

United States History and the Constitution EOCEP Data Review Report 2017

On November 30, 2017 the South Carolina Department of Education convened a panel of experts to review item data on the United States History and the Constitution End of Course Assessment. The panel looked at items with a high percentage of students answering correctly and items with a low percentage of students answering correctly. The discussions of that panel yielded the following recommendations.

The panel recognizes the hard work of SC educators and offers the following as suggestions for ways to improve student success.

General Recommendations

- Student performance highlights the need for instruction that pays close attention to the support document across all of the standards. Likewise, the intent of each standard and the interrelatedness of all the standards should not be overlooked.
- Instructors need to focus on building student skills while concurrently teaching content. Practice using stimulus materials, especially quote analysis, that will enable students to better summarize and infer.
- Students should be able to utilize graphic organizers to organize their own thinking and thereby stimulate the deeper understanding that comes from integrating background knowledge, making connections, and asking “why?”
- Students need to practice close reading of each question in its entirety, carefully utilizing context clues including time period and vocabulary. For this type of untimed test, students should be attentive to reading more than key words as a test taking strategy.
- Through their own assessments, teachers should encourage students to read the stem and all options thoroughly to determine what the question is asking, including what the directions instruct the student to do. Classroom assessments should also provide practice in determining the main idea, eliminating false statements, and answering multi-select questions. (The stem indicates how many options are required. This item type is excellent to assess relationships between multiple causes and effects.)
- Students should be able to compare historical events and eras. Student understanding should include historical trends and concepts found throughout the standards, which special emphasis on that of cause and effect that includes the complexity of situations and change over time. (see Appendix A of the *South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards*)

Areas of Strength (Continued Focus)

- Students continued to apply knowledge to utilize unfamiliar texts and analyze quotes and remained strong in utilizing information from varied primary sources.
- Students’ performance showed that they had been exposed to critical analysis of concepts and ideas.
- Students were able to make connections between colonial regions and understood and applied the concept of judicial review as related to state nullification. (standard 1)

- Students understood the concepts and ideas in standards 2 and 3, including the applications of the amendments.
- Students performed well with most concepts in standards 5, 6, and 7, especially imperialism and the exercise of civil liberties during both world wars.

Areas of Concern

Standard 1

- Students had difficulty understanding the rights that English citizenship entailed prior to independence.
- Students need practice comparing the foundational documents, especially the Articles of Confederation and the Constitution.

Standard 3

- Students struggled with the strategies of early civil rights leaders.

Standard 4

- Students struggled with the abstract concepts of capitalism.
- Students had difficulty differentiating between different methods of protest and demonstration depicted visually.
- Although the committee determined the test items assessing standard 4 to be “very straightforward,” the committee believes that this standard is “not a teacher favorite” and is viewed by most teachers as “tough.” The committee believes this may affect student performance on items assessing standard 4.

Standard 7

- Students had difficulty with several Cold War terms such as iron curtain, communist bloc, and satellite nations.

Standard 8

- The committee attributed the difficulties exhibited with standard 8 to instructional pacing. Panel members urge teachers to spend more time on the latter and more modern standards.

General Observations from Committee Members

- “Please, please, please read the **entire** question and **all** distractors carefully before answering the question. The exam is checking for deep understandings. Racing through this test is not appropriate and will be detrimental to your score and also your grade in the US History course.”
- “I found the questions to be fair, aligned [to the Standards and the Support Document], and straightforward. They required understanding/ conceptual knowledge and used the Literacy Skills [for Social Studies] in the appendices. (Appendix A and C).”
- “Don’t forget to continue working on the suggestions from last year and the year before too...remember that the tests are different each year.”
- “We are again seeing much of what the committee last year told us.”

- “Continue to use graphs and charts! Our students are doing well using them!”
- “Teachers, consult your support document regularly!”
- “Teachers are encouraged to pay close attention to pacing and spend more time on the latter standards.”