



AN ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION OF

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Title: At What Level has Standards-Based Education Reform Initiatives Influenced Oregon High School History Instruction and Classroom Practices?

Abstract approved:

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Rick Orozco

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate Oregon public high school history teacher perspectives concerning standards-based reform initiatives springing from the No Child Left Behind legislation. The central question addressed in this study is: At what level has Standards-Based Education reform initiatives impacted Oregon high school history instruction and classroom practices? Paramount to that investigation are questions concerning curriculum guidance, assessment practices, teacher praxis, and school climate conditions. This research enterprise uses a mixed methods approach which encompasses quantitative and qualitative components. As a descriptive study, a two-phase explanatory approach is achieved utilizing an electronic teacher survey instrument and selective follow-up teacher interviews. The survey instrument was modeled after a three state comprehensive research project implemented by the Rand Corporation entitled *Standard-Based Accountability Under No Child Left Behind (2007)*. To accomplish this research investigation, all of the public high school history teachers in Oregon were solicited to participate in the study. Regional distinctions inclusive of urban, suburban, and rural designations were allocated to evaluate any geographic differences in responses. The

major findings of the study reveal that teachers perceived an alignment of curriculum to state mandated standards in history, consider their textbooks representative of those standards, acknowledge minimal changes in their teaching praxis for the 2008-2009 school year, rarely administer the voluntary state sponsored Social Studies Knowledge and Skill Test or progress tests, receive minimal administrative or district curriculum oversight, find student preparation and absenteeism to be impediments to learning, and have limited professional development activities associated with state standards or history assessment activities. The conclusions derived from the study show that without a mandated assessment the reality of alignment with standards can not definitively be established. Additionally as an exploratory study the groundwork has been established to further evaluate: the adaptation of content standards, the need for a mandated assessment device in the social studies, the isolationism of Oregon classroom teachers, the limited state and district support and oversight for standards, the need to consider what evidence ascertains that student improvement naturally stems from mandated reforms based on state sponsored curriculum and performance standards.

At What Level has Standards-Based Education Reform Initiatives  
Influenced Oregon High School History Instruction and Classroom Practices?

by  
Eric V. Lowe

A DISSERTATION

submitted to  
Oregon State University

in partial fulfillment of  
the requirements for the  
degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Presented May 28, 2010  
Commencement June 2011

Doctor of Philosophy dissertation of Eric V. Lowe  
Presented on May 28, 2010

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I understand that my dissertation will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

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Eric V. Lowe, Author

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author expresses sincere appreciation to Dr. Michael Dalton for his admirable patience and assistance throughout the long dissertation journey. Similarly, the author recognizes the wise council and advice offered by Dr. Gary Nave who lavishly gave personal and professional support at crucial times during the process. Special appreciation goes out to all of the high school history teachers who took of their valuable time to participate in the study. Most importantly, the author acknowledges his thankfulness to his faithful friend and beloved wife Joan for her unending support, encouragement, and participation in this epoch adventure. Lastly, the author recognizes the prominence of God in the whole process, who has endowed me with His gracious mercy and strength without which I would have never been able to achieve this monumental accomplishment.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction to the Study**

#### **Introduction**

In recent years K-12 public education has become a hotly debated topic and has faced a significant examination from multiple corners of the society. Educational commissions, theorists, governors, and even sitting presidents addressed the topic of public education. The central concern stems from the perception that the current educational system is failing in its mission to provide students with a good education. This concern is coupled with a belief that the future success of the nation is directly tied to the educational capability of the country's youth. By way of addressing this serious concern, efforts at reforming education have incited national legislative measures like the current No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002.

Over the past 150 years the curriculum focus of American public education has changed, but the interest in examining what content is taught has not. That is because curriculum issues are still at the center of disputes surrounding public school education. An examination of the history of American public education (Ravitch, 1995) reveals that the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) is not novel in its approach to reforming education, but instead it merely represents the latest expression in a long line of curriculum-centered initiatives. In fact, early efforts at standardizing content to ensure continuity for college-bound students (Ibid) established the model which is still essentially followed today. Over time this curriculum went through an evolutionary process and became more utilitarian. By necessity curricular choices were broadened to address the needs for all students and not just for those bound for college.

The post-WWII period represented a dramatic increase in high school attendance and importance (Pulliam, 1991). The national interest in education was forged during that period in large part as a result of several key historical events. The Russian launching of the Sputnik satellite in 1957 and the Nation at Risk report of 1983 are two landmark examples of events which brought about a national focus on public school education (Ravitch, 1995; Pulliam, 1991). These actions provoked further political interest in public education and grabbed the attention of both the executive and legislative branches of government. Since that time, success in public education has been directly tied to the self-interest of the country.

At the same time, social changes in the society de-emphasized educational elitism and promoted egalitarian, democratized education for all people groups (Ornstein & Levine, 2000). As a result, progressive reforms forged a subsequent interest in vocational education, a broadened spectrum of educational offerings to meet societal needs, and a concern for the inequity of educational offerings for minorities and handicapped students. Legislative and commission initiatives forged new policies that altered the scope of public education. These change agents restructured the expectations and requirements for public education while simultaneously addressing the realities of a shifting society. The net result is that public education has become the bearer of a litany of social, national, and ideological causes. Those causes continue to foster conflicting viewpoints about the central mission of education.

A high school education, while not a recent phenomenon, has become an essential requirement for any student wishing to succeed in the American culture. While students in the past would have been workers on the family farm or helpers in the family business,

or just expected to work to help provide income for the family, they are now required to spend the bulk of the first 18 years of their lives in compulsory education. Whereas a high school diploma was not required in the past to succeed in life, over the last 50 years the high school diploma became a necessity and is considered the minimum benchmark of achievement for students desiring to obtain a living-wage job or pursue a degree in college. These new realities have changed the composition and offering of all K-12 education, but especially the coursework required in high school.

Educational reform efforts have gone through a series of stages and social developments (Pulliam, 1991), but they have essentially returned to the central issues of curriculum requirements and student performance expectations. As noted, the current approaches to educational improvements are not unique, but rather they demonstrate a continuum of interest in curriculum content and course continuity. Similarly, current reform efforts present no new solutions to improving education; they just lend immediacy to the issues surrounding content and performance standards, which maintain their prominence as the central elements in the continuing debate surrounding educational improvement. As a result, secondary curriculum requirements are caught in the web of content restrictions and the reality of an ever-changing world rapidly moving toward global competitiveness. This dilemma sets the stage for the ongoing debate about the nation's educational future while establishing the framework for this research study.

### **The Scope of the Study**

#### **The essential research questions.**

The core research question here being investigated is this: At what level has Standards-Based Education (SBE) reform initiatives influenced Oregon high school

history instruction and classroom practices? By soliciting teachers' perceptions it should be possible to discover the influence of NCLB reform efforts. The following list of subordinate questions which delineate the scope and set the parameters of the study, augment the central question:

*1. Curriculum Guidance: To what degree are Oregon history teachers familiar with Oregon social studies standards in history? To what degree have they aligned their curriculum to these standards, and do they use them for curriculum guidance? At what level do textbooks reflect the state's standards?*

*2. Teacher Practices: In what tangible ways have Oregon high school teacher practices changed as a result of the implementation of state standards in history?*

*3. Assessment Activities: To what extent are Oregon history teachers informed about the state's Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test, and do they require regular history progress tests?*

*4. Climate Conditions: To what degree has teacher morale changed and what, if any, school climate conditions exist that may hinder or prevent students from achieving high performance levels?*

Each of the previous questions offers an in-depth look at the overarching idea of whether SBE initiatives, in the form of NCLB mandates, are influencing teacher perceptions and instructional practices in Oregon's high school history classrooms. The initial broad-based question, labeled *curriculum guidance*, seeks to ascertain whether the standards promoted by NCLB/SBE initiatives are determining curricular decisions, and are guiding as well as supporting instruction. The second question, addressing teacher practices,



investigates the level of influence being exerted over emphasis and time allotments as a result of SBE requirements. The third question inquires about assessment realities, addressing the proclivity toward assessments which are aligned with SBE evaluations. Finally, the fourth question looks for impediments and cultural-climate issues which may hamper or restrict SBE implementations as defined by the NCLB legislation.

### **Significance of the Study**

I based this study on the premise that standards-based educational efforts, under the guise of NCLB legislation, are influencing educational instruction. Proponents of this reform argue that a standardized content approach to subject curriculum will enhance student performance and level the playing field for disadvantaged students. The net significance of these efforts is the nationalization of American education. Because the issue of standards-base education has such wide-ranging consequences, this research project investigates the merits of such enterprises and adds to the body of knowledge by surveying Oregon history teachers to determine their level of compliance, their views of the implications of SBE for instructional practices, and their perceptions of the current SBE reform efforts pertinent to public high school instruction.

From a contextual perspective, SBE reforms such as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) 2002 legislation attempt to mandate curriculum standards with the goal of raising the level of student achievement and improving the quality of education for all students. Cunningham (2005) emphasizes the point when he says, “The belief of the public, legislatures, and governors, as well as the rationale behind the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) suggest that the most important purpose of education is increased student academic achievement” (p. 123). SBE requirements are traditionally conjoined

with assessment instruments often referred to as “high-stakes” tests (Cizek, 2005). Since most states, including Oregon, have instituted discipline-specific standards as a means to evaluate compliance with federally mandated educational requirements, this dissertation addresses the implications of content-based educational reform (Ibid). Augmenting other studies, I focus on social studies instructional practices with an emphasis on high school history courses. By investigating this particular discipline, I seek to explore the impact of reform on history content standards.

Clearly there are multiple justifications for pursuing this research project. Not the least are the pervasiveness and potentially all-encompassing nature of the parameters that SBE reforms place upon instruction. These realities alone warrant further investigation of this topic. Nonetheless, a host of issues surface in the discussion, ranging from the logistics of implementation to concerns associated with standardized tests, local and national oversight, the parameters of course requirements, time allotments, teacher morale, and problems of authentic assessment. Furthermore, this topic is plagued with differing views, and it engenders conflict among those in the educational community. Vested parties include teacher practitioners, principals, superintendents, educational theorists, as well as state departments of education, legislators, and the executive branch of the federal government. Since teacher practices are typically defined by content requirements, especially in educational circles stressing a subject-centered curricular approach (Ornstein & Levine), the implications for teaching processes also warrant a close evaluation. In a general sense, the widespread interest in the issue demonstrates its pertinence while offering the rationale for further research.

The results of this research are valuable to a range of individuals and organizations that maintain an interest in the influence and implementation of standards in high school history classrooms. While the classroom teacher can glean valuable insight, especially in the historical development of the reform efforts in American education, the major beneficiaries of this study appear to be education authorities. The information obtained from this study offers to the target audience, which includes heads of history departments, district and site administrators, the Oregon Department of Education, and professional history organizations, insight regarding the perceptions of high school history teachers across the state of Oregon. Department heads will get a grasp of the level of latitude in content and instructional approach assumed by classroom teachers. They will also find information that will help them consider to what degree standards are and should be emphasized in their departments. Administrators will gain a greater understanding of teacher perspectives concerning the support and oversight given to the implementation of standards. This study suggests a number of particular avenues through which administrative support and oversight can be exercised. At the state level, this research will provide the Oregon Department of Education with a view of the breadth of influence that standards in history are having statewide. The views of teachers concerning mandated assessments will also afford state-level decision makers insight into the amount of resistance and support that can be expected from teachers regarding the implementation of those assessments. Moreover, professional organizations like the Oregon Council for the Social Studies and its parent organization, which has been active in creating and lobbying for reforms, will find here useful information on teachers' views of content alignment and mandated assessments. Finally, the perceptions that teachers

harbor concerning the differences between state standards and AP history requirements will raise additional questions and possibly lead to further research.

The overall scope of this study is determined by several factors. They include the significance of the topic, the implications of SBE reforms, the level of conflict aroused by the topic, the limited scope of subjects included in previous NCLB research, and the regional benefits of a localized study. The theoretical and practical implications of this study stem from the ideological foundations of the SBE movement itself and the impact upon teacher practices respectively. Notably, the SBE reforms have at their core the idea that every student needs to learn a specified subject content (Coppola, 2008). SBE initiatives include a number of assumptions regarding what students should know, how student improvement is achieved, the role of national and local entities, and which stakeholders are in the best position to determine what should be taught in the classroom (Ross, 2006).

By focusing on high school history, I will evaluate an undervalued core academic discipline (Ross, 2006), heretofore seldom addressed. This study intentionally investigates to determine what, if any, alterations are taking place in history instruction as a result of the initiative of SBE reform efforts prompted by NCLB legislation. The social studies, including history, rely heavily on distinct curriculum content and involve specific aspects of critical analysis; they lend themselves well to the push for standards-based reform efforts. Additionally, they typify current ideological conflicts regarding what should be taught within the discipline (Ross, 2006). Also, since up to this point standardized tests, normally coupled to SBE efforts to measure effectiveness, have not been mandated for social studies in states like Oregon, it is apparent that ground-breaking

research in this realm will construct a framework from which future exploration will benefit.

### **Purpose of and Rationale for the Study**

This study is important for a number of reasons. Even a brief look at the subject reveals a need for a closer evaluation of facts and potential concerns. To begin with, SBE reform efforts spawned by NCLB are pervasive and have widespread implications. Current SBE efforts have precipitated a look at reform efforts in general, calling into question the necessity of reform and the prudence of national oversight (Ross, 2006). Moreover, the wholesale implementation of NCLB across the United States both garners interest and encourages a critical evaluation of SBE objectives and methodology. The topic of standardized tests, systemic to accountability systems, similarly has been hotly debated for years with no resolution, and yet the present reform efforts rely heavily upon such instruments to determine compliance. The polarizing nature of high-stakes testing at best provokes apprehension and at worst raises the level of concern regarding validity. Cizek (2006) defines high-stakes testing as those “tests to which positive or negative consequences are attached” (pg. 25). Finally, such reform efforts directly affect teachers and instructional practices. Therefore, the broad effect of stringent oversight and highly defined course parameters requires a look at both positive and negative repercussions.

The realization that NCLB reforms are still in the process of formulating and that it is an ongoing development encourages continued evaluation of its influence and objectives. The more we know about how NCLB is influencing teacher practices, the better we can assess it. This state study extends the notable work already conducted at a national level as represented by the Rand and CEP studies (Rand, 2007; CEP, 2004).

This study adds to that research by evaluating the impact on high school social studies instruction.

There are several persuasive justifications for this study. Each offers a need to look more closely into the particulars of SBE reforms. The following points represent a synthesis constructed by the researcher and briefly encapsulate the justification for further investigation:

1. NCLB initiatives guide instructional requirements and inevitably affect teaching.
2. The basic assumptions associated with SBE reforms should be scrutinized to determine their validity.
3. Critics, theorists, and educational practitioners have voiced multiple concerns regarding the SBE method of educational reform.
4. The issue of standardized tests has polarized proponents and opponents who respectively cite concerns or tout the benefits of high-stakes testing.
5. The reform efforts have not addressed social studies as a core subject in the same fashion as they have other core subjects.

Clearly as a result of national NCLB legislation, standards-based initiatives are guiding current educational curricular decisions (Ross, 2006). In response to this legislation, states have developed their own versions of content and performance standards, often coupling them with mandated tests (Rand, 2007; CEP, 2004). Content standards are establishing curriculum frameworks and determining overall coursework

requirements. This reality encourages a continued vigilance to ensure that the constrictions imposed on the curriculum are not detrimental to the overall scope of student learning.

Critical to the discussion of SBE reforms are the assumptions upon which the reform is based. The central premise of SBE is that content standards and assessments offer all students the tools for academic success. Mathison, et al. (2006) offer a summary of the core presuppositions associated with SBE reforms.

1. Students do not know enough.
2. Curriculum standards and assessments will lead to higher achievement.
3. National and State standards are necessary to ensure U.S. competitiveness in world markets.
4. Federal guidance and local control can coexist.
5. Centralized accountability and bottom-up initiatives and creativity are coherent aims.
6. Standardization will promote equal educational opportunity.
7. "Experts" are best positioned to determine what ought to be taught and how in schools.

(Mathison, et al., p. 101)

Critics, theorists, and educational practitioners have questioned sharply the legitimacy of these presuppositions (Meier & Wood, 2004). Opponents of the NCLB legislation cite multiple concerns, especially regarding the testing component often used as a gauge to determine standard curriculum compliance (Berliner & Nichols, 2007). Critics like Linda Darling-Hammond (2004), who endorses the overall objectives of

education reform, find several issues of concern like inequity issues and testing concerns (Meier & Woods, 2004). Educational researchers such as Michael Linn (2005) and Lorrie Shepard (2000) call into question the application of such tests. For example, performance equity issues and content-testing incongruence surface, such as ambiguous expectation or faulty alignment between the standards and assessments (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004) as well as discrepancies between differing state standards (Linn, 2005). Detractors of standardization and standardized testing are also concerned that over the long run embracing standards will result in the widening of academic inequities, exacerbating the student achievement gap (McNeil, 2000). Educational analyses like those formulated by Yong Zhao (2009) offer other concerns. He believes that the United States will become less globally competitive with the movement toward national standards. He thinks that a diverse curriculum approach to education represents both the hallmark of American competitiveness and the premier element of U.S. international success.

Critics also question whether accountability measures accomplish their intended objectives. Often, they argue, the net result of accountability systems is the refocusing of content and instructional practices which may or may not benefit student learning. If the intended purpose of NCLB is student improvement (Sirotnik, 2004), then failure to produce positive results defeats the overall goals. Some educational theorists believe that high-stakes tests set the parameters for instructional practices and by inference have the potential to minimize the scope of the learning offered to the students. Joan Herman (2004) of the National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) says, "The [SBE reform] assessments thus become a primary vehicle for communicating what the standards really mean, and provide a strong signal to teachers



and schools about what they should teach and what students should be learning” (p. 142). Attempts at educational reform, specifically systems of accountability, are typically summed up as intentional actions designed to codify content requirements and raise student performances (Carnoy, Elmore, & Siskin, 2003). The possibility of punitive measures associated with reform efforts also cause concerns for teachers who worry that low-performing schools will be penalized regardless of the demographics of their student population. Concerns can be quite elevated. Diane Ravitch (2010) says, “what the federal government is saying is, the lowest-performing schools, regardless of the reasons for their low performance, will fire the principal, close the school, turn the school into a charter school, turn the school over to the state, turn it over to a private management organization. All of these very punitive approaches have no basis in experience” (PBS interview).

