



The Education Trust–Midwest

September 21, 2018

TO: Michigan Department of Education

FROM: The Education Trust-Midwest

CC: Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Sheila Alles
Members of the Michigan State Board of Education

RE: **The Education Trust-Midwest’s Public Comment on May 2018 Draft Michigan K-12 Social Studies Standards**

The Education Trust-Midwest (ETM) is appreciative of the Michigan Department of Education’s (MDE) commitment to rigorous academic standards for all students. We recognize the importance of standards for ensuring equitable access to high-quality instruction and the overarching objective of preparing all Michigan students to succeed in education and life after high school graduation.

We appreciate the MDE’s review of Michigan’s social studies standards as well as the robust public input opportunities afforded throughout this process.

As a civil rights organization, we believe that students and communities are best served through a full education on civil rights, civil liberties, and critical moments in our nation’s history. In being true to the lessons of our shared history, we must include both points of national pride, as well as lessons from the darkest moments in our collective past. Only then can we ensure that our next generation of leaders is well prepared to be thoughtful, conscious, civically-active members of society.

Ensuring a full and complete education on the struggle for civil rights in America requires specificity. Generalizing or using significant moments and forces as single examples has the effect of minimizing systemic, persistent, government-sanctioned segregation, inequality and violation of rights.

Below, please find specific concerns from the final draft standards for your consideration. The Education Trust-Midwest urges the Michigan Department of Education and Board of Education to reconsider these revisions and restore these changes.

U5.3.3: Just as the struggles of groups working for equality under the law should not be generalized, the activities of groups seeking to maintain the status quo and prevent others from accessing full civil rights should not be, as well. Excluding the resistance of *Southern whites* to the role of African Americans during reconstruction - and instead listing only the role of the Ku Klux Klan - minimizes the role of the general public in parts of America seeking to prevent equal rights for African Americans.

6.3.2: Revisions to this standard shift the focus away from the people, groups and critical events in the fight for civil rights and instead focus on the harmful laws and activities that disenfranchised generations of Americans. Both sides of this issue reflect critical moments in our nation's history and both should be included. Specifically, revisions eliminate the following people, groups and events: the Women's Christian Temperance Union, settlement house movement, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, Eugene Debs, W.E.B. DuBois, Upton Sinclair and Ida Tarbell.

By eliminating these significant contributors and events from this standard, they are entirely removed from Michigan's K-12 social studies standards, as they do not appear elsewhere in the standards, including as examples.

8.3.1: By eliminating references to specific governmental actions, events and organizations from the standards, we minimize their significance in the struggle for civil rights. This includes: the *Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955-1956)*, *March on Washington (1963)*, *freedom rides*, *National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)*, and *Nation of Islam*.

8.3.4: The elimination of *American Indians*, *Latinos/as*, *new immigrants*, *people with disabilities and gays and lesbians* has the effect of reducing the focus of this standard on the major accomplishments and setbacks of these specific groups during the 20th century. Similarly, adding to this standard *how the expansion of rights for some groups can be viewed as an infringement of rights and freedoms of others* shifts the focus away from marginalized groups and instead places it on those seeking not to expand civil rights and liberties.

3.4.1-3.4.2: The combining of these two standards has resulted with the elimination of all examples demonstrating the importance of the rule of law and what can happen in its absence. The examples should be included with the revised 3.4.1: *Marbury v. Madison*; *U.S. v. Nixon*; *practices such as submitting bills to legal counsel to ensure congressional compliance with the law*; *Ku Klux Klan attacks*; *police corruption*; *organized crime*; *interfering with the right to vote*; *perjury*.

In addition to these concerns, the Education Trust-Midwest was pleased by key revisions to ensure instruction on important content, and supports the following revisions:

7.1.1: Inclusion of the *NAACP legal strategy to attack segregation* in the 1920s.

7.2.3: Inclusion of *the work of A. Phillip Randolph and the integration of United States Military Forces*.

8.3.1: The Education Trust-Midwest supports the revision to specifically include *Brown v. Board of Education (1954)* and *The Civil Rights Act (1964)* in this standard.

The Education Trust-Midwest appreciates the work of the MDE to develop and implement high academic standards for all students and fully reflect the history of Michigan's diverse student body.

Respectfully Submitted,
The Education Trust-Midwest