7.1.3). Examples of European colonization in the old 7.1.13 are dropped from the new 7.1.11 – again with little obvious reason, whereas the examples of Mid-East conflict in the new 7.1.13 are commendably expanded. Discussion of slavery as a global phenomenon, included in 2007 and preserved in the revision, is commendable and worth noting.

*High school geography and history of the world & high school world geography:* Both courses retain examples, though they are much pared-down since 2007. Still, these courses focus on interdisciplinary concepts, not historical narrative – so the choice of examples and case studies is legitimately far more subjective than in an actual history course, and the reduction of examples is arguably far less of an issue.

*High school economics & high school global economics:* Neither course included examples in 2007, and neither does now... the revisions have had no effect on the general approach of either document.

*High school world history and civilization:* The changes to this course are quite dramatic, and largely beyond the scope of this review. But in brief, there has been a dramatic reworking of the entire course outline. Nine original sections have been reduced to seven, involving substantial rearrangement and some notable compression. Such changes are not inherently unreasonable: the original units laid out more content than could arguably be taught in a single course, probably leaving many classes well short of the present-day at the end of the class-year. Nevertheless, the removal of examples is again a problem. With a huge amount of material packed in, the individual standards are inevitably very broad – and between compression of the standards and removal of examples, there is now, for instance, no longer any reference to so fundamental a figure as Constantine. (Charlemagne, on the other hand, has made it through to the new version) Important African kingdoms, named in 2007, now go unmentioned. The word “communism” only appears in connection with China. The term “fascism” does not appear in *either* the 2007 version or the new revision. (On the other hand, the Magna Carta, which did *not* appear in the 2007 version, is named in the revision.) Thus, while compression and rearrangement of the old standards is understandable, even necessary, added detail could make the overwhelming volume of highly compressed material *more* usable, comprehensible, and grounded... not less.

### **Conclusion:**

Indiana has long been a leader in providing rigorous, substantive content standards for history in its schools. It should not retreat from that worthy educational objective in the name of local control or teacher flexibility: identifying core historical content places no meaningful constraint on teachers or districts, since unlimited choice of focus or subject-matter is not compatible with the study of history itself.

The proposed changes do not destroy Indiana’s standards. The proposed resource guides, however inadequate and problematic they are as replacements for substantive detail, do offer some sense of key specifics. But the result still needlessly weakens documents that previously took a better approach. Were these new proposed standards – with the completed resource guides – to be reviewed for Fordham, they would likely receive an adequate grade. But, given the many problems and issues discussed above, neither would they remain in the top tier Indiana has previously occupied. There is simply no reason to suffer such unforced, self-inflicted damage, when the existing 2007 standards remain preferable to the model now proposed.

If, on the other hand, Indiana wishes to move beyond the constraints of outline-style standards, an ideal model is available in South Carolina’s support documents. Even resource documents far

less comprehensive than South Carolina's could still lay out basic explanation and examples for each standard, immediately superior to any mere list. Web-links (and, ideally, short bibliographies) would provide welcome supplements to such explanatory content, but cannot stand as a substitute.

More substantively rigorous resource guides could transform these revisions from a liability into a strength – but that is simply not the case with the proposed documents and resource guides.