In contrast to opponents, proponents tout the benefits derived from SBE. Marshall Smith (1995) states, “While content and performance standards alone cannot reform schools, they can establish a core set of substantial expectations for all students and, therefore, act as a guide to bring rigor and focus to every school and classroom” (p. 11). Buese (2004) says that “a key function of accountability systems is to communicate to teachers expectations of high performance and to counteract presumed habitually deflated expectations of students in the low-performing schools” (p. 123). Other testing proponents — such as the psychometrician Richard Phelps (2005) — defend standardized assessments, arguing that the only problem with them is that they are often misused or misrepresented. Phelps (2005) believes that opponents are confusing the purpose and intention of standardized tests with other overarching educational assessment goals. He avidly denounces the idea that these tests are or should be the major means of evaluating

student performance, and he also highlights the concern that some advocates attribute a greater benefit to standardized tests than they are designed to deliver. This conflict over standards and testing instruments suggests the need for further study.

Finally, the research into SBE reforms does not address all core subjects equally or comprehensively, even though the core subjects are the focus of standards-based reform efforts. Thus far, the reform investigations, as demonstrated by the amount of research directed toward the various core subjects, have focused on math, science, and English (Lauer, Snow, Martin-Glenn, Van Buhler, Stoutemeyer, & Snow-Renner, 2005); in contrast, subjects like the social studies have been approached, but without the fervor given to other subjects. Since little research has been directed toward the social studies, and in particular high school history, it would be timely to expand the investigation of the effects of SBE to those disciplines. The timeliness of this research is demonstrated by the fact that social studies advocacy groups are taking advantage of this present reform environment to ensure compliance and to adapt national standards to the social studies disciplines (see Ross, 2006).

### **Definition of Terms**

An understanding of what is meant by the terms associated with Standards-based Education reform is germane to this research. The following discussion attempts to clarify the meanings of key concepts in this study. Terms like *standards*, *Standards-based Education (SBE)*, *curriculum*, *standardized tests*, *social studies*, and *teacher practices* need to be explained. While the general use of these concepts is typically understood, a clear grasp of the inferences associated with them is necessary.

The term *standards* is typically defined as “official requirements and numerically determined thresholds of acceptable performance” (Kordalewski, 2000, p. 2). Diane Ravitch (1995) offers a more general definition. She says a standard is “something established by authority, custom, or general consent as a model or example” (p. 7). In education, standards are associated with student curriculum requirements. The essential point is that educational standards are a means of determining essential content to be covered and basic performance levels to be obtained (Ravitch, 1995). Allan Glatthorn (1994) states that too often the term *standards* is confused with outcomes. He distinguishes the two this way: The term *standards* refers to a general statement of what is to be learned; in contrast, *outcomes* refers to intended learning during a limited period, such as a year or course. Similarly, a standards-based curriculum is defined as “curricular based content standards as explicated by experts in the field” (Glatthorn, p. 17).

*Standards-Based Education (SBE)* is constructed upon a set of universal content standards intended to ensure strict compliance with curricular goals. This idea is associated with the Essentialist or the Outcome-based movements. The original ideas behind the Essentialist movement were promoted by William Bagley (1874-1946), and they have been more recently espoused by Eric Hirsch (1987), among others. The central platform of the Essentialists is that one needs to know certain essential knowledge to participate effectively in society (Orstein & Levine, 2000; Pulliam, 1991). The manifestations of SBE generally rely upon a set of proposed state standards, or those developed by academic organizations, that outline the objectives teachers use to ensure that coursework meets the standards. Historically, SBE has attempted to define narrowly school curricula in order that a core set of content could be disseminated and assessed

(Hirsch, 1987). For example, the list of proposed curricular requirements for social studies is perpetuated and modeled after those established by the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) and the National Center for History in Schools (Ross, 2006). In 1991, the NCSS published its social studies content standards (Laughlin, 2004), which are often adapted and supported by state boards of education.

The terms *standardized testing* or *assessments* refer to academic tests given to students to evaluate performance and to construct summative data for departments of education and the federal government. While there are several approaches to assessments and accountability (Carnoy, et al., 2003), the term *assessment* generally includes formative and summative evaluations (Ross, 2006) used for diagnostic purposes, performance analysis, and individual or institutional ranking. Typically, when coupled with SBE, these assessment instruments are standardized tests designed to determine student content assimilation and proficiency as well as school and teacher performance (Sirotnik, 2004). Specifically for the use of this dissertation, the emphasis is on benchmark content or performance assessments administered by official educational entities and often referred to as high-stakes tests.

The term *curriculum* has been defined in multiple ways. In a narrow sense it denotes the content of an academic subject; a broader definition includes everything transpiring within a school (Oliva, 1997). For the purpose of this study, the meaning of *curriculum* is confined to content coverage established by state standardized content descriptions. Social studies curriculum refers to the standard body of knowledge within those disciplines that make up the social studies (see the NCSS social studies standards, 1991) with emphasis on historical and geographical content introduced to high school

students. For example, core high school history studies include U.S. history and, additionally, geography, which encompasses the locations and cultures of the world. Other social studies disciplines include civics (often associated with history), economics, and psychology. In this dissertation the focus is on history with occasional limited references to geography.

The term *teacher practices* refers to the emphasis of instruction, the use of assessment instruments, the allocations of time, the teacher/student interaction, and the methodology used for class instruction. In short, teacher practices are defined by typical classroom actions which are associated with primary instructional performances. These practices were defined by the researchers who constructed the Rand (2007) teacher survey. They looked at the range of adjustment to existing practice to determine what, if any, alteration in these practices had taken place.

### **Theoretical Basis for the Research**

An ideological framework establishes the lens through which the researcher evaluates and deciphers the data, so here I will describe the theoretical basis for this study's methodology. To begin with, the clinical confines of a survey instrument limit theoretical considerations by expressly looking at data in a quantitative fashion. The survey is a rigid type of instrument that evaluates responses across a range of lesser to greater importance, limiting philosophical distinctions. Specifically, the questions postulated in this research, which were constructed by the researchers of the Rand Corporation (Rand, 2007), don't allow for drawing implications about a particular theoretical mindset. The methods used in the present study merge multiple theoretical perspectives. Attributes offered by perennialism, essentialism, progressive theory, and

cognitive frameworks all seem valuable and adaptable (Cohen & Atkins, 1999). The nature of historical study itself assumes some perennial constructs and essentialist parameters of content. Dewey's emphasis on student-centered learning, and Piaget and Vygotsky's recognition of teachers as facilitators of student discovery, offer a range of positive educational possibilities (Ornstein & Levine, 2000). While my research does add some subjective elements to the analysis of the study, the data is conveyed in a sterile fashion, paralleling the research report in the Rand Corporation study. It is, however, clear that SBE proponents demonstrate a strict essentialist theoretical inclination (Ibid). Survey and interview participants in this study have voiced concerns about implications associated with the confines of this type of approach, and I also feel somewhat apprehensive about these concerns. Nonetheless, by speculating about the implications of the study, assuming some level of bias, I hope to provide some resolution to the problems or complexities that motivated the study. Other researchers, representing a host of competing educational ideological systems, can tease out further implications of the data results themselves and draw their own inferences.

Inherent in every research study are researcher biases. While attempts to minimize bias are the earmarks of sound research (Wiersma & Jurs, 2005), inevitably the researcher brings some level of bias to the table. In this research I have attempted to limit subjective elements, while recognizing as an experienced classroom teacher that I harbor certain assumptions both about the benefits of codified content and the value of teacher instructional freedom. The following disclosures are meant to be informative and to present to the reader the lens through which this study was formulated and viewed. On a personal note, I began by recognizing the benefits of offering content that is consistent

and universal; standardized content helps to ensure uniformity and maintain a measure of academic equity. However, I also recognize that issuing curriculum requirements does not guarantee either universality or equity. Content particulars represent only one component of the educational enterprise. In a similar vein, while there appears to be some connection between quality instruction and student performance (Lauer, et al., 2005), experience leads me to believe that the attributes of quality instruction are multifaceted and not easily quantified. Pointedly, curriculum requirements offer valuable guidelines for instruction, but they do not replace teacher intuitiveness or innovation. On the other hand, I believe that limited administrative oversight or the absence of required assessments, even at a school or district level, leaves plenty of room for complacency to arise. So as a researcher I favor establishing mandated curriculum guidelines, but I also believe that content by itself does not promote improved student performance. This research project validates my belief that quality teaching, the kind that stimulates student interest and raises student achievement, cannot be fashioned strictly by curriculum selections and assessment instruments.

### **The Issues to be Addressed**

Underlying the discussion regarding the change to SBE reform, or compliance with it, is the assumption that curriculum, assessments, and teacher practices have evolved. The question as to whether standardization has been achieved can only be answered with a multi-pronged evaluation of particulars regarding instructional practices. As previously noted, those practices include general elements like curriculum guidance, teacher practices, assessment activities, and school climate conditions. Of particular interest within these general parameters are curriculum and textbook alignment, teacher

assessment activities, changes in teaching methodologies, teacher morale and school environments, and professional development activities; each of these components is germane to the discussion. From the results of these investigations, the impact of reform efforts can be either affirmed or denied. A more specific look at each area associated with teaching and instruction can lend deeper insight into the questions associated with standards-based compliance. These are the same rudiments used by previous surveys that have investigated whether standards-based reforms have influenced classroom instruction (Rand, 2007; CEP, 2003). While state curriculum and performance standards are the focal point of the discussion surrounding the implementation of NCLB requirements, this study does not directly evaluate or adjudicate the validity of those standards. Educational experts, especially associated with organizations like the National Council of the Social Studies and National Standards for History (Mathison, et al., 2006), have created, vetted, and promoted those standards which states like Oregon have adopted. In contrast, the questions concerning Standards-based Education, which are the focus of this research, hone in on influence being exerted upon teachers and classroom instructional practices.

The following discussion addresses key rudiments in essential areas that need to be investigated to determine the impact of SBE reforms. To begin with, teachers' knowledge of whether a school curriculum is aligned with state standards indicates whether they are aware of the state's subject content requirements and performance standards. Alignment assumes both the knowledge of and the adaptation of specific subject matter. Typically, alignment with standards means that those standards are used as guiding influences when constructing lesson plans. Textbook evaluations are an additional means of determining if course content is aligned with established standards.



Since courses are typically taught according to the framework offered by textbook publishers, and since state departments of education articulate their own lists of content and performance standards, the relationship between the textbook and state standards is crucial to guaranteeing curriculum conformity.

Similarly, assessment practices attest to the degree of seriousness being given to the application of standards, and required content assessments (instruments that probe for standards compliance), provide some level of assurance. The use of assessment devices offers a means of leveraging students and a way of confirming follow-through regarding the implementation of standards (Fuhrman & Elmore, 2004). Districts or schools that adopt assessments coupled to standards evince a high level of motivation (Mintrop, 2004). Such assessments also make it easier to verify whether students are assimilating course content.

Recognizably, teachers who emphasize the content mandated by the standards are embracing the intention of the reforms. However, other important instructional attributes also ensure compliance while demonstrating a sincere interest in improved educational results. An allotment of time and energy to ensure that all students are performing at an acceptable level likewise implies that weight is being given to content-oriented instruction. Changes in delivery methods as a result of the state's accountability system signal adaptations to accommodate those systems. Similarly, teachers who review assessment data to determine which topics need more or less emphasis acknowledge the importance of course content requirements.

Even in model schools with the best of intentions, one can find that school cultures, poor support, and teacher apathy have the potential to derail or enhance

educational improvements. Reform critics and researchers alike consider this a viable concern. Abernathy (2007), who harbors reservations about the success of NCLB legislation, reminds the reader that multiple policy proposals have failed due to the lack of political will, failure to commit sufficient resources, or poor planning. Studies like the Rand (2007) study incorporate these variables in their investigation, by implication elevating them to a high level of importance. The fact that researchers investigate school climate particulars and probe for impediments attests to the level of influence that these elements can bring to bear on educational reform efforts.

Teacher morale also plays a part in the promulgation of Standards-based Education. The willingness to promote standardized content is directly tied to the success of the endeavor. If teachers are enthusiastic about state-mandated curricular standards, then compliance is likely; conversely, if teachers lack enthusiasm, the results will be less satisfying for those promoting SBE reforms.

Teacher in-service training also offers administrators, teacher leadership facilitators, or department heads the opportunity to reinforce and encourage compliance with standards-based reforms. The level of commitment aimed at promoting standards during professional development opportunities speaks directly to the level of importance being afforded to the reforms. Therefore, the amount of time allotted, during professional development opportunities, for the formation and facilitation of course standards further verifies the intensity and legitimacy this topic is given.

### **Rationale for a State-Level Study**

Why investigate social studies and, in particular, Oregon high school history instruction? The rationale for the investigation is found in the nature of the subject itself

and in the limited examination of standards and their impact upon this core subject; at national and state levels the social studies, particularly history, have not been investigated. Although history isn't as easily quantified or evaluated as math or English, it is a core subject and its significance in K-12 education is readily recognized (Ross, 2006). Likewise, social studies as a group of disciplines are poised for future compliance assessment evaluations in states like Oregon and Washington which presently do not require such tests (Oregon Department of Education, Washington Department of Education). As representative of the push for educational reform, history instruction is at the center of a debate regarding the content to be covered, its inherent significance or academic mission, and the ideological framework for historical interpretation (Ross, 2006).

A state-level investigation of high school history instruction would produce results that can be used to shed light upon current educational practices in the state. The picture resulting from the study could also add fuel to the discussion of the influence standards are having at the local level. While the generalizability may be limited, the inferences could be informative for others who choose to readdress this study or undertake similar research projects. Moreover, the attitudes revealed by the study could open a dialog about the benefits and difficulties of coupling assessments with standards. At a local level, assessment perspectives can offer a microcosm of variant views that can bring some level of implication to the national understanding of appraisal instruments. Additionally, a single state research study would serve well as the framework for further studies that could probe more deeply into perceptions and generalizable impacts.

The overarching rationale for the need to conduct a study in the State of Oregon is that there has been no study in the state of high school Standards-based Education and social studies in particular. The general need for the study nationally has been clarified; it is also clear that on a state level history coursework warrants investigation. The portrait resulting from the study could give validity to other discussions concerning the influence that standards are having both locally and statewide, especially as they pertain to high school historical studies.

Correspondingly, the attitudes obtained regarding standardized testing could open a dialog about the benefits and difficulties of coupling assessments to standards. Since Oregon has yet to introduce a mandated standardized assessment test in social studies, this research could lend valuable insight into the current statewide practices of curriculum alignment and the high school history culture. The absence or existence of history performance tests and teachers' views of Advanced Placement tests can similarly offer insights to those interested in considering mandated social science tests. Teacher perceptions of such tests could offer educational theorists and decision makers a greater understanding of apprehensions associated with standardized tests.

A survey of statewide school districts comparing them according to their geographic divisions (as urban clusters and rural schools), could establish multiple variances, if any exist. This distinction parallels the research compiled by the Centers on Educational Policy, which made regional designations in their NCLB study when assessing local districts (CEP, 2004). The results they offered implied some differences based on those geographic considerations.

## **Chapter Summary and Conclusion**

This chapter I have briefly introduced the issues surrounding SBE, standards, and high school history studies. I have also outlined the necessity for the study by demonstrating the relevance of the subject to the contemporary state of educational reform, and have defined the context of the study, including Standards-based Education initiatives, standardized assessment practices, reform efforts encouraging standards alignment, and the historical posture of the social studies. The central question regarding the impact of SBE initiatives on instructional practices speaks clearly to the underlining objectives of education and pointedly addresses the current debate plaguing educational ideology. Further investigation is warranted by the remaining unanswered questions surrounding this discussion, especially as they relate to high school social studies. The subordinate groupings of questions that this research addresses—including curriculum guidance, teacher practices, assessment activities, and climate conditions—outline the extent of the study while setting the groundwork for an appraisal of impact. The implications of these unresolved issues form the basis for further investigation while establishing the scope of the research warranted by this dissertation.

In the following chapter I will explore the existing literature relevant to the discussion, encompassing reform efforts in American education as they pertain to content-driven, Standards-based Education. I will also investigate particulars concerning the historical evolution of U.S. educational reforms connected with curriculum standards and assessment complexities, the social studies as a core disciplines, and Oregon's adaptations of SBE requirements. The discussion will also emphasize the social studies, most prominently history, and will include an examination of the driving force of these

disciplines, notably the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS). To set the parameters for this study, I will look at pertinent research studies of Standards-based Education prompted by NCLB legislation and will further clarify the alleged complexities inherent in current Standards-Based Education reform efforts.

The subsequent chapter will focus on a review of literature relevant to the study. As a descriptive study, chapter three articulates the two-phased methodological approach used in the study that incorporates both qualitative and quantitative research practices. This approach will use a survey instrument followed up with teacher interviews. Chapter four summarizes the data collected from the research instrument and interview processes and will include a synopsis of answers to the Likert-oriented survey questions. It will also present data analysis, utilizing a t-test evaluation, of regional distinctions and early and late responders. Chapter five examines the results of the research findings, comparing them to the Rand Corporation (2007) study while lending interpretive elements to the discussion. Chapter five culminates this project by suggesting additional avenues of research that naturally extend from the findings of this study. The survey instrument, interview questions, and study data charts are respectively found in Appendixes A through C.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **Introduction**

The literature reviewed in this study offers a broad historical perspective of reform efforts in American public education. Germane to the discussion are the particulars of those reform efforts, assessment propensities, social studies (especially high school history) instruction, and the role played by the National Council for the Social Studies. Additionally, this review addresses current research findings regarding NCLB and the adoption of state-mandated standards. I will also explain Oregon's content qualifications and assessment approaches to establish a perspective for the research in this study. These inclusions will offer a context in which to understand the current preoccupation with education and set the ground work for evaluating the influence of content-oriented reform efforts in Oregon high school history education. The literature evaluated in this research project will undoubtedly demonstrate the propensity of American education toward reform efforts based on SBE assumptions and practices.

#### **Approach to the Literature Review and Sources Used**

In reviewing the literature in this chapter, I investigated a range of topics related to educational reform. Basic to my approach is the understanding that reform is an ongoing process which evolves over time. The content of the literature selected for review should naturally flow from an understanding of that evolution. Logically, the appropriate approach to the literature should offer the reader both the historical context and the content particulars germane to the topic. Research studies relevant to the topic should also be explicated.

The literature review begins with an investigation of the development of American education as it relates to standards and to the standardized assessments that are coupled to those standards. Of particular interest are references in the literature to historical developments, researchers, and proponents and opponents of educational reform with an emphasis on education (SBE) reform. This survey addresses equally educational reform efforts and pertinent historical developments, and explicates both the theoretical and pragmatic evaluations of educational standards and assessments. Finally, I discuss national and regional efforts to show the relevance of the issue on a national legislative level and a regional implementation level.

From the outset it is imperative to recognize that the evolution of standards in American education has a significant narrative. Understanding this narrative requires a look at past efforts to develop standardization and content requirements in order to establish a historical context for understanding the present reform efforts. Current efforts to reform public education along the lines of standardized content and performance standards proceed from reform movements during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. During those early days, college requirements determined curriculum decisions for secondary schools, resulting in an emphasis on continuity and accountability. Educational authorities like Diane Ravitch, Robert Marzano, and John Kendall effectively outline the evolution of American education and the prevalence of reform efforts in the American historical record.

An evaluation of educational assessment activities is also warranted because of the close relationship between assessment and the implementation of national and state standards. The coupling of testing with standards also has a long record in American



education (Linn, 2000), therefore meriting a thorough investigation of assessment benefits and concerns. Questions about the reliability, value, and practice of high-stakes testing have provoked a lengthy discussion regarding the goals and uses of such tests. Experts in educational evaluation (e.g., Lorrie Shepard) and assessments (e.g., Robert Linn & Richard Phelps) are included in the literature review because of their extensive knowledge of the subject.

Whereas social studies, and history in particular, are central to the research conducted for this study, this review includes a historical synopsis of the pertinence of social studies as core subjects. The emphasis is placed upon high school history since it is the central subject under consideration in this study, but I also discuss the significant influence of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), as this body has been the authoritative organization at the forefront of promoting social studies and defining content parameters. NCSS historians, including Dale Greenawald, William Wraga, Sherry Field, and Ben Smith are referenced since they effectively articulate the relevance and prevalence of the NCSS as it pertains to developments in the social studies. The NCSS history coincides with, and in some cases appears to parallel, the evolution of American education and its flirtation with content standards while specifically addressing the relevance of standards to the social studies. Social studies researchers like E. Wayne Ross, Sandra Mathison, and their colleagues add qualifying elements to the discussion of social studies and standardization.

Naturally, since this study focuses on Oregon, this review will also look at that state's educational reform requirements as well as a discussion stemming from Oregon's initiation and eventual adoption, during the early nineties, of the Certificate of Initial

Mastery (CIM) and the Certificate of Advanced Master (CAM) requirements. I was able to glean pertinent information from the Oregon Department of Education's actions and its social sciences assessment specialists, such as Leslie Philips. Oregon's experience is valuable in that complexities regarding standards and assessments have arisen in the process of implementing NCLB requirements. More to the point, and indicative of other places in the nation, Oregon has established content and performance standards for social studies, but doesn't currently have a mandatory assessment coupled to those standards. This study also investigates and incorporates regional distinctions in Oregon. The effect of reform efforts on the various geographical areas of the state merits an investigation that compares the suburban regions (urban clusters) with the rural areas to determine whether there are geographical differences in the level of compliance with NCLB federal legislative requirements.

Where possible, I located and evaluated research studies that paralleled the objectives of this dissertation. The Rand Corporation's 2007 initiative study and the Center on Educational Policy national NCLB study were ultimately selected because of their relevance to the issues prevalent in this research. Even though the Rand study predominantly addresses mathematics and science in its three state studies, the questions used in its research give a general understanding of the impact of standards and assessments on instruction and teacher perceptions. Other more universal studies of NCLB, like the Center on Education Policy's (CEP) Year 2 of the No Child Left Behind Act, and subsequent reports, also provide insight into the adoption of national standards as a result of the NCLB legislation. As a general study, the CEP research addresses the adoption and implementation of reform efforts promoted by NCLB across the nation as a

whole. These two studies address compliance, attitudes, concerns, and pitfalls associated with NCLB reform.

### **SBE Reform as Policy**

The context for the present study is established by a basic understanding of the goals, assumptions, and methods historically used by SBE reform efforts. A brief look at SBE as an entity orients the discussion surrounding standards and standardized assessment activities. The literature on the issue highlights the theoretical value of SBE as a method of reform and constructively offers an evaluation of the concerns surrounding SBE. At the heart of SBE reforms, like those instituted by the NCLB initiative, is the desire to improve the education of all students. While the educational objectives are not controversial, the means to achieve those goals are.

The central goal of educational reform, as a movement, is to improve education by forging a unified curriculum in core subjects (Coppola, 2008). It begins from the premise that universal content requirements ensure continuity and establish core coverage within disciplines. Shepard, Hannaway, and Baker (2009) notes that “the intentions of education – to focus greater attention on student learning, to ensure the participation and success of all students, and to provide guidance for educational improvement” (p. 7) are not contentious by nature, but the use of required standards and mandated test instruments is. Nonetheless the proponents argue that the worthiness of SBE is found in its intentions. It is generally understood that the essential assumption of SBE is that “all students are capable of meeting high expectations” (*Education Week* September 21<sup>st</sup> 2004, *Standards*). While the *Education Week* article considers that assumption a radical one, proponents like Hirsch find it plausible (Coppola, 2008). He argues that by articulating

and emphasizing the universality of content requirements, minimum content coverage is established for all students (Coppola, 2008). The result is that all students receive the same knowledge regardless of their ethnicity or social standing (Hirsch 1987; Coppola, 2008). Hirsch postulates that one way to build a consensus of materials to be taught is to align them with tests in grades 5, 8, 12 (Hirsch, 1987). He defends his position by holding up and heralding the British system as an example of an effective educational model.

While effort and energy are spent to ensure the breadth or scope of the content being disseminated, the reality can be less than ideal. The fundamental idea behind the Essentialist's reform efforts, like those promoted by Hirsch, is that the students in U.S. schools need to be taught a definitive body of content which is consistent nationwide (Coppola, 2008). The content standards that are disseminated, which are discipline specific, result in equity and continuity of learning. While standards are typically considered minimal benchmarks, there is the implied assumption that the standards represent the essential core academic offerings. This assumption leads to the implication that all of the nation's children, regardless of ethnicity or social standing, are given an equal education (Hirsch, 1987).

Critics find several faults with the content approach to educational reform. A particular concern arises from SBE's content-oriented approach to education as opposed to the more progressive or teacher preferred student-oriented approaches such as those promoted by John Dewey and others (Ornstein & Levine, 2000). Some critics emphasize that standards are minimal, and essentially aim at the lowest levels of performance (McNeil, 2000). Others raise concerns that these methods stifle rather than improve student performance. Sandra Mathison further summarizes the key elements of resistance

to SBE. She says these elements are formulated along three lines: a technical resistance, a psychological resistance, and a social critique (Mathison, et al., 2006). The technical resistance rises from the suspicion that the test is flawed or incorrectly used. The psychological issue revolves around the use of external motivations and the possibility of lowering performance expectations. The social critique claims that the practice promotes corporate interests while being valueless and anti-democratic.

The afore mentioned critics of standardized instruction and assessments also denounce the practice as confining and ineffectual, especially if the goal is improved academic growth. Linda McNeil (2003) makes the basic argument against standards by declaring that “standardization reduces the quality and quantity of what is taught” in the classroom. She further says,

This immediate negative effect of standardization is the overwhelming finding of a study of schools where the imposition of standardized controls reduces the scope and quality of the course content, diminishing the role of the teachers, and distanced students from active learning. The long-term effects of standardization are even more damaging: over the long term, standardization creates inequities, widening the gap between the quality of education for poor and minority youth and that of more privileged students. (p. 3)

However, the support and momentum for SBE education are unmistakable. The proponents appear to be gaining substantial support, including federal sponsorship. Even though Sandra Mathison believes that the content-based approach is questionable and probably destined to fail (Mathison, et al., 2006), she makes the case forcefully for its tenacity when she says, “There is currently no more powerful force in education and schooling than the Educational reform movement. It is a movement that enjoys both favor and disfavor across the political spectrum, as well as special-interest groups including social classes, ethnicities, and races” (Mathison, et al., 2006). By implication she

acknowledges that the movement represents a forceful effort among educational entities, including groups like the National Council for the Social Studies and state and federal boards of education. The support from these entities gives it resilience. The proponents of a standardized curriculum and assessment practices find adequate support for their view, which maintains that standards improve educational performance (Ravitch, 1995).

The literature, reflecting on a wide range of research studies, demonstrates a correlation between content-based reform efforts and improved student achievement. Specifically in the realm of math and science, this association has been aptly demonstrated. To support that claim the researchers at Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning (McREL) engaged in a synthesis analysis of previously conducted research studies. Their study generated two reports; the first one represents the effort of all of the researchers involved in the study, while the second subsequent report was only offered by two of the original participants—Snow-Renner and Lauer. Both reports draw the same conclusions and highlight the potential benefits of SBE reform efforts.

In the main report, authored by Lauer, et al. (2005), the authors outline the methodology used in the study revealing that they had gathered 621 studies of which 113 were selected to be included in their research analysis. The study engaged a broad perspective of different SBE research study examples employed across multiple academic disciplines. They also reveal that the studies, analyzed by the McREL researchers, were typically quantitative, but in some cases mixed-methods studies were also employed. In brief, Lauer and associates (2005) found that in multiple studies, like those in mathematics, a correlation existed between improvements in student performance and

initiatives. In a lesser number, but still prevalent, these same results were replicated in science-oriented research studies. Even in several language arts studies, student achievement was verified by standardized or state assessment evaluations. The overarching conclusion posited in these reports discloses that SBE initiatives do have the potential to influence student performance and teacher practices. The following findings were extracted by the author or this study from the major study report.

1. SBE reforms can have a positive influence on student achievement.
2. SBE reforms can influence teacher instructional practices.
3. SBE state assessments influence content and pedagogy.
4. At risk students receive less access to reform oriented instruction.
5. Study results depend on how outcomes are measured.
6. The breadth and quality of the research on SBE needs to be improved.

Echoing the sentiments of the major report, Snow-Renner and Lauer (2005) in the subsequent summary highlight several important points about SBE research. In particular they write that in the “examination of the research, we found that policies do influence teaching and student learning in K-12 classrooms. The specific nature of this influence, however depends on how policies are perceived and implemented by teachers” (p. 8). Snow-Renner and Lauer also surmise that curricula and instructional guidelines can have a positive influence on student achievement. They do however caution that research results depend on how the outcomes are measured. In summary, the net result from this synthesis study shows a correlation between standards and student improvement. This, however, has not diminished the opposing voices which continue to issue complaints about the ineptness and confining elements of reforms.

### **Historical Perspectives on Reform and Education in High Schools**

The proof of the popularity of standardization in American education is seen in its historical development, which demonstrates a continuing flirtation with educational standards (Ravitch, 1995). In particular, the historical literature suggests two primary points: (a) the United States has had a longstanding proclivity toward centralized standardization of content, and (b) the literature demonstrates a progressive increase in federal control over what is taught in the nation's schools. Diane Ravitch (1995), E. Wayne Ross (2006), Robert Marzano, John Kendall (1997), John Pulliam (1991) and others articulate the path American education has taken toward universal standardization and standardized assessments.

While it is easy to assume from the current educational rhetoric that standardized content and assessments are modern phenomena, a realistic look at the literature reveals that beginning with the late nineteenth century, American schools have promoted content standards. As an education historian and expert Diane Ravitch (1995) in her seminal works articulates the historical relevance of content standards in the history of American education. While there have been other socially progressive educational developments, which I will later address in this study, standardized content has withstood the test of time as the premier concern. Diane Ravitch (1995), who has written extensively on Education efforts, concludes that the United States has a clear history of interest in regional and national standards. In *National Standards in American Education* she reveals both the reality that standards have been a mainstay in U.S. education, and that setting standards has at times been both decisive and unintentional. She writes, "The fact is that American



education has a long history of standard-setting activity, sometimes overt and purposeful, at other times implicit and haphazard” (Ravitch, 1995, p. 33).

Standards and standardized assessments begins with the actions of college boards in the nineteenth century whose members desired to ensure the competency of college-bound students. Since that time, several distinct milestones have marked the course of educational reform efforts tied to standards and standardized testing as a means of assuring academic development. Beginning with the Committee of Ten (established by the National Education Association) in the late nineteenth century and represented by the modern SAT college entrance exams, American education has supported various forms of standards. As Diane Ravitch (1995) writes, “The current movement is grounded in a long tradition of efforts to establish agreement on what American students should know and be able to do and to measure whether and how well they have learned what was expected of them” ( p. 33).

It is also clearly apparent that there has been considerable federal interest and involvement in education. The literature summarized by Ornstein and Levine (2000) show that the national involvement in education continued throughout the twentieth century and that federal dollars were heavy invested in government efforts to push for educational standards, as the following synopsis demonstrates. Beginning with the 1917 Smith-Hughes Act, which provided money for vocational and home economic instruction, the federal government has financially supported and influenced certain educational elements and developments. Again, during the New Deal era, federal funds were allocated for K-12 education. The post-WWII G.I. bill provided federal support for the returning WWII veterans to go to college. In 1965 President Johnson pushed through the

Elementary and Secondary Education Act which subsidized public school education and promoted equality in education. The 1972 title IX Education Amendment outlawing sex discrimination and the subsequent 1975 Education for All Handicapped Children law further demonstrated the federal government's involvement in the nation's education (Ornstein & Levine 2000). President Jimmy Carter established the federal Department of Education, and subsequent presidents joined a zealous congress in the involvement in K-12 and higher education. The establishment of a cabinet-level position for education and the founding of the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) marked the advancement of federal involvement and the movement toward a national educational agenda. The creation of America 2000, a list of educational goals articulated by the governors and solicited by then President George Bush, established educational goals for the country, even though the legislation would not be passed until 1994, during President Clinton's presidency. The Goals 2000 governors' educational act and the following No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 demonstrate the federal government's increasingly overt interest and oversight in education.

A brief but closer evaluation of legislative acts relevant to content-oriented education and governmental oversight, will establish that the current reform efforts are not an aberration, but rather they are a continuation of past practices. The following historical synopsis supports this claim with a more detailed look at each intervention and legislative act leading up to the current nationalization of education, and offers a clear picture of the oversight and influence that federal agencies have exerted in education.

### **Educational progress and reform in the 1800s.**

In the nineteenth century, the preparation of students for college experienced a form of standardization as college educators argued for rigid educational requirements to promote consistency within the educational system. Both Wayne Ross (2006) and Diane Ravitch (1995) emphasize the early influence educational committees played in the role of establishing content standards as valid instruments for curriculum reform. In 1892, in order to prepare students for higher education, the Committee of Ten was formed. This committee, which included college presidents and the then U.S. Commissioner on Education, studied and recognized the disparity in the curricula being used in the nation's schools, then recommended new standards for high school and standardized college entrance requirements. Several issues faced the Committee of Ten: the lack of content uniformity, the need for vocational offerings, and essential topics germane to college-tracked students. In the following passage, Diane Ravitch (1995) summarizes their educational dilemma.

The Committee of Ten had to wrestle with four difficult issues. The first was how to resolve the antagonism between the classical curriculum and the modern academic subjects such as science, history, and modern foreign languages. The second was how to promote uniformity in preparing students for college. The third was how to respond to demands by some educators to include practical courses such as manual training. The fourth was whether the high schools should offer different curricula for those who were college bound and those who were not. (p. 37)

In addition to the Committee of Ten's parameters, early reform efforts included a number of other committee efforts which addressed the issues of education, and particularly curriculum requirements. The discussions that took place in these committees focused primarily standardization of educational content. With respect to social studies in particular, E. Wayne Ross says, "The roots of the contemporary social studies curriculum

are found in the 1916 report of the NEA Committee on the Social Studies as well as the NEA Committee of Ten (1893) and the AHA Committee of Seven (1899), which proceeded it” (Ross, 2006, p. 24). In summary, Ross makes the point that curriculum development and reform relied on centralization, which is tied to curriculum standardization (Ross, 2006). Therefore, it is not surprising that multiple educational committees addressed concerns and forged reform initiatives. It is evident from these early efforts that standardization was at the forefront of the minds of educators who saw the resolution to their educational concerns wrapped up in the need for content continuity.

### **Educational progress and reform 1901-1945.**

Without question education reform made a significant leap forward during the first half of the twentieth century. The advent and promotion of the Common Schools during the nineteenth century broadened the curriculum to encompass a wider range of subjects for the non-college-bound students. While the curriculum was being broadened, concern over standardization did not abate. Two educational initiatives during this era reflect the degree of concern over educational content and the continued broadening of academic offerings. The Smith-Hughes Act and the *Cardinal Principles of Education*, developed by the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education, promoted federal involvement and the continued establishment of curricular guidelines.

The Smith-Hughes Act involved the federal government in the establishment of a vocational education commission, which oversaw the various state boards of education and mandated them to work in cooperation with the Federal Board of Vocational Education (Patterson, 2009). The commission’s efforts regarding vocational education are well established (Ibid). Federal monies were allocated for vocational training

programs specifically targeting students over the age of 14 and those preparing for college entrance. E. Wayne Ross (2006) says that the Smith-Hughes Act of 1917 “fostered the transformation of American high school from an elite institution into one for the masses by mandating that the states specify training needs, program prescriptions, standards and the means for monitoring progress” (p. 25). While the emphasis was on broadening the curriculum to include vocational training, the resultant effect was to define the curriculum and produce more government involvement in educational decisions.

Similarly, in 1918 the Commission on the Reorganization of Secondary Education (CRSE) established seven *Cardinal Principles for Education*. These principles outlined curriculum objectives and expanded into areas that had social and ethical implications for education. The establishment of these goals was significant in that they stressed the relevance of education in society, thereby linking community concerns with educational goals. The summary of the seven cardinal principles listed below offers a range of educational requirements and demonstrates the level of national influence upon educational curriculum.

1. Health – encourage good health.
2. Command of Fundamental Processes – reading, writing, oral and written expressions, as well as math.
3. Worthy Home Membership – the development of skills crucial to home life.
4. Vocation – a recognition of vocational abilities and their relevance to society.
5. Civic Education – imparting the knowledge of social organizations and civic morality.

6. Worthy Use of Leisure – educational experiences that lend skills to develop student minds, body, spirit, and direct leisure activities.

7. Ethical Character – instilling student responsibility and initiative.

(Scherer, 2009)

It is noteworthy that the commission's concerns expanded beyond essential core subjects to include utilitarian courses like home economics and vocational subjects. To state the obvious, the influence exerted by this commission demonstrates that educational commissions were proposing and directing curricular decisions.

Further standardization of college entrance requirements fostered universal content requirements in high schools. College boards determined what subjects and proficiencies were necessary for incoming students, and their determinations in turn spilled over into the secondary school curriculum standards. Beginning in 1926, the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) found its place as the filtration device used to determine college preparedness. The SAT took some time to leverage its way into being the foremost college entrance instrument; it was not until the U.S. entered World War II that it eclipsed the traditional college entrance essay exam and became entrenched as a means of determining a student's readiness for college. In contrast to the traditional essay exam or oral entrance exam which preceded it, this multiple-choice aptitude test lent itself to becoming the premier predictor of college level ability, and more importantly for this study, resulted in defining the scope of skills and knowledge required of college-bound students. Its influence on secondary school offerings marked a decisive move toward standardizing high school instruction.

Historical influences like the Essentialist movement helped to establish the framework for current content-based reform efforts. John Pulliam (1991) aptly discloses the beginning and framework of Essentialism. This movement, started by William C. Bagley in 1938, promoted a return to essentials, or basic skills, and in 1946 the newly formed Council for Basic Education also encouraged a similar return to the basics (Pulliam, 1991). Essentialism, in opposition to the progressive movement promulgated by John Dewey (Emand & Fraser, 2008), resulted in a resurgence of interest in standardized content, emphasizing core requirements for curriculum offerings. The Essentialist opposed progressive forms of education while promoting, from their perspective, a seemingly sensible way to ensure educational continuity.

According to Ornstein and Levine (2000) the progressive movement in education, which is typically associated with John Dewey and his experimentalism, is really a broader eclectic fusion of a number of methodological and ideological perspectives. The scope of concerns extends from curricular issues to administrative processes and eventually resides in a desire to expand the scope of classroom offerings giving students more choices. Ornstein and Levine forcefully point out that “progressive education arose from a rebellion against traditional schooling” (Ornstein & Levine, 2000, p. 404). *Traditional schooling* is historically grounded in a core curriculum specifically define and rigidly administered. They reference reformers like G. Stanley Hall, Francis Parker, and William H. Kilpatrick, who elevate apprehensions about education that is centered on repetitive routines, memorization, and authoritarian oriented management. Education, according to progressives, should be more student-centered affording students an environment which is not rigid or constrained by stilted curriculum requirements. This

educational philosophy is clearly juxtaposed against SBE, which by its very nature is content oriented and focused on the dispensing of a consistent core of coursework material. However, I believe that those who espouse an SBE mythological perspective, like Hirsch, would not concede that their approach confines teachers or inhibits their ability to use individualistic methods of delivery. Rather the centrality of a core curriculum is paramount to their position and the method of delivery is subordinate to their primary emphasis.

In recent times the age-old historical conflict between these two opposing educational theories has resurfaced in the face of the current educational debate. While modern expressions of the Essentialist movement find their kinship in these earlier movements and ideas, they, unlike their earlier counterparts, have been more encumbered with political connotations. Pulliam (1991) states that the more modern forms of the Essentialist movement are generally more political and less academic in their concerns than are those proposed by William Bagley: “Unfortunately, the current essentialist movement has lost the logical basis provided by Bagley and has become merely a protest against educational change and innovation” (p. 178). Nonetheless, the fundamentals of essentialism still provide a platform upon which to construct educational reforms tied to content standards.

As previously established, reform efforts that advocated standards were prevalent in the nineteenth and early part of the twentieth century, and their influence persisted throughout the rest of the twentieth century becoming more significant in the later decades. The evidence suggests that the centralization and standardization of education was a byproduct of early attempts at reforming education. E. Wayne Ross argues that



centralization established early its dominance over education. He cites the annual report of Henry Barnard, then secretary of the Board of Commissioners of Common Schools in Connecticut (1839), as support that centralized curriculum was on the mind of directors of education (Ross, 2006).

### **Educational progress and reform 1946-1989**

Two significant landmarks during the second half of the twentieth century demonstrate the continued propensity in the United States to associate standards with educational reform efforts. A survey of the literature relevant to this topic demonstrates that the Elementary and Secondary Act of 1965 and the Nation at Risk Report of 1983 were monumental milestones (Marzano & Kendall, 1997; Pulliam, 1991; Mathison, et al., 2006; Ravitch, 1995). Each resulted in a more active national role and higher level of involvement in education. With the advent of the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA) of 1965, the ideal of educational equality took a major step forward; similarly, the Nation at Risk Report brought educational reform to the central stage in the discussion regarding the nation's dedication to education.

In 1965 President Lyndon B. Johnson facilitated the passage of the Elementary and Secondary Educational Act (ESEA). This bill, aimed at bringing equality to education, marked a new level of federal involvement in the process of reform. While it is clear that the federal government's role in education has changed over the years, and especially during the twentieth century, the ESEA set a new precedent in national involvement in education. This bill authorized five areas, or title descriptions, in which the national government would fund and support education. This federal oversight into education marks the beginning of more modern efforts to centralize and standardize

education. The following title descriptions encapsulate the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

1. Title I programs are designed to meet the needs of "educationally deprived" children and school districts with high concentrations of these designated students.
2. Title II allocates money to purchase media and library materials.
3. Title III directs funding to programs designed to support "at risk" students.
4. Title IV supports research on education in colleges and universities.
5. Title V provides funding to individual state departments of education.

The most noteworthy of these title descriptions is Title 1, which offered federal financial support for sponsored programs. These funds are targeted and primarily allocated to schools with high numbers of poor or disadvantaged students. This act revolutionized education by catapulting the federal government into a realm that had been typically controlled by states and local educational jurisdictions. Diane Ravitch (1995) explains the significance of the 1965 legislation:

The federal government has been involved in education since the nineteenth century, when its primary responsibility was collecting statistics. But its role has always been limited, not least because the Tenth Amendment of the Constitution. Since 1965, when Congress passed the Elementary and Secondary School Act, which authorized the federal support for the education of disadvantaged children, the federal role has supported specific activities, including research, aid for disadvantaged and handicapped students, and subsidies for students in higher education. [However] by law the federal government has not been allowed to supervise, control, or direct curriculum. (p. 31)

Analogous to the reform efforts instituted by President Johnson, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) was also launched in the 1960s. Its initial aim was to develop and employ procedures to monitor academic achievement in the

nation, but it also became the keeper of educational statistics. By its nature the NAEP supports and fosters educational conformity. It eventually became the premier educational watchdog of the federal government, and intentionally or unintentionally, a supporter of a standardized curriculum. The establishment of the ESAE and NAEP raised the level of national oversight and federal influence.

The second, and arguably the more politically charged, element of reform resulted from an evaluation of the state of American education in the early 1980s. The Nation at Risk Report crystallized attention on the competency of the nation's educational efforts and heralded concern regarding the poor state of education in America. Described as the grandfather of all reports, the Nation at Risk Report was requested by the Secretary of Education Terrell Bell and prepared by the National Commission on Excellence in Education in 1983. The report highlighted the poor performance of American students while raising the possibility that the academic malaise actually placed the national security in peril. Included in the report's recommendations was a call for more rigorous traditional studies, core standards, and extended hours of instruction. Concerns regarding the dilution of curricular content and poor competency resulted in several recommendations by the commission. In summary, they include the following:

1. High school content should include four years of high school English, three years of math, science, and social studies as well as some limited computer science, and two years of a foreign language.
2. Colleges should raise entrance requirements, resist grade inflation, and utilize standardized tests.
3. Students should spend more time in school learning.

4. Good teachers need to be recruited, trained, and compensated.
5. The federal government has a role to play regarding selective groups of students (like the gifted and talented) and civil rights concerns.

This report sent shockwaves through the government, the educational establishment, and the general population (Ravitch, 1995). Mathison, et al. (2006) emphasizes the concern generated by the Nation at Risk report and tie the distress to multiple elements of the U.S. economic decline. They say, “American Educational performance was linked to the decline in the ‘once unchallenged preeminence [of the United States] in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation’” (p. 99). The report emphatically affirmed the need to raise student learning expectations and requirements (Ross, 2006). After the publication of this report, many other commissions and educational organizations developed (Pulliam, 1991), all with the same objective of improving education by emphasizing content requirements. For example, the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) was formed, and the National Council for the Social Studies came into its current prominence (Ross, 2006). The significance of this report was manifested in its sobering declaration that the country could be at risk, that the nation’s education was a national concern, and that immediate reform actions were essential to ward off further educational disintegration.

Most educational commentators consider the Nation at Risk Report to be the direct impetus for the contemporary standards movement (Marzano & Kendall, 1997). The follow-up flurry of reports and commissions demonstrates the watershed influence of this report. John Pulliam (1991) states, “More than thirty examinations of public education in the United States followed closely on the publication of the ‘A Nation at

Risk.’ Some of these were sponsored by special interest groups; several emerged from the work of commissions and professional organizations, while a few represented individual efforts” (p. 238). The reality that education in America was getting a failing grade and that this failure placed the nation at risk echoed through the halls of Congress and the national psyche. It was noted that the nation had exercised great efficiency regarding the improvement of math and science after the Sputnik affair (Bybee, 1997), but the Nation at Risk Report underscored the continued inadequacies of the American education system and fueled the public’s desire for reform efforts. Wayne Urban and Jennings Wagoner (1996) speak to the essence of the Nation at Risk indictment:

Behind the metaphor of economic competition lay the real phenomena alluded to in the report--declining test scores, increased school dropout rates, poor teacher remuneration and morale, lessened academic requirements for high school graduation, and textbooks that had been ‘dumbed down’ in their level of comprehension. (p. 334)

The net result of the Nation at Risk Report was a new interest in high school curricula and a renewed interest in promoting standards. The cumulative response promoted the idea that the federal government needed to take the helm as an active and aggressive agent to ward off the risk of a failed educational system.

### **Educational progress and reform 1990-2000.**

The interest in national standards intensified in the last decade of the twentieth century. In 1991 Congress established the National Council on Education Standards and Testing (NCEST) which recommended the adoption of national standards and standardized tests (Ford, 1991). A conference made up of the nation’s governors promoted a means to mitigate the country’s educational malaise. They endorsed the enactment of legislation that would promote educational reforms based on content

standards. This gubernatorial effort would take ten years to become enacted into legislative form, but would ultimately set in place an emphasis on national standards and solidify the influence of the national government in matters of educational oversight.

The governors outlined educational goals that would eventually be established and promoted at a federal level. The chairman of the governors' conference was then Governor of Arkansas Bill Clinton. This conference promoted the institution of national standards to improve the nation's education. These far-reaching reform goals were daunting but should not have been unanticipated, especially considering the history of reform in American education. Robert Marzano and John Kendall (1997) upon assessing the significance of the governor's conference articulate the impediments facing the establishing SBE reforms. The concerns included philosophical clashes, resistance from the educational community, and the apprehension over the loss of local educational control. During the 1990s resistance arose as a result of the criticism and complexities of implementing standards. The guarantee of universal student improvement was jeopardized by ideological disagreements and the inherent complexities of implementation. Critics voiced concern about the influence on local school districts that national legislation would impose. Marzano and Kendall (1997), saw these disagreements as the beginning of the end for initiatives. The possible continuation of federal involvement in developing national standards seemed to them be on the wane. Reflecting on that historical development, Marzano and Kendall (1997) comment, "The one bright promise of subject area standards, born from a desire to improve the rigor and effectiveness of American Education, has faded under a wide array of criticism, and the

movement itself has become bogged down under its own weight”(p. 6). Needless to say, the movement did not recede; rather it would become more vigorous.

The governors’ conference (in Charlottesville, Virginia) established multiple educational goals. The attending governors constructed the framework for what was to become the Education 2000 Goals, which included the essentials formulated for the America 2000 project begun by President George Bush Senior. The focus of the goals was more on outcomes than delivery modalities. To ensure improved performance of students and compliance with the goals, two federal agencies were established to be watchdogs and counselors. As Robert Marzano and John Kendall (1997) explain,

Soon after the summit, two groups were established to implement the new educational goals: the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) and the National Council on Educational Standards and Testing (NCEST). Together, these two groups were charged with addressing unprecedented questions regarding American education, such as the following: What is the subject matter to be addressed? What types of assessments should be used? (p. 3)

The governors’ conference produced a list of substantial and idealistic goals. The following list summarizes the America 2000 goals, starting from the essential premise that “All children will start school ready to learn.”

1. The high school graduation rate will increase to at least 90 percent.
2. American students will leave grades four, eight, and twelve having demonstrated competency in challenging subject matter including English, math, science, history, and geography, and every school in America will ensure that all students learn to use their minds well, so that they may be prepared for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment in our modern society.

3. U.S. students will be first in the world in science and mathematics achievement.
4. Every adult American will be literate and will possess the knowledge and skills necessary to compete in global economy and exercise the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.
5. Every school in America will be free of drugs and violence and will offer a disciplined environment conducive to learning.

(Urban & Jennings, 1996, p. 341).

The consummation of the governors' conferences on education resulted in a legislative bill focused on educational reform and standardization. The Goals 2000: Educate America Act (1994), encouraged state improvements in academic content but fell short of mandating them. As Ornstein and Levine (2000) explain, the effort in the early 1990s by the National Assessment Governing Board, whose members were pushing for higher standards, resulted in setting performance standards for primary, middle, and secondary schools. While suggesting standards were not new in educational initiatives, this enactment fueled a movement of conservative educational reformers who wanted to promote an essentialist framework. Essentialists like Eric D. Hirsch Jr., educator and critic, had touted an essentialist's curriculum in the late 1980s. His book *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know* caused quite a stir in education circles. This resurgence of emphasis on essential core learning helped in the 1990s fuel the curriculum debate and continued to politicize educational dialog. "Whereas in the past the concept of core curriculum was tied to progressive philosophy, today it reflects the



conservative theories of perennialism and essentialism; its advocates attempt to affirm both equality and excellence in schooling by defining what is central to the education of all students” (Ornstein and Levine, 2000). Hirsch (1987) was clearly on record as criticizing the inequities of American public school education and encouraged the return to universal standards for all students. He postulated, “That children from poor and illiterate homes tend to remain poor and illiterate is an unacceptable failure of our schools, one which has occurred not because our teachers are inept but chiefly because they are compelled to teach a fragmented curriculum based on faulty educational theories” (Hirsch, 1987, p. xiii). While the presence of Hirsch was not prominent in the nineties his ideas still resonated with those bent on student improvement and reform.

As a result of the 1998 National Governor’s Conference report and the Goals 2000 enactment, the U.S. Department of Education funded the development of national curriculum standards in seven subject fields. The objective was to establish a basic standardized curriculum. Initial curriculum drafts were controversial, but because they were backed by federal dollars they were ultimately implemented. The Clinton administration offered financial incentives to states enacting standards, which were primarily content standards.

#### **Educational progress & reform: current reforms.**

In 2001 President George W. Bush, made another push for national standards. The current movement toward standards was triggered by the passage of the 2002 No Child Left Behind legislation, which promoted the establishment of state standards and accountability measures. This legislation consummated the movement toward establishing content standards and implementing assessments tied to those standards.

Similarly it secured the place of the federal government as the major decisive player in making educational decisions.

First announced in 2001, and subsequently passed in 2002, the No Child Left Behind legislation elevated the federal role in education and fostered the establishment of mandated state curriculum standards and assessments. States were allowed to establish their own content standards and assessment practices, but there were federal financial incentives attached to student improvements and achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress expectations. The question was posited: Who would develop those standards at the state level? This question was easily answered because groups like the NCSS and the NCTM had already published curriculum standards and lobbied for their usage. The provisions of the NCLB Act include the following,

1. Increase Accountability – the institution of state standards and assessments coupled with Adequate Yearly Progress evaluations.
2. More Choices for Parents and Students – the opportunity to attend alternative public or charter schools.
3. Greater Flexibility for States, School Districts, and Schools – flexibility offered to schools regarding the use of federal funds for Title 1 programs or other improvement offerings.
4. Putting Reading First – a strong commitment to ensure all children can read by the end of grade 3.
5. Additional Major Program Changes – flexibility in funding allocation to include teacher development; simplifies English language programs by combining

programs for more efficiency; also requires monitoring of safe and drug-free environment.

(U.S. Department of Education, 2004)

To the point, the current federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2002 is the latest facilitator of education reform. Enacted with the intention of elevating student academic performance and encouraging lower scoring schools to improve, it has polarized the educational community. Because the NCLB act is tied to federal dollars, states and districts are compelled to set minimum standards for their students, while developing annual improvement strategies. As a result of this legislation, schools and districts have worked diligently to align their curriculum with state standards in the relevant subjects. Low performing or baseline performing students have become a focal point, provoking teachers to address low-end student deficiencies. Even though states maintained control over the process, federal legislation has dominated the process and directed the educational requirements.

#### **Educational accountability and SBE.**

Like the push for universal content standards, attempts to institute a system of accountability in education also have a long tradition in the United States (Resnick, 1982; Ravitch, 1995). The literature demonstrates both strong support for educational testing and obvious apprehension. Assessment experts Lorrie Shepard (2000) and Robert Linn (2005) offer keen insights into the discussion regarding standardized measurement processes. Their work, while supportive of the overarching value of assessment activities also raises concerns over the logistics of standardized accountability. Measurement

experts like Richard Phelps, directly confront critics, embracing a more supportive view of educational assessment practices.

The recent preoccupation with testing and standardized assessments has evolved over time, but in no way does the current appetite for testing misrepresent historical and typical practices in American education. In practice, testing and standards are natural bedfellows that are inextricably joined. Lorrie Shepard (2009) and colleagues make the point when they say that in every “new wave of educational reform” the reality is faced that “high-stakes tests strongly influence what is taught” (Shepard, et al., 2009, *Standards, Assessments, and Accountability*). Accountability instruments are added to reform efforts to certify improved student performance and compliance; they have also been used to distinguish student ability for a number of purposes. Robert Linn (2000) establishes the point when he says,

Assessment and accountability have played prominent roles in many of the education reform efforts during the past 50 years. In the 1950s, under the influence of James B. Conant's work on comprehensive high schools, testing was used to select students for higher education and to identify students for gifted programs. By the mid-1960s test results were used as one measure to evaluate the effectiveness of Title I and other federal programs. In the 1970s and early 1980s, the minimum competency testing movement spread rapidly; 34 states instituted some sort of testing of basic skills as a graduation requirement. Overlapping the minimum competency testing movement and continuing into the late 1980s and early 1990s was the expansion of the use of standardized test results for accountability purpose. (p. 1)

Critics like to report that tests are used because they are convenient and relatively inexpensive, and because they can serve as a regulation or control device (McNeil, 2000).

As previously noted, the acceptance of standardized tests in American education originated with the college entrance exams of the nineteenth century and continues into the twenty-first century, currently manifesting itself through the relationship to statewide

curriculum standards. As early as the eighteenth century the requirements for college entrance used a standard curricular set and tested students' preparation upon their application to college. This of course trickled down to form the content standards for high school college-bound students. The creation of the College Entrance Examination Board around the turn of the twentieth century accelerated the pace of American education's insatiable desire for standardized testing. The longevity of the SAT college entrance exam, first initiated in the 1920s, and its counterpart the current ACT exam, attest to the pervasiveness of standardized assessments for college entrance and the reliance placed upon them. The arguments regarding student preparation and content stringencies haven't changed all that much since those times.

The advent of more sophisticated and automated assessment devices has encouraged their use, especially because of their lower costs. Similarly, with the beginning of psychological testing around the 1900s, educational tests became a mainstay in American education. The idea of accountability systems remains entrenched throughout the whole of educational history, but the coupling of student learning and accountability is a more modern approach. By the time we approach the current era, education and standardized tests have become normative and well entrenched. Educational historians like Diane Ravitch (2002) validate this basic premise.

Nowadays, one thinks of testing and accountability as twins in education; tests, it is assumed, produce the data on which accountability for results are based. A survey of the history of American education, however, reveals that although testing has been a staple in American public education since the nineteenth century, the idea of accountability – holding not only students but teachers, schools, even districts accountable for student performance – is more a contemporary invention. (p. 1)

Clearly, the literature streaming from psychometrician Richard Phelps (2005) and educational historian and policy analyst Diane Ravitch (1995) demonstrate that there exists strong public supports the use of tests. It is historically accurate to say that the American public has always considered testing a valid means of determining accountability, as Daniel Resnick (1982) affirms: “Public support for testing has grown out of a desire to keep our school accountable for their costs and their educational quality”(p. 175). Richard Phelps (2005) underscores this point: “Public support for widespread and consequential use of standardized testing is overwhelming, and has been since pollsters first posed the question” (p. 21). The interest in testing is at some level associated with the amount of tax dollars invested in education. Educational observers conclude that since education is often the biggest state expenditure, they have a significant stake in seeing their tax dollars well spent; standardized testing offers some evaluation of how their investment is faring (Ravitch, 2002). In summary, the evolution of testing in America, regardless of variant opinions, has coupled standards and testing together; nonetheless, testing is surrounded by controversy. Diane Ravitch (1995) echoes the point:

Discussions of standards tend to turn at once into debates about testing, such as whether tests are fair (however that word may be defined), whether tests discriminate against disadvantaged or minority students, whether tests items are culturally biased by their vocabulary, whether multiple-choice tests discourage creativity, whether tests can measure what is really important, whether tests have too much influence on instruction, and whether tests should influence decisions about college admission or employment. (p. 11)

A lot of dissatisfaction with traditional testing still persists with some in the educational community. As a result of Howard Gardner’s (2006) theories on multiple intelligences and the broader discussion regarding IQ testing (Evans & Waites, 1981),

many educators have resisted the idea of standardized tests and prefer to support and embrace more nontraditional forms of assessment (Ross, 2006). Today in education everything from classroom discussions to portfolios are used to evaluate student competencies (Shepard, 2000). While traditional tests are also used, they are considered only one of many forms of assessment.

If the objective of assessments is to determine overall student ability or academic competency, the employment of standardized tests is not considered the satisfactory method. Referring to such an attempt, Kulieke and Bakker (1990) in a research project for the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NcREL) discussing alternative assessment methods note,

The staff found that standardized tests were not usually useful in measuring the broad range of abilities fostered in the curriculum. Most tests measure only a narrow slice of children's linguistic and mathematical abilities. And even in these areas, the tests fail to reflect the student's ability to think critically and creatively, their motivation to learn, or their capacity to engage in self-assessment." Concerns weigh heavily on theorists who are seriously troubled by the potential negative aspects of standardized testing. (p. 7)

Richard Phelps offers support for the fact that testing encourages accountability that translates into some level of improved learning (Phelps, 2005). "For better or worse, high stakes tests are often the foundations upon which accountability systems have been built." (Phelps, 2005, p. 39) Nonetheless, many critics contest that assumption. Dylan Williams states,

They [legislative reformers] have started from the idea that the primary purpose of educational assessment is selecting and certifying the achievement of individuals (i.e., summative assessment) – and have tried to make assessments originally designed for this purpose also provide information with which educational institutions can be made accountable (evaluative assessment). Educational assessment has thus become divorced from learning, and the huge contribution that assessment can make to learning (i.e., formative assessment) has been largely lost." (p. 105)

Even proponents like Richard Phelps (2005), do not assume that these high-stakes tests are perfect instruments capable of being good overall reflectors of student learning. Most realize that achievement tests are measurement tools primarily designed to convey comparative information and are valuable primarily for giving an overall picture of an institution's or district's health; as a consequence, intentional or unintentional, they also offer a motivational influence (Phelps, 2005). Concerns surrounding standardized tests are not limited to the inability of the tests to measure student ability or just the reservations over the narrowing of the curriculum, but include logistical concerns regarding the complexities inherent in constructing an adequate nonbiased measurement instrument. Nonetheless, tests are still utilized to evaluate students, institutions, and public education as a whole.

Educational researchers like Robert Linn (2005) pose other concerns regarding educational standards and testing, in particular the idea of leaving standardized testing construction and decisions up to each individual state. Linn states, "The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2002 has given new salience to questions about the relative stringency of state performance standards and NAEP" (p. 11). He notes that a considerable variance exists between various state-mandated tests (Linn, 2005). He uses the scoring discrepancies between various state test results to show that those variations are significant. It is apparent from his research that there are varying degrees of difficulty among statewide assessments and that they appear not to be harmonizing in their evaluation. Linn discusses the matrixes used to compile statewide assessments and demonstrates their lack of congruence. He cites the finding from an article in *Education*



*Week* dated September 7<sup>th</sup>, 2005 where the variant range of 8<sup>th</sup> grade math scores was 71% points between the highest- and the lowest-scoring states. According to Linn, these variations call the whole process into question.

Other educational theorists pose additional questions about the overall public benefits of accountability measures. In a report summarizing the particulars of a National Center for Research on Evaluation, Standards, and Student Testing (CRESST) study, Joan Herman asks a probing question: Are accountability and assessments, as they are currently being practiced, in the public interest? (Herman, 2007). While she ultimately supports the use of high-stakes testing, she harbors some reservations regarding the consequences of such instruments. Her conclusions do however reflect the general educational research perspective – namely, that accountability measures manifest some improvements in test scores, but at the cost of narrowing the curriculum and encouraging lower-level skill development.

### **Summary of educational progress and reform.**

The historical landscape of American education reveals that reform efforts are a natural occurrence in American education. The poor performance of the nation's students has brought to light the need for scrutinizing and fixing the educational system. Efforts to improve educational quality have resulted in the establishment of a plethora of national commission reports which have promoted the need for educational reform. Central to these national efforts have been the standardization of curriculum and corollary assessment processes. The pressure to improve student performance has, in turn, resulted in government bodies and private organizations putting greater pressure on the educational establishment. Resistance from various elements within the educational

establishment has created the need for outside influence and in some cases significant intervention. Cunningham (2005) encapsulates the reasons behind introducing accountability systems:

Concern about the reluctance of educators to emphasize academic achievement has led to the widespread adoption of educational reforms, as a way for governors and legislators to force an achievement emphasis on schools. This means they have defined a set of content standards, adopted an assessment system, set performance standards, and implemented an accountability system in which schools, districts, and /or students receive rewards and sanctions depending on their academic achievement. The ultimate in accountability occurs when students are required to pass an exam in order to graduate. (p. 124)

In retrospect, the history of American education reveals both a concern over declining student performances and the belief that imposed educational guidelines offer the solution to poor student achievement. The various decades of reform efforts highlight the centrality of content-oriented reform. The various commission recommendations and subsequent legislative acts represent a continuity of belief that student performance is enhanced by clear curricular objectives. The added leverage of accountability systems backed by federal financial support further attests to the proclivity for reliance upon core curriculum requirements which are tied to content specifics.

The conjoining of assessments with content standards also has a long history in American education. Daniel Resnick (1982) makes the point when he states,

“Educational testing has played an important role in American Education for more than 70 years. In no other Western nation does it occupy so large a place in the processes of schooling. Selection, guidance, placement, credentialing, and program evaluation, which all tend to be dealt with in other ways in other nations, are closely tied in our society to standardized testing” (p. 173)

There exists no debate concerning the prominence played by educational testing in our nation’s schools and colleges; in fact, it is apparent that the American appetite never

seems completely satisfied when it comes to educational testing. For many the separation of the two seems inconceivable (Ravitch, 1995). To add teeth to the discussion, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) as the nation's assessment provost has further embedded a preoccupation with standardized assessments. National oversight has not quelled the debate; in fact if anything it has exacerbated it. Critics and proponents spar with each other, regarding whether standardized tests actually foster improved student learning. Even though the results of educational initiatives and standardized testing procedures reflect a mixed bag of outcomes, the interest in testing and its application as a means of evaluating student performance has not waned. While opponents raise multiple issues of concern about the validity of assessment devices, the history of assessment practices in American education appears to guarantee their prominence, especially within the landscape of secondary and higher education, and strongly suggests that they are not likely to be dislodged.

Historically, the federal government has become more proactive in education over the last 150 years, as evidenced by such measures as The Smith-Hughes Act, ESEA legislation, Goals 2000 initiative, and the recent NCLB legislation. As the federal government has become more influential in education, it has expressed the need for content standardization and universal requirements. These efforts gravitate toward a more nationalized approach which reflects the basic tenets of typical SBE improvement-oriented efforts. This version of a content-oriented approach includes standardized testing as a means of checks and balances to ensure compliance. In summary, the current NCLB legislation represents a continuation of the historically typical American educational reform processes, in that it promotes content standards, embraces the adoption of

standardized tests for accountability purposes, and places the federal government in the position of influence regarding education.

## **HS Social Studies Curriculum and SBE Reform**

### **Overview of social studies.**

The discussion regarding the social studies as disciplines begins with a grasp of the gravity of the educational situation. The literature pertinent to the development of the social studies, as articulated by E. Wayne Ross (2006) and colleagues, demonstrates a parallel evolution with American education as a whole. It addresses the importance of the social studies in the overall scheme of public school instruction. Finally, it then highlights the complexities inherent in addressing the social studies by utilizing the current reform apparatus.

The purpose and scope of the social studies curriculum has always been a contentious issue (Ross, 2006). Regardless of the fact that multiple voices have offered differing views about what should be taught in the social studies (Ross, 2006), history and geography (while adapting to the social and cultural climate) as core subjects have been deeply associated with content standardization. In general terms those standards encompass historical, civic, geographic, and culture components. In the current educational climate state boards of education articulate the content and performance standards which are typically modeled after discipline specific educational organization developments. Therein, the “formal curriculum” as understood by theorists like E. Wayne Ross is defined by state boards of education and groups like the NCSS (Ross, 2006). While there may be discord concerning what content should be emphasized in the classroom, the value and importance of the social studies is not in question. Jan Tucker

(1981) says, “More than most other subject areas, social studies is shaped by and, in turn, shapes the social, economic and political development of a nation or region” (p. 298) On the significance of the social studies, Zoya Malcova (1981) states, “But the most important school subject of all is the social studies. History, social science and geography inform pupils about the development of mankind, about its present and its past, about what has befallen various countries and peoples and about their mutual relations and ties” (p. 83).

Concern about the ability of students in social studies parallels the overall concerns prompting educational reforms. The poor performance of students in history accentuates the alarm fostered by proponents of SBE reform. Limited improvements in students’ ability to assimilate historical content elevate the calls for reforms. To evaluate student performance in history, the (NAEP) keeps track of and reports on student test performance in U.S. history. While the NAEP doesn’t monitor the social studies as often as it does other subjects, it has done so intermittently. Currently, the NAEP tests fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders for their knowledge of history. As a means of establishing a context, results were tabulated both in 1984 and in 1988 as well as subsequent intermittent years. In 2007 the NAEP report for U.S. history revealed that between 1994 and 2006 American students’ performance in history has slightly improved. While the executive summary states that twelfth graders improved without qualification, it touted the fact that eighth grade scores have risen from 14% to 17% between 1994, 2001, and 2006 (Lee & Weiss, 2007). On a personal note these scores, while demonstrating improvement, still appear to represent minimal progress. While it has been conveyed that

some improvement transpired, the concern over student ability in history isn't abated by these NAEP findings.

An evaluation of the literature shows that general educational reform efforts and the evolution of reform efforts in the social studies have been on similar tracks. They have been congruent in their interest in and promotion of content standards. The parallels between the two regarding universal reform efforts and progressive social advancements in education are recognizable. As the Ross (2006) poignantly reveals, curriculum standards have long been advocated for historical instruction. In demonstration of that point, it is evident that the social studies, and history in particular, have a affinity for a standardization of content (Ross, 2006) and the adoption of assessments as coupled instruments. This is relevant because the promotion of SBE reform in social studies should by the fact of its proclivity for standardization easily manifest the benefits of content oriented reform efforts.

While the social studies, as a collective group have gone through a range of adaptations, phases, and emphases (Michaelis, 1992), the core subjects of history and geography have remained the central focus, especially in high schools. However, these subjects have received minimal attention in comparison with other core disciplines. Much emphasis has been placed on reform efforts in English, math, and science, but reform efforts in history have not received as much attention as other core subjects. While the adoption of standards is easily enough embraced, the effective use of assessments tends to be more elusive. The complexities of assessment requirements, provoked by NCLB, have hampered local departments of education (ODE) from aggressively evaluating the

influence of SBE initiatives. To date there have been limited evaluations of the implementation of reform efforts in the social studies.

**National Council on the Social Studies as a reform agent.**

Central to the determination of the mission and the curriculum to be taught in the social studies is the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), which has been in the forefront of content-driven educational reform. NCSS historians William Wraga (2004), Murray Nelson (2004), Dale Greenawald (2004) articulate the evolution of the organization while emphasizing its commitment to academic improvement constructed upon curriculum standardization. This organization, which officially began in 1921, has championed educational improvement, consistency, legitimacy, standards, and assessments throughout its history. Its most recent establishment of content standards for social studies in the 1990s demonstrates its attachment to improving social studies education through that approach. The current SBE efforts reflect a content-oriented approach to reform which complements the emphasis on content standards that the NCSS proposed in the 1970s and established in the 1990s. While the NCSS, during its history, has advocated for continuity for college-bound students, has demonstrated its commitment to equality in education, and has maintained a concern for social developments in the overall society (Wraga 2004, Nelson, 2004, Greenawald, 2004), it has always promoted content standards.

The struggle for credibility and acceptance during the 20<sup>th</sup> century plagued the NCSS. Its effort at bringing continuity and standardization to the social studies was hampered, first by the lack of recognition of its social subjects as core educational disciplines, and second by a general resistance to acceptance by secondary teachers in the

field. The core classes of English, math, and science have had a long tradition of acceptance, whereas history and geography initially seemed less essential. Since the NCSS was primarily in the past sponsored and patronized by college professors, primary and secondary teachers avoided applying for membership. In particular many high school teachers felt no compulsion to join a national organization that was primarily controlled and directed by college educators or professional historians. As noted by the following quotation, early board members were generally college professors although a few teachers were represented: “The NCSS leadership in the early years was primarily composed of college professors although their numbers did include 3 high school teachers” (Nelson, 2004, p. 11). Nelson further postulates that the limited number of teachers resulted from a lack of a perceived “need by teachers for a national organization because of a willingness to allow professors to do the organizational spade work” (Nelson, 2004, p. 4) Even in the late 1960s the NCSS was still dominated by university professors, administrators and department chairs, and only half of its members were classroom teachers (Greenawald, 2004).

The literature reveals that the NCSS has been an advocate for reform throughout the twentieth century, and it has not lost its fervor or proclivity for improvements based on standardized content. While the NCSS began in the 1920s, it would take the organization about 70 years before effectively establishing social studies curriculum standards. It wasn't until the 1990s that NCSS would finally gain the definitive hand on its ability to influence reform initiatives and obtain recognition as the premier representative for the social studies. The broadening of its influence at that time would secure its position as the driving force of reform, especially regarding subject matter



standards. Its eventual recognition as the voice for the social studies and educational reform would be facilitated by legislative reform initiatives.

**A historical synopsis of NCSS and curriculum reform.**

The history of the National Council for the Social Studies echoes the concerns and emphases associated with the evolution of American education in general. The importance placed on core curriculum and quality instruction is systemic to the history of the NCSS. The organization officially began in 1921, but its history stretches backward to the late nineteenth century when in 1892 the Madison Conference convened a group of historians who attempted to initiate reform in history, civil government, and the political economy. These initial efforts worked toward offering continuity and consistency in social studies instruction. From this humble beginning the would-be enthusiasts would spawn both the American Historical Association (AHA) and eventually the NCSS. Both of these organizations would focus their attention on the quality of the content and the methods of instruction. “The quality of the teaching of history was a major concern of both NCSS and AHA” (Nelson, 2004, p. 6). The two of them would for a season work diligently together to influence historical instruction. As a case in point, the forerunners of the NCSS engaged in establishing committees intent on reform and in publishing articles that elevated the need to enhance social studies education.

The establishment of educational committees intent on reforming social studies instruction and the establishment of educational journals demonstrates the approach used by the NCSS in its desire to improve education. Several committees and journals established between 1909-1911 (including the Committee of Eight and the Committee of Five of the American Historical Association) produced reports or articles on elementary

and secondary education in American schools. From its inception, NCSS played a role in the debate about school curriculum. Through its journal publication, *The Historical Outlook*, a multi-issue yearly series of publications, the NCSS addressed curriculum as well as social issues. *The Historical Outlook* was basically a forum to report the NCSS activities and address important issues relevant to the teaching of history until 1934 when it was renamed *The Social Studies*. It was eventually abandoned by the NCSS. In 1937 *The Historical Outlook* became the *Social Education* publication, and it severed its ties with the AHA. Clearly the two organizations had a long history of collaboration, and the cessation of that relationship marked a new beginning for the role of the NCSS even though “the quality of the teaching of history was a major concern of both NCSS and AHA.” (Nelson, 2004, p. 11)

While the emphasis on quality curriculum instruction was never fully subjugated to other reform or social developments, the NCSS promoted progressive educational developments. A historical look at the period from the 1950s to the 1980s demonstrates the societal influences on educational developments during those periods. Support for social developments, curricular changes, and a broader range of teaching methodologies epitomizes these time periods.

Reflected in the NCSS’s history, is an organization that offered subject credibility, established educational relationships, and brought cohesion to a group of seemingly unrelated academic subjects. Balancing both academic concerns and social changes has been the hallmark of the NCSS as it has journeyed its way through almost a century of existence. The period from 1921 to the 1982 reflects the growth of NCSS dominance in social studies. Without losing its central concern for subject integrity, the NCSS began

to exercise its social and academic muscle. “As Social Studies began to find its way into the school curriculum, NCSS was formed to provide leadership and to give credibility to a subject that would be constantly challenged during the twentieth century” (Smith, Palmer, & Corriea, 2004, p. 9). Murray Nelson (2004) says that the NCSS would play a vital role in becoming the bridge between the school teachers and the social sciences. “Launched to bridge the gap between school teachers and the social sciences, NCSS was conceived by its early leaders as an organization that would provide an umbrella for educators in a variety of academic disciplines” (p. 1).

Influenced by the Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s and the Brown vs the Board of Education Supreme Court ruling in 1954, the organization pushed toward a democratized focus. Similarly, in the 1960s NCSS also found itself supporting modern reform efforts reflected in the “New Social Studies” (Greenawald, 2004, p. 9).

Greenawald (2004) comments,

“Although much of the initial impetus for reform came from outside of NCSS, the organization continued to respond in myriad ways to loud calls for academically rigorous reform. These responses not only facilitated and interacted with the New Social Studies, but they frequently accelerated the professionalization of social studies” (p. 9).

NCSS struggled in the 1960s with content issues as well as how social studies should be taught. The call for new methods of teaching focused on conceptual teaching in contrast with the factual emphasis of the past. Presentation became as significant as the substance being offered. Just as academic organizations in the fields of math and science, the NCSS was poised to be a reforming force for history education. When the National Defense Education Act came up for renewal in 1961, the NCSS lobbied to be included. “Not only was NCSS concerned about the quality of teachers and resources in the

classroom, but it recognized that the conditions in which those teachers worked also impacted the quality of the social studies instruction” (Greenawald, 2004, p. 11).

During the 1970s and subsequent decades, NCSS participated in furthering content standards and fostering a relationship with the National Educational Association (NEA). The influence that the NCSS exercised was a precursor to its eventual prominence in the field of social studies. The NCSS established standards for teachers in 1971 to increase professionalism. It published social studies curriculum guidelines in 1971 and again in 1979 (Wraga, 2004). After the inception of the National Assessment of Educational Progress, launched in the 1960s, the NCSS attempted to influence NAEP regarding issues of standards on at least a couple of occasions, and it clearly worked to become a major lobbying force during this period (Wraga, 2004). Its role as the promoter of educational standards for the social studies would only increase with time. During the next couple of decades the NCSS played an important role in the formation of educational imperatives. Four themes, according to William Wraga (2004), highlight the NCSS involvement during the 1968-1982 periods:

1. To constitute a more professional organization.
2. To establish the hallmarks of a professional for the field of social studies.
3. To find and exercise a professional voice on social studies-related issues.
4. Ultimately to forge a professional identity for social studies educators.

(p. 1)

More important for this research, the NCSS has highlighted the need for student improvement and fought for the establishment of curriculum guidelines for the social studies. The National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools study, conducted in

1990, represents a case in point. This comprehensive study evaluated the achievement levels of students in the social studies and found the students extremely deficient. These deficiencies prompted the NCSS to establish extensive social studies guidelines for curriculum standards. The result was that the NCSS developed a book on curriculum standards titled *Curriculum Standards for Social Studies* (1994). The content standards established by the NCSS became the framework for state and local social studies requirements. These content standards span ten broad areas of study: culture and diversity studies, people places and environments, individual development, groups and institutions, time continuity and change, power authority and governance, production distribution and consumption, science technology and society, global interdependence, principles and practices of civics, and democratic responsibilities. The specific achievement guidelines of each of these content areas are comprehensive. The recommendations of that report encompass the development of civic responsibility, a global perspective, a critical understanding of history and geography, a multicultural view of the world, and critical thinking capacity (Mullins, 1990). Subsequent evaluations using statistics from the NAEP have further encouraged outspoken lobbying by the NCSS for curriculum changes. Mullins (1990) reflects on the reform efforts stemming from the NCSS initial study which was concerned with charting the course for the social studies into the new millennium (see also Woolever & Scott, 1988). The following represents her summation of the reform's historical development: The National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools (1989) completed and reported on an extensive study with the intention of charting the course for social studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The commission's recommendations reflect the scope of reforms currently impinging upon the social studies

curriculum. The commission's curriculum task force made several suggestions including the teaching of civic responsibility, global and multicultural understandings, critical evaluations of core social studies disciplines, and the development of critical thinking in regard to human enterprise.

From its early embracing of forward-looking educational ideology to its current attempts to realign social studies with the society, the NCSS has demonstrated its tendency to flex with the times while holding on to its core concern for academic continuity. These historical developments within the NCSS reflect the evolution taking place in the overall education movements of the times. As Nelson (2004) states, "The organization was predominantly a voice of progressivism and liberal political views" (p. 13).

Needless to say, the NCSS development of content standards marks a milestone in the effort to establish a standardized social studies curriculum and promote education practices. While the NCSS is and has been the dominant force for change, other educational bodies have also taken an interest in and contributed to reform in the social studies. Other commissions and agencies include the Bradley Commission's *Historical Literacy: The Case for History in American Education* (Jackson, 1989), The Education for Democracy Projects Democracy's *Half-Told Story*, and the National Governor's Association Report *America in Transition: The International Frontier*. General standards guidelines have also been put forth by the National Commission on Excellence in Education. Nonetheless, it is clearly evident that the NCSS has been the dominant force for educational change and that the organization has promoted an SBE platform as the means of bringing educational reform to the social studies.

### **NCSS section summary**

The social studies demonstrate an evolution strongly influenced by curriculum-defined imperatives. Various disciplinary organizations and commissions have offered oversight to ensure the prominence and academic continuity of the various subjects included in this discipline. In particular the NCSS has played a definitive role in promoting a clear curricular framework and encouraging improvements in the field. The history of the NCSS and its interest in educational reform complements the reform efforts central to the general educational reform effort. Throughout its history, the NCSS has lobbied for educational improvements in the social studies. Even while the organization has embraced concerns relevant to the social historical developments during the 50s 60s and 70s, it has always had subject content concerns as its core mission. This preoccupation is evidenced in its early and forthright presentation of content standards for the social studies. As has been previously noted, during the early 1990s the NCSS established the model curriculum standards for the social studies, and it continues to lobby for the use and practice of those universal standards. Furthermore, it is currently promoting and lobbying for the use of standardized tests to ensure universal content acceptance (NCSS, 2009).

Similarly, the social studies, like the other core disciplines, have been influenced by SBE requirements. History and geography in particular are heavily oriented toward universal core content requirements, lending themselves easily to innovations or reforms associated with required standards. The general adoption of NCSS standards has set the social studies in an amenable position for adopting state-mandated content standards initiated by federal education legislation. The complete adoption of NCLB requirements

assumes some quantifiable evidence, in that state accountability systems typically include subject-oriented assessments. Yet, unlike other core disciplines, at least in the state of Oregon (unlike Texas, Georgia, and Oklahoma as examples), no mandatory assessment instrument has been implemented. The absence of any quantifiable evaluation of the impact reform efforts are having on the social studies raises questions regarding the absence or existence of improvements in those disciplines.

### **Advanced Placement Courses**

Advanced Placement courses are designed to offer high school students the opportunity to get dual credit for classes taken during the last couple of years of high school (Mollison, 2006; Morgan & Ramist, 1998; Geiser & Santelices, 2004). The difference between general high school history instruction and AP courses is that AP courses are formulated to be the equivalent of collegiate level survey courses. The primary benefits of AP courses are that they reduce the time a student spends in college, thus reducing the cost of college, and they also play an important role in admissions considerations (Mollison, 2006). In history instruction, typical AP courses in Oregon consist of classes on U.S. Government, U.S. History, and World History (College Board, 2010). The underlying rationale of AP classes is that they benefit students by aiding in the development of college readiness. Advanced Placement courses were originally elitist and designed to allow gifted students to earn college credit while still in high school (Mollison, 2006; Geiser & Santelices, 2004). But over time they became more a common place for college bound students who wanted to increase their college acceptance chances and academic preparation. During the 1980s the number of students enrolling in AP courses began to accelerate as colleges were beginning to use completion of these courses



as factors for determining college admission (Geiser & Santelices, 2004). Researchers nonetheless have critically evaluated whether AP courses are legitimate determinants of college success (Sadler, et. al., 2010; Geiser & Santelices, 2004). The aforementioned researchers concluded that while the research seems to indicate that taking AP courses doesn't guarantee college success and that these courses may not be good substitutes for actual college classes, high scores on the AP test do correlate as predictors of college achievement.

Because AP courses are designed to substitute for or complement college level courses, they approach learning differently than do general education courses. The differences are marked both in methodology and content. While general history instruction in high school is informative and content laden, it doesn't approach the content with mastery in mind (Whelan, 2006); rather, it is formulated more along the lines of exposure and discovery. In contrast, AP courses introduce high school students to college level history curriculum where not only is content assimilation expected but interpretive elements are highly valued (College Board, 2010). AP courses are staunchly content oriented and intentionally coupled with AP exams to ensure student retention (Ibid). The coursework encourages a teaching methodology which is tied to successful test results and is distinguished from the general pattern of typical high school historical instruction. Hill (1999) says, "In this day of standards and achievement testing, AP courses stand as a practical and real measure of quality, using university standards as opposed to politically determined standards of expectations and content" (p. 269). In reference to California high school history standards, Hill (1999) makes the following comments about the distinctions between state standards and AP coursework: "The

Advanced Placement program is largely separate from all this [state curriculum decisions]. AP courses and examinations, written by both secondary-school and college teachers, bring their own sets of standards and expectations that stand outside of the K-12 system. They are crucial to maintaining the intellectual level of secondary education, because they uphold high scholarly expectations in large part sheltered from the political winds blowing through K-12 education” (p. 271). While there exist many parallels between traditional standardized content offered in the typical public school history course and those offered in AP courses—such as emphasis on events, people, and movements; cause and effect relationships; interpretive elements; and the desire for higher level thinking—the academic level of the AP courses necessitate higher performance from students.

Some of the same concerns voiced concerning SBE reform initiatives are also indicative of AP courses—in particular, the narrowing of the curriculum, the incessant necessity to teach to the test, and concern over demographic inequities (Meier & Wood, 2004). Familiarity with AP course requirements makes the first two of these concerns obvious, but the third one is not necessarily so blatantly visible. In short, it is clear that an ethnic gap exists because a disproportionate number of minorities’ students enroll in AP courses. While those numbers have increased the inequity is still evident. Speaking to that specific point, researchers note that even though over the years the demographics of students participating in AP courses has changed (Mollison, 2006), the benefits of AP for minority and disadvantaged students have not been fully realized (Geiser & Santelices, 2004).

## **Social Studies and Assessment Practices**

As previously discussed, the literature on assessments and assessment practices is contentious. Discussions of assessment in the social studies parallel those in education in general (Ross, 2006). However, due to the nature of the social studies disciplines, other issues surface. Mandated assessments in social studies have not been embraced with the same fervor as they have in English, science, or mathematics. While standards and assessments typically go hand in hand, assessments in social studies can be complicated. Since history in particular is not a physical science or founded upon principles of grammar, it requires a distinct approach to assessments, typically in the form of essay evaluations. History as a subject requires an understanding of historical developments and events as well as some level of interpretive evaluation, which are not effectively conveyed through traditional testing formats such as multiple-choice or fill-in-the-blank questions. Assessments in history are, therefore, best suited to essay exams. Due primarily to costs and the ease of efficient scoring, most standardized tests are multiple-choice. However, multiple-choice tests are not generally believed to be effective evaluation instruments when the goal is to determine the student's comprehension of history (Ross, 2006). Therefore, while states generally mandate history content standards, assessments in historical or geographic studies are often delayed or ignored (Oregon Department of Education & Washington Department of Education). Nonetheless, states are still gearing up to comply with the goals of NCLB legislation and putting forth social studies assessments, even though in some cases they are voluntary rather than compulsorily (Oregon Department of Education & Washington Department of Education represent examples).

The scope of historical instruction and the limitations of standardized tests have impeded the wholesale adoption of standardized history assessments. As Kahne and Westheimer (2006) point out,

When it comes to assessment, civic goals get very little attention. The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act mandates yearly testing in math and reading, and, beginning in 2005, science. Social studies and civic education, the areas of the curriculum most tied to the democratic mission of schools, share no such requirements. Similarly, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which is often referred to as the ‘Nation’s Report Card,’ measures performance in math and reading annually, but administers a civics assessment only once every ten years. (p. 298)

While some states, like Oregon, have proposed standardized history tests, currently they do not mandate such tests; rather they rely on voluntary assessments (Oregon Social Studies Knowledge and Skills Test). In social studies, like other core disciplines, testing plays an integral part. “While assessment is now considered to go far beyond testing, testing has always had a place in social studies teaching, because evaluation is considered an integral part of curriculum instruction and because students must be graded for report card purposes” (Alleman & Brophy, 1999, p. 334). Nonetheless, reform advocates, including the NCSS, continue to lobby for standardized assessments in history. It is reasonable to assume that mandated social studies assessments will be an eventual reality.

As it is evident in the literature, reform advocates (including the NCSS) have continually lobbied for the adoption of social studies assessment instruments (NCSS, 1991 & 2009). As a result of NCLB mandates and continued lobbying for standardized testing, mandated social studies assessment seems reasonably assured in the future.

### **Research Studies and NCLB Standards**

Crucial to the literature review is a discussion of key studies that speak directly to the influence of NCLB exerted upon classroom instruction and teaching practices.

Multiple formidable studies and some less extensive ones were formulated around SBE (Lauer, et al., 2005) and conducted following the initiation of the NCLB legislation. The two selected for inclusion in this study were chosen because of their comprehensive nature and direct relevance to the investigation of standards and educational practice. The Center of Educational Policy (CEP) and the Rand Corporation both have evaluated the impact and implementation of standards and assessments initiated by the NCLB. The CEP assessed the implementation of state standards, over multiple years, in several forums (including a nationwide survey, case studies, and interviews). The Rand Corporation initiated an extensive three-state study (including multiple surveys, case studies, and state assessment data). The results of these two studies reveal progress and problems associated with implementing NCLB requirements for subject matter standards and assessments.

For the purpose of this research project these two studies are crucial because they offer informed insight on the discussion concerning SBE reform initiated by NCLB. The literature review of these research studies serves as an evaluation of current reform efforts, offers perceptual positions on its effectiveness, all the while determining the feasibility of implementing NCLB reform efforts. In general terms, both these studies provoke the discussion, formulate the particulars, and articulate the manifestations expected by the adoption of national standards and assessments. Particularly, they provide the platform for continued study by constructing applicable survey instruments and case studies by which the validity of the reform enterprise can be evaluated. In summary, these research projects offer a close clinical look at SBE reform efforts, as they pertain to NCLB, and lend themselves to subsequent research opportunities.

**The Center on Education Policy study.**

The Center on Educational Policy (CEP) engaged in a national study during the years following the advent of the NCLB legislation. As part of a six-year study intended to report on the “implementation and effects of the No Child Left Behind Act, the 2004 Year 2 Report encapsulates the progress being made to align schools with the federal legislation. At that time it was considered the “most comprehensive national examination of all of the main aspects of NCLB implementation at the federal, state, and local levels” (CEP, 2004). The report was based on 47 states and the District of Columbia, a survey of 274 school districts, and case studies of 33 urban, suburban, and rural districts. To encompass such a breadth the study included federal, state, local, and general research methods. Of particular interest to this study are the local research activities and the summary report. Local district surveys as well as case studies were conducted. The local district survey included 402 urban, suburban, and rural schools. The case studies included 33 school districts which are described in the study as, “school districts, selected to be diverse in geography and size and to reflect the approximate distribution of urban, suburban, and rural school districts.” In general terms, the CEP report acknowledged that most states and schools were approaching the NCLB act responsively. The report states, “We found that states and school districts across the country are taking very seriously the challenges presented by the No Child Left Behind Act and are working hard to achieve the goals” (CEP, 2004, p. v). In its *Major Findings and Observation*, the CEP determined that districts and states were trying hard to meet the demands of NCLB, and that overall they believed that the accountability requirements would raise student achievement.

Other points from the report include the notion that schools had a better grasp of needed improvements, that there was an apparent need to add additional professional development opportunities while ensuring that “all teachers of core subjects are ‘highly qualified,’” and that only a limited number of schools were vying for the school-choice provision of the act (CEP, 2004, pp. vii-viii). However, states and districts believed that they lacked the capacity to meet the law’s requirements, while over half of the surveyed districts reported financial problems which they believed “were adversely affecting their own ability to carry out the law” (CEP, 2004, pp. v-x). As noted in the report, some educators voiced opposition and others offered support for the Act. The report found that some state board of education administrators, like Virginia’s president Mark C. Christie, believed that AYP (Adequate Yearly Progress) provisions were irrational. Some governors, like New Jersey’s James McGreevey and New Mexico’s Bill Richardson, were concerned that NCLB, while well intentioned, was “creating difficulties” (CEP, 2004, p. 7). In contrast, the report also cites a supportive group of 100 minority school superintendents who signed an open letter encouraging policy makers to maintain the accountability requirements (CEP, 2004, p. 8). In reference to assessment and accountability, the report writers believed that concerns and apprehensions regarding the NCLB act would conceivably increase as AYP target realities and potential changes in the law or funding became known (CEP, 2004, pp. 80-81).

The following represents the overarching summary points derived from the study. The findings of the CEP (2004) study are as follows:

1. Trying hard – States and schools are putting a great deal of effort into complying with NCLB.

2. Support for the Act's Goals – An overwhelming majority of states agree with the premises of NCLB.
3. Broader and Deeper Effects – Recognition of the need for school improvement is growing.
4. Additional support for identified schools – The number of schools using data to inform instruction, match curriculum standards and assessments, and adapt improvement strategies is increasing.
5. Rarely use school choice – There was no significant participation change in school offerings of the school-choice provision.
6. Supplemental services – An increased number of students are taking advantage of supplemental educational services.
7. Lag in teacher improvements – Schools were slow in developing and implementing systems to enhance the quality of the teaching force.
8. Paraprofessional requirements – There exists a slow development regarding the updating of paraprofessional qualifications.
9. Unworkable requirements – Some of the NCLB requirements are unworkable, like accountability regarding AYP deadlines and the testing of ELL and disabled students.
10. Lack of capacity – Many schools do not feel that they have the staff levels necessary to meet the NCLB requirements.
11. Funding pressures – Financial problems are impeding the implementation of all of the requirements of NCLB.



The CEP has released subsequent reports since its Year 2 Report. During the third year the report says, “State and district officials have made it clear: student performance is up and achievement gaps are closing.” These officials were, however, concerned that the momentum would not continue if the government was not more forthcoming with support funds. During the fourth-year report the CEP stated that the impact of NCLB continues to “widen and deepen” and that “NCLB affects a range of state and local decisions, both small and large – when and how students take tests, which textbook series districts adopt, which children receive extra attention and how they are grouped, how states and districts spend their money, how teachers are trained, and where principals and teachers are assigned to work” (CEP, 2006, p. 1). Four broad conclusions in the fourth-year report state that (a) teaching and learning have changed as a result of NCLB, (b) scores on state tests have risen as a result of AYP requirements and school district policies, (c) the number of schools identified for improvement has remained constant – not soaring as expected, and (d) urban school districts are increasingly experiencing the greatest effects. In contrast, the 2007 year 5, CEP report indicates that schools are finding minimal improvement in student achievement. “More than half (56%) of all the states and two-thirds (66 percent) of districts reported that the requirements have improved student achievement minimally or not at all. Only 6 percent of states and 4 percent of districts indicated that the requirements have improved achievement to a great extent” (CEP, 2007, p. 1).

#### **The Rand Corporation SBI study.**

More to the point of this paper, the Rand Corporation delivered its 2007 report of a three-state study conducted in Pennsylvania, California, and Georgia during the 2003-

2005 school years. This study evaluated the impact of NCLB on science and math in primary and middle schools. The study used multiple surveys, focus groups, state test results, and AYP information to formulate perceptions and results of the implementation of NCLB requirements. Superintendents, principals, and teachers were all surveyed. Case studies involved onsite visitation to enhance the researcher's grasp of the quantifiable data. AYP information and state assessment results were integrated in the research process.

According to the research report, "The study was designed to identify factors that enhance the implementation of SBA [ Accountability] systems, foster change in school and classroom practice, and promote improved student achievement" (Rand, 2007, p. xvii). The random sample for this report was selected from 297 schools in 27 districts. The study incorporated three different surveys, respectively given to superintendents, principals, and teachers. The response rate for superintendents was 73–88%; principals and teacher response rates were from 83–87%. The people conducting the study held some focus groups, but mostly evaluated the results of the questionnaires and various state assessment results. They also incorporated AYP data from each state. To that end the extensive study evaluated the effects and implementation of NCLB requirements especially relevant to state-mandated standards and assessments.

In general terms, while differences among states were noted, the research found that accountability practices were leading to an emphasis on student achievement, but also found concerns regarding the narrowing of the curriculum and declining staff morale. The differences noted among states primarily had to do with their variant standards and

assessment practices or their previous experiences within state-initiated systems of accountability.

The report determined that the alignment of standards and the use of data for decision-making were improving. In some cases extra support for low-performing students was evidenced. Teachers reported that in a number of ways NCLB was influencing their instructional practices. On the positive side, teachers reported increased alignment with standards and teacher interest in curricular improvements. On the negative side, teachers acknowledged the narrowing of the curriculum, teaching toward the test, and focusing on borderline-proficiency students. Support for the goals of NCLB was universal, yet teachers held concerns regarding the value of the influence of accountability. While they were not sure about improvement in curriculum or student learning stemming from accountability, they acknowledged an increased focus on student achievement, increased curriculum coordination, and improved rigor of school curriculum. They did, however, associate low teacher morale with assessment measures. In addition to concerns teachers had over inadequate instructional time, there were barriers like students' lack of basic skills, inadequate parental support, and student absenteeism or tardiness. These difficulties were considered significant impediments to the students' educational development. The overall findings of the Rand Corporation (2007) study include the following:

1. State accountability systems enacted in response to NCLB differ across the three states.
2. Districts and schools responded to the new state accountability systems actively and in broadly similar ways, despite state differences.

3. There were reported changes at the classroom level that included both desirable and undesirable responses.
4. Educators expressed support for NCLB goals but had concerns about specific features and effects.
5. Several perceived hindrances may stand in the way of effective implementation of NCLB.

Several implications were taken from the study. The results are summarized in the following excerpt from the report: “The findings from this study suggest a need for clearer information about alignment, capacity building efforts to help educators engage more effectively in school improvement, and more valid measures of teacher and school effectiveness” (Rand, 2007, p. xx). The research results also noted four basic areas of concern; the following list summarizes them.

1. Alignment efforts at all levels need to be improved.
2. Teacher and administrator capacities for improvement need to be developed.
3. Better methods for measuring school and student performance should be explored.
4. Teacher concerns should be examined and addressed.

(Ibid)

It is evident from the Rand (2007) report that the researchers felt that the previously listed concerns needed to be addressed. In many cases the teachers felt that state assessments were not well aligned with subject standards. The study further noted that states and districts need to adopt measures that assist teachers in instructional approaches that are well matched to standards, but that do not lead to extensive test preparation; and that there is a need for improved capacity to address low-performing

students and ELL students. The overwhelming concern of teachers and administrators was that 100% proficiency was unrealistic and that the AYP requirements focused too specifically on performance scores; this resulted in instruction being directed too much toward marginal-proficiency students. It is apparent from the report that teachers' apprehensions should be examined, especially since they are on the front lines of reform and need to be positively responsive to accountability requirements in order for those requirements to be successful. Since revisions to policies affect teachers most, their perspectives need to be taken into account.

The overall findings of the Rand (2007) study were mixed. It was clear from the report that states had taken seriously the national legislation, expeditiously implementing the reforms required by NCLB. Most districts reported aligning curricula with standards; they also acknowledged that they are using state test results for instructional planning and providing extra support for low-performing students. However, teachers agreed that their alignment with state standards had narrowed the focus of the curriculum; they also harbored concern regarding the negative impact of these curriculum modifications on high-achieving students. As postulated by educational observers, realignment resulted in more teaching to the test (Shepard, 2000). Teacher morale diminished as a result of implementing NCLB standards, and there were concerns regarding the alignment of state standards with state assessment tests. Some problems regarding English Language Learners (ELL) were also noted in the study's report findings. Other concerns revolved around expectations; for example, 100% participation proficiency goals were considered unrealistic. In contrast to the concerns, the report recognized that the general objectives of NCLB were being met and were producing some positive performance results.

**CEP and Rand Corporation section summary.**

The two major studies included in this research demonstrate that NCLB has influenced aspects of educational practice. It is clear from the summary reports of these studies that the legislative mandates are being implemented and that course content is being standardized across the nation. The net results from these studies imply some level of improvement in student performance and some difficulty with total implementation of the reforms. There has also been some incongruence among state results. For example, the report noted that in contrast with California and Pennsylvania, the Georgia districts and schools were especially active in “promoting science instruction and in adopting interim assessment systems” (Rand, 2007, p. xix). The report minimizes the apparent incongruities by explaining that each state had their own previously established academic requirements, and each had a different level exposure or experience with content and practices. The overarching evidence, however, suggests that while there have been some complications implementing the requirements of NCLB, in particular the AYP requirements and the 100% proficiency targets, by and large states have complied with the tenets of the legislation.

These two studies sufficiently demonstrate that teacher practices are evolving. The studies noted changes in the classroom practices, particularly in the areas of content, teaching emphasis, allocation of time, and concern for low-scoring students. But in spite of these changes, teacher morale has declined. Additionally, a level of concern still exists among many in the educational community who question the positive influence this legislation may be having on student learning. There have also been some signs of retreat from the initial levels of improvements which were cited in previous research reports.

Some changes in the perceptions of educators from the second year 2004 CEP study to the 2007 report, call into question the continuation of student improvement. The additional fact that both the Rand and the CEP studies are longitudinal research projects implies the need for continued vigilance and re-evaluation of the results coming forth from these research studies.

### **SBE and Reform in Oregon**

#### **Oregon standards, requirements, and teacher practices.**

The history of reform efforts in Oregon demonstrates a legacy associated with a content approach to reform (Oregon's Academic Content Standards, 2005). A quick look at the extent of educational innovations in the state reveals an interest in reform which focuses particularly on curriculum requirements. In fact, the current mandated Oregon subject-oriented standards typify the expectations initiated by the NCLB legislation (Ibid) even though they were established more than a decade and a half ago. Starting in the 1960s, Oregon law encouraged curriculum improvements and student performance enhancements. During that time, the central issue emanating from the state legislature was a requirement for school districts to establish a minimum number of subject matter competencies (Ibid). In 1983 the state developed common curricular goals, and by 1989 the legislature had established statewide tests for grades 3, 5, 8, and 11 (Ibid). These efforts on the part of the state legislature demonstrate a high level of interest in content-oriented restructuring.

Since the early 1990s Oregon has attempted to reform education by means of a number of legislative enactments. Beginning in 1991 Oregon's Educational Act for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (HB 3565) established state standards and educational requirements in the

form of CIM and CAM requirements (Oregon's Academic Content Standards, 2005). In 1995, HB 2020 refined the 21<sup>st</sup> Century legislation by initiating content and skills tests; the measure also added academic content standards and benchmarks to serve as checkpoints. In 2003, HB 2744 amended the education act and limited CIM testing requirements to English, math, and science (Ibid). The manifestation of these enactments offers insight into the level of reliance that Oregon's educational department placed on curriculum-based reforms.

Of specific interest for this study are the reforms in the early 1990s which demonstrate that Oregon has been working diligently toward curriculum standardization and content reform. The major effort at reform took place during the 1990s and positioned Oregon quite well for the impending introduction of NCLB legislation. Oregon instituted subject matter requirements that obligated students to achieve predetermined levels of subject mastery. These initiatives were characterized by the establishment of standards and standardized assessments, and were designated by the titles Certificate of Mastery (CIM) and Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM). Students were required to achieve mastery in the core subjects and demonstrate their abilities by reaching acceptable levels of competency as measured by required state-sponsored tests. It therefore is evident that the advent of the CIM and CAM requirements represents a substantial influence by state government to improve public secondary education by way of standardized content and assessments.

Oregon academic standards branched out into all core subjects, including the social studies. The Oregon Certificate of Initial Master (CIM) program established requirements for the social studies, as it did for the other core subjects. Yet high school



history, as well as other social studies subjects, presented a distinct set of complexities for those responsible for establishing compliance with standards. Since historical instruction includes analysis and synthesis, as well as cause and effect understanding, it is difficult to assess students' abilities in these areas with a standardized test. To underscore the point, Lawton (1981) explains the distinctions associated with historical study.

Inevitably, history requires a certain amount of narrative and chronology. But good history teaching depends also a lot upon logical analysis. In the past many history teachers have erred in two ways. First, they have not fully appreciated that learning history requires understanding generalizations and abstract concepts to a greater degree than most other subjects. Second, teachers have assumed that students understand concepts and laws based on the social sciences when in reality these must be learned by pupils. (pp. 52-3).

With content standards already established by groups like the NCSS, the adoption of standards was fairly seamless; testing, however, produced multiple challenges. When the Oregon Department of Education proposed in 2002 an assessment instrument for the social studies it came under extreme fire from teachers and other educational professionals who complained about the illegitimacy of the questions contained in the exam. The criticism revolved around the lack of congruence between the test and the content it was supposed to test for. The net result was that the 2005 proposed unveiling of a mandated exam was scrapped and replaced with a CAM voluntary exam titled the Social Studies Knowledge and Skills Test. This voluntary exam offered teachers and school districts the option of recommending it to their students who desired to demonstrate mastery in the subject matter. Needless to say, the number of students who have taken the test is minimal.

In the summer of 2008 the Oregon legislature decided to retire the CIM and CAM program. In July 2008, as a result of the passage of HB 2263 by the 2007 Oregon

Legislature, the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM), Certificate of Advanced Mastery (CAM) and the CIM subject area endorsements will sunset (ODE, 2007). It appears that the experiment with the certificate of mastery program for all Oregon students was not plausible or fully achievable. In the 2002–2003 report cards, only 31% of the state’s high school students received a CIM diploma. While those numbers were up from 26% in the previous year, the inequities were self-evident; less than 11 % of Hispanics and African Americans obtained the CIM diploma (ODE, 2003) After more than eighteen years as the foundational plan for student improvement, the CIM and CAM will inevitably be replaced by a new educational initiative.

Oregon’s early and continued decision to embrace required content standards represents support for the essential tenants of SBE reform as manifest in the NCLB legislation. The centralization of requirements and the emphasis on particular content-oriented instruction represents the current movement toward the adoption of universal curriculum requirements. From the literature reviewed in this study it can be naturally assumed that the loss of local control and general curricular decisions have altered the role of the teacher and possibly instructional practices. While the level of influence on the social studies in Oregon is not currently available, the implications can be inferred. Ross (2006) in particular speaks to curriculum changes in the social studies similar to the ones in Oregon: “The ends-means split between curriculum and teaching narrows the professional role of the teachers to the point where they have little or no function in formal curriculum development – this has never been more true than in the current era of curriculum and high stakes testing” (p. 4). Concerns regarding the insinuation of these inferences or implications speak directly to the core of this research project.

**Oregon reform section summary.**

Oregon, like many other states caught up in the educational reform efforts of the 1990s, has a legacy of efforts to reform education by establishing standards and standardized assessments. The notable CIM and CAM reform initiatives, which established the key benchmarks for student performance, demonstrate Oregon's proclivity toward reform based on content-oriented requirements.

SBE-styled mandates in the social studies in Oregon have encountered some complexities especially regarding assessment requirements. While the traditional core disciplines like math, science, and reading were heavily affected by the tentacles of the CIM and CAM imperatives, social studies was affected only in the area of established content and performance standards—not in assessment. The absence of any mandated assessment instrument in the social studies hampered the ability of the state to determine the level of compliance with the reform. As a result, it has been impossible to determine whether reform efforts have produced any improvement in student competency. The retirement of the CIM and CAM benchmarks leaves lingering questions regarding the level or implications of reform in the social studies. It is nonetheless quite plausible to assume that the push toward social studies reform in Oregon is not likely to change with the departure of the CIM and CAM, because even though the NCLB legislation doesn't immediately require standardized assessments in social studies, efforts by the NCSS and the Oregon Department of Education imply the inevitable inclusion of such assessment instruments.

## **Summary and Conclusions**

This literature review has established that America has maintained a strong interest in establishing standards for education beginning in the nineteenth century and continuing throughout the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. SBE efforts, regardless of their title or association, have promoted content standards as the essential vehicle to ensure student proficiency and the acquisition of general knowledge. Coupling assessments to content standards has been the typical practice of reform advocates who believe that standardized assessments generally ensure compliance with standards. These methods of reform have aroused an ongoing debate regarding the parameters and the focus of education restructuring. Increased governmental control has added fuel to the debate in that local control has virtually been replaced by national dominance. State boards of education have been compliant with this less-than-subtle transformation of education stemming from concern over the decline in student performance, and the need for federal financial support has precipitated support for legislative acts like the No Child Left Behind initiative.

High-stakes tests have garnered criticism and provoked resistance to their use, yet the increase in their prominence is evidenced. Advocates of testing often cite the reality that testing for compliance has a long history in American education. Nonetheless, while proponents and opponents square off, the public does not appear disheartened about the use of such tests. While the evidence mounts and the facts regarding poor student performance appear to weigh heavily in the balance, the public discussion shows a marked preference for SBE-oriented reforms. In fact, national testing itself has provided the evidence of decline heralded by reformers. Regarding the social studies, poor student

performance is underscored by national watchdogs, adding fuel to the debate. For example, the National Center for Education Statistics published its report in May 2007 and revealed that in their knowledge of civics, students are not doing much better than they were in the previous decade (Lee & Weiss, 2007). According to the National Council of the Social Studies, America's 4<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 12<sup>th</sup> graders know only very slightly more than they did about history and civics today than in the 1990s (Lee & Weiss, 2007). In contrast, questions about the validity and integrity of standardized tests beckon critics who are quick to point out the discrepancies in those types of tests (Linn, 2005). Yet the evidence suggests the interest in standardized testing is not waning (Phelps, 2005).

Subjects like the social studies find themselves embroiled in the ongoing debate regarding SBE-modeled reforms. An evaluation of the history of the social studies shows that the journey of these disciplines parallels broad reform developments in American education in that proponents have forcefully and continually supported content-based initiatives intended for the improvement of student performance. Commissions and groups, especially like the National Counsel of the Social Studies, have been on the forefront of reform efforts throughout their history and have promoted the interest and elevation of curriculum standards. They have not only supported standards as reform agents, but have created, published, and promoted their use.

Research studies stemming from the NCLB act have verified a level of instructional change and have implied the implementation of requirements. The adoption of standards-oriented instruction has been steadily increasing, and still the studies cited in this literature review have offered a mixed bag of results. Compliance is transpiring, instructional patterns have been altered, and yet initial improvements in scores, at least in

one study, now appear to be diminishing (CEP, 2007). The limits of the current studies encourage an ongoing investigation of the impact of SBE reforms. In particular, the scope of the Rand study is limited in that it presents a picture confined only to primary and middle schools; high school implementation, which is extremely relevant because these students are close to entering college or the world of work, has been largely neglected.

While state and local district control has been maintained, national oversight has increased, especially during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. States like Oregon, which early on implemented subject content standards, have embraced the NCLB legislation as a continuum of practices already fully entrenched in their history. The net result of these reform efforts is educational centralization and the standardization of curriculum. The movement toward a universalized set of subject-specific content standards reflects the belief that adopting SBE reform ideology improves student performance.

### **What have We Learned?**

There are many findings from this literature review that require the reader's attention. First, American education has a long tradition of using the approach to restructuring education. Second, while social and equity issues have often been tied to educational reform, the central focus in educational reform is tied to SBE styled initiatives. Third, social studies, and history in particular, are not immune to the influences of standardization; in fact, the NCSS, the essential campaigner for the social studies, has been a diligent advocate for universal standards and assessments in the various social studies disciplines throughout its history. Fourth, Oregon defines its educational progress by its proclivity for embracing content standards; the CIM and the

CAM are just recent examples of this type of reform effort. Fifth, standardized tests, while historically predominant and publicly supported, are deemed by opponents as problematic. These tests raise many concerns for educators, especially because they have the potential to narrow educational offerings, and they are often indicted for penalizing poorly performing students. Critics charge that American education's preoccupation with standardized tests places the society in the posture of test overload resulting in a form of "test mania" (Kohn, 2001). Also, it is commonly understood that these types of tests are limited in their ability to evaluate a broad range of human academic ability. Lastly, the Rand and CEP studies reveal mixed results from educators concerning the influence of initiatives and their counterpart, standardized testing. Further research has the potential of offering additional insight into the impact of SBE reforms on classroom teaching.

#### **What Research Gaps Presently Exist?**

Little is still known about the influence of SBE reforms, associated with the NCLB legislation, on high school history instruction. It seems worthwhile to research teacher perceptions of how these reforms have affected public high school practices and history instruction in particular. What effects, if any, have the reforms had in the classrooms? Several lingering questions surface regarding the adoption of NCLB requirements in Oregon high school social studies classrooms. Is there a quantifiable impact that the NCLB legislation is having on curriculum guidance, teacher practices, assessment activities, and school climate? The answers to these pertinent questions should offer some realistic understanding as to whether there is a measurable effect associated with the NCLB reforms. The results should be beneficial to all interested parties, including the Oregon Council for the Social Studies, the Oregon Department of

Education, and the state legislature as they continue to define the social studies curriculum and consider future assessments, especially now that the Certificate of Initial Mastery program has expired. It would also be useful to determine whether any discernable differences exist between the urban, urban clusters (suburban), and rural school districts that may cause different schools to be affected differently by mandates developed at a state level.

As a result of these realities, the present study evaluated the following research question: “At what level has Standards-Based Education reforms initiatives influenced Oregon high school history instruction and classroom practices?” A modified version of the Rand 2007 teacher’s survey, minimally adapted to social studies instruction, was used as a tool to investigate high school history teachers’ perceptions of whether reform has affected high school history instruction—and if so, what are the effects? The study surveyed public high school teachers throughout the state of Oregon regarding their perceptions of the impact of educational mandates by having them complete the adapted Rand teacher’s questionnaire. The questionnaires were coupled with six personal interviews with teachers, which probed for deeper qualitative understandings of the answers to questions posed in the teacher survey. The six teachers were selected from the survey questionnaire respondents.

In chapter two the relevant literature was addressed and unfolded offering a fuller grasp of the essential discussion while articulating the historical context surrounding the issue. Chapter three will provide the particulars of the methodological approach used in this study affording the reader an understanding of the manner in which the research questions were posited and evaluated. Additionally, the methodological framework as



well as the logistical directives will be conveyed in the chapter clarifying why this particular approach was adopted in lieu of other possible options.

## Chapter 3

### Research Design and Methodology

#### Introduction

For this descriptive research study, data was collected to ascertain the behaviors, beliefs, and attitudes of teachers (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2005) concerning Educational (SBE) reform efforts. The main device used in this investigation was a teacher survey instrument constructed by the Rand Corporation (2007) and used in their Standards-Based Accountability (SBA) 2003-2005 studies in three states. Since the basic premise of this study is that SBE initiatives, initiated by NCLB, are altering classroom instruction, I determined that it would be beneficial to investigate whether implementing state standards has altered or affected high school history instruction in Oregon. In particular, I look at teacher perceptions relative to curriculum guidance, accountability activities, teacher practices, and school climate concerns associated with SBE efforts. To facilitate this project, a mixed-methods research approach was utilized that incorporates both a modified Rand (2007) SBA teacher survey and a limited number of teacher interviews.

#### Research Perspective

This study incorporates both a quantitative and qualitative approaches. This mixed-methods approach is employed because of its alignment with the goals of the research. The quantitative survey addresses the goal of obtaining a broad view of how Oregon's high school history teachers view the effects of social studies standards on classroom instruction. This methodology offers an expansive look at the implications of the core issues pertinent to this research (Creswell, 2005). The qualitative part of the

study, which addresses the goal of acquiring a deeper understanding of teachers' responses, was accomplished through interviews with selected teachers.

The objectives of a study typically determine what methodology should be employed. In this research it was determined that a mixed-methods approach best meets the requirements of the study. Lankshear and Knobel (2004) state that mixed methods are valuable for certain research endeavors: "While many questions/problems are of a type that presupposes one form of research rather than another, not all problems preclude multiple approaches, and some positively lend themselves to studies that employ a mix" (p. 74). Wiersma and Jurs (2005) lend their support when they say, "Research associated with comprehensive school reform projects is an example of research often involving mixed methods" (p. 274). While, for example, ethnographic studies may produce a clearer understanding of the impact of standards and curriculum alignment on an individual or a select group of teachers, such studies will not produce a corporate wide-angle view; they would not necessarily determine the pervasiveness of the effects on curriculum in a statewide population. Therefore, a viable way to determine the broad influence of standards on the curriculum and the classroom is to select a quantitative survey instrument (Creswell, 2005) like the Rand SBA (Rand, 2007) survey that probes the range of issues germane to this research and offers a statewide look at teacher perceptions of standards reform efforts.

The rationalization for using a mixed-methods process is supported in several ways: it embraces current trends in research, it meets the design requirements of this type of study, and it offers several benefits. The benefits and possibilities offered by such an approach are more evident and substantiated today than they have been in the past. The

current reality is encouraging for those interested in pursuing a mixed-methods research approach. Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998) summarize how significant developments in mixed-methods processes have made that approach more tenable and effective.

This evolutionary process toward the use of mixed method and mixed model studies has been occurring at an ever increasing pace during the past 30 years due to (a) the introduction of a variety of new methodological tools (both quantitative and qualitative), (b) the rapid development of new technologies (computer hardware and software) to access and use those methodological tools more easily, and (c) the increase in communication across the social and behavioral sciences. (p. 17)

In education, questions have not always been effectively addressed with a single research approach. That is one reason why mixed-methods approaches are becoming more common—they add depth and breadth to the data collected. While some research environments are better suited to one method over another and some field researchers have preferences (Smith, 2006), the variety of research options today offers more choices than in the past.

The mixed-methods approach, recently prominent in some circles, is not really new; rather, it has just been rediscovered. Prior to the emphasis on specialization, mixed methods were commonly employed (Smith, 2006). The recent broadening of methodologies is ushering in a new era of multiple research approaches. It is fair to say that the value of such a variety of approaches is being recognized and the legitimacy of mixed-methods studies is becoming recognized “If in the field we are making real progress toward answers to my initial questions about teaching, learning, policy, and the like, we would continue along the course of single designs and methodologies, and separate disciplinary paths” (Ibid, p. 458).

Some theorists claim that mixed-methods approaches diminish concerns and negate deficiencies often associated with using only a single method. The claim is that “by incorporating studies by researchers with multiple perspectives using multiple methods, the researcher is able to cancel out the deficiencies of each one (provided the findings from the separate parts converge)” (Smith, 2006, p. 461). Greater confidence results from a study which looks at the quantitative data and uses qualitative elements to aid in the interpretation.

The mixed-methods approach confers additional benefits when the research question is not adequately answered by a single method. “It follows that mixing methodologies makes sense when the researcher has more than one research question for which more than one method fits” (Smith 2006, p. 461). Creswell (2008) initiates the point that you also conduct a mixed methods study when one type of research (qualitative or quantitative) is not enough to address the research problem or answer the research question. Mixed method research often has strong support because it offers the benefits of both quantitative and qualitative data collection, which often provides a better understanding of the research problem than one type of data alone (Creswell, 2005). Creswell (2005) states, “You use mixed methods when you want to incorporate a qualitative component into an otherwise quantitative study” (p. 510).

Within the mixed method options, there are a variety of ways to execute the research. Creswell (2005) describes the three prominent mixed-methods design formats which he calls Triangulation, Explanatory, and Exploratory. Each of these formats offers a slightly different approach. For this research, of the three options, the Explanatory method offers the best approach. Creswell (2005) explains that the Explanatory approach

is used to gain deeper insight into the data results from the quantitative survey (Ibid). It offers a clearer grasp of the specific thought processes behind the answers to the survey questions via a follow-up interview (Ibid). Triangulation also uses both quantitative and qualitative data, but the difference is that the data is collected simultaneously, rather than one method following the other, and is merged to better understand the research problem. In the Exploratory approach qualitative data is collected first, and is followed by a quantitative investigation. This method works well when the qualitative data produces phenomena which need further exploration. But for the purpose of this study, the Explanatory method was selected because it best fits the research design, which was to first obtain quantifiable data and then follow it with a process that probes for deeper insight based on the results of the quantitative study.

#### **Two-Phase approach.**

John Creswell (2005) lends support to the two-phase explanatory method when he says, “A reason for conducting a mixed methods study might be that you seek to explain in more detail through qualitative research the initial quantitative statistical results. (p. 510)” Since this research effort is interested in first obtaining broad quantitative data and then following up with an investigation based on that data, the two-phase approach appears to be the right choice. According to Tashakkori and Teddlie (1998), “These are studies that are products of the pragmatist paradigm and that combine the qualitative and quantitative approaches within different phases of the research process” (p. 19).

For this research, the two-phased survey process was selected because it offers the opportunity to clarify the results of the quantitative survey. The first and major phase of

this research, the quantitative, is in the form of a questionnaire. This questionnaire probes teachers' attitudes regarding compliance with NCLB or SBE initiatives. Wiersma and Jurs (2005) support the use of questionnaires for certain types of research studies, such as this one, particularly when national, local, community, or school settings are the focus of the investigation. The survey instrument used in this study aligns well with the research method suggested by Wiersma and Jurs (2005) since it explores educational compliance and alignment with standards, the compatibility of assessment activities with standards, teacher practices, the effect of implementing standards on teacher morale, and hindrances associated with school cultures.

The second phase of the research uses personal interviews to extract qualitative data by probing for in-depth answers to the questions deposited in the electronic survey. This explanatory process is designed to elicit explanations which lend insight to what would otherwise be bare data. The interview questions (see Appendix B) are formulated to augment the answers to the survey questions. The second phase utilized personal interviews with six teachers selected from the respondents across the state. The justification for adding qualitative data to the survey is that this research seeks to understand, for example, in what ways the curriculum alignment of standards was facilitated or how assessment activities were coupled to standards. The interviews attempt to probe for clarification of whether instructional practices have been altered by the emphasis on content standards. This research methodology has an effective track record offering a significant level of data retrieval when collective perceptions are sought. Questionnaires coupled with follow-up selective interviews have a long record of use in

research that attempts to collect data regarding perceptions, attitudes, and practices (Gall, et al., 2005).

There are multiple ways in which to wed qualitative and quantitative methods. As Creswell (2005) points out, the issue is one of prioritization. The determination of primary versus subordinate roles in the research process is usually determined by the problem that the researcher is attempting to solve. The options typically are composed of three choices (Creswell, 2005; Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998). Option one weighs the quantitative and qualitative instruments equally. Option two gives greater weight to the quantitative and assigns a lesser role to the qualitative instrument. Option three reverses the previous option by giving greater weight to the qualitative instrument and assigning a subordinate role to the quantitative instrument. The choice of which model to use is determined by the research intention; this results in a predetermined sequence of processes. Generally, if the qualitative instrument is primary, the quantitative component is quite likely conducted first to lend some insight regarding the parameters or direction of the qualitative study phase. By way of contrast, if the quantitative instrument is primary, it will generally be administered first so that the direction of the qualitative portion can home in on or enhance the understanding of the quantitative results; this is especially the case where the purpose of the qualitative data is to shed additional light on the raw data from the quantitative instrument. Conversely, if the qualitative and quantitative instruments are given equal weight, the order of operations or sequence may be less easily determined.

In summary, the mixed-methods approach, although not exempt from typical concerns regarding bias, is effective when the aim is to ascertain a wide scope of



educational perceptions and practices. From the standpoint of the relationship between curriculum and standards, questions regarding the awareness of standards, the pitfalls associated with curriculum alignment, the relevance of textbook content, forms of assessments used, instructional practices, and environmental conditions are easily grasped from a questionnaire and further qualified by subsequent interviews. The mixed-methods model lends itself well by offering a full explanation of the raw data especially when the primary purpose of the research instrument is to survey a population's perceptions. The use of what Creswell (2005) calls the Explanatory design method augments quantitative results by offering a deeper understanding of the implications of the data collected. In short, the two-phased approach offers additional clarity by probing in progressive stages.

### **Method/Logistics**

To accomplish the goal of looking at teacher perceptions of instructional practices, the following methods are employed: a survey to collect quantitative data followed by selective one-on-one interviews to collect qualitative data. Although there are limitations to this type of methodology and instrument, especially if the primary interest in the study is the extraction of significant qualitative data, its benefits appear to be favorable enough to be used in this research project.

A couple of multi-state survey devices developed and used by the educational branches of the Rand Corporation (2007) and the Center for Educational Policy (2004) encouraged this type of primary instrument and design approach. The Rand (2007) study, titled the *Accountability (SBA) Under No Child Left Behind*, and the CEP study *From the Capital to the Classroom* offer a sound roadmap on which the present study is modeled.

As a part of the Rand Corporation project, researchers used a survey of teachers in three states regarding the impact of standards provoked by the NCLB legislation on educational practices. Since the Rand Corporation had already developed and effectively used this survey instrument, it seemed sensible to reuse it with minor adaptations designed to fit Oregon social studies instructional practices. The justification for modeling this research effort on the Rand (2007) study is that the Rand study had similar objectives and purpose, particularly in its desire for a broad-based evaluation and in its utilization of both qualitative and quantitative analysis.

As noted, the Rand (2007) study probed for change in classroom practices and student achievement. It is clear from the summary of this study that the purpose of the design was to “identify factors that enhance the implementation of SBA [ Accountability] systems, foster changes in school and classroom practice, and promote improved student achievement” (p. xvii). Even though the Rand Corporation (2007) study evaluated the impact of imposed standards only on science and math instruction, it nonetheless represents a succinct, broad-based, multi-state assessment of the influence of initiatives promoted by NCLB. The multi-pronged extensive approach used in the Rand (2007) study provides a solid platform on which to build; the particulars of the surveys are especially suited to replication. Moreover, the quantitative and qualitative focus of the Rand (2007) study reflects both an objective approach, in that it quantifies the association of standards and curriculum while evaluating outcomes, and a qualitative approach, in that it incorporates teacher perceptions regarding objectives and student performance.

The process of the present research is designed specifically to replicate the teacher portion of the Rand (2007) comprehensive study, but adapted to social studies rather than

math or science. A minimally modified Rand (2007) SBI teacher survey was offered to history teachers across the State of Oregon. The only modifications to the original survey questions were the substitution of history for math or science and the use of an electronic gathering system in place of Rand's paper-and-pencil survey. Data gathering was facilitated by an electronic questionnaire posted on the SurveyMonkey site (surveymonkey.com).

The procedural processes of this research consisted of multiple steps, some of which needed to be executed prior to the actual research. The first step was the modification of the Rand (2007) survey to adapt it to high school social studies, in particular high school history courses. The second step was obtaining a statewide list of social studies teachers from the Teachers Standards and Practices Commission (TSPC social studies teacher list, January 2009). The third step was extracting history teachers from that list. This was accomplished by contacting each of the public high schools by phone and verifying which teachers were currently teaching history courses. Of the 3,035 total population of social studies teachers, 975 were determined to be history teachers, and each of those was solicited to participate in the study. The fourth step was the development of an interview list of eight questions which probed for the particulars highlighted in the teacher survey.

As part of the research project a pilot survey was conducted in May 2009. Six teachers from the Vancouver and Camas districts in Washington State were selected to alpha test the use of the instrument and to offer legitimacy to the interview forum. These six teachers were given both the electronic survey (adapted for Washington high schools) and were also solicited for follow-up interviews. The interviews were completed on site

in a person-to-person discussion forum. While the bulk of the interviews were conducted in person in face-to-face interviews, one of the pilot interviews was completed through electronic correspondence. An assessment of those processes was used to evaluate any necessary modifications needed, which were subsequently incorporated. Insights gained from the process were also noted to help refine the overall interview process.

The surveys and interviews were conducted and the data was evaluated during May and June 2009. The data retrieved from the survey was collated, analyzed, and reported in the same way as it was done in the Rand (2007) study. The percentages of responses to the various Likert-scaled choices were codified and examined. The data was analyzed to note perceived changes in the teachers' instructional approaches. Each section of responses to the questions was evaluated and compared to the results of the Rand (2007) study. The weight was placed primarily on the quantitative section because changes and alterations to classroom instruction and practices are at the core of what is being evaluated. The follow-up interviews were orchestrated according to the guidelines established in the research goals and executed accordingly.

Similar to the pilot project, the timeline and sequence for the research process followed a precise chronological order. Teachers were first offered the questionnaire electronically. This phase of the research began during the first part of May 2009. Reminder e-mails encouraging participation were sent on June 10 and June 15, 2009. The survey information was compiled and collated by November 2009. The selective interviews were conducted prior to July 2009, and a subsequent written report was constructed summarizing the comments of the interviewees. In the following months, from August 2009 through September 2009, data from the questionnaires was analyzed.

Incorporated in the analysis was a comparison with Rand (2007) SBA results and with SPSS evaluations indicating the differences between suburban (urban clusters) and rural teacher populations. The research results were compiled and the final summary report, including interpretative assessments, was written up by December 2009.

### **Pilot Project**

A pilot project was initiated to test the process, review the survey instrument, and to evaluate the interview questions and format. Six teachers were solicited to take the electronic teacher survey, which was only altered to represent Washington standards designations. Oregon and Washington standards in high school history and state-mandated curriculum requirements parallel each other. Both have content and performance standards established by their respective departments of education; neither has a mandated history assessment exam, and similar to the retirement and longevity of the Certificate of Initial Mastery (CIM) 1991 requirements in Oregon, Washington is re-evaluating the requirements of its Washington Assessment of Student Learning (WASL) 1993. Upon completion of the electronic survey, teachers were solicited to participate in the interviews. All of the six teachers who completed the pilot survey were invited to participate in one-on-one personal interviews utilizing the eight questions designed for the study project (see Appendix B). All but one of the participants consented to participate in a face-to-face, 30-minute interview. The sixth participant preferred to have the questions e-mailed, and responded electronically. As designed, the open-ended questions posed during the interview attempted to ferret out qualitative answers to augment the answers in the survey. Participants requested clarification of a couple of the interview questions, and corresponding changes were made to those questions. It was

noted that the participants were very congenial, considered the research topic relevant, and were very forthcoming with their answers and comments. The 30-minute time designation seemed to be reasonable, although in some cases the interview exceeded the half-hour limit by ten to fifteen minutes. During the interviews the teachers were also asked about the process of taking the survey, particularly about logistical or maneuverability concerns regarding the electronic media and the overall readability of the survey. No major concerns surfaced during these interview discussions. It was therefore determined that significant changes to the survey or to the follow-up interview questions were not warranted.

### **Rationale for This Type of Study**

The basic rationale for this method of study is found in the insight it lends to educational practices and teacher perceptions. This type of survey instrument and interview investigation will determine in tangible fashion whether standards are influencing classroom teaching. If it can be determined that standards are eliciting compliance by aligning curriculum and by forging assessment practices that are united with those standards, then the merit of such a project can be justified. Similarly, if teacher perceptions confirm increased student performance, then the goal of such reform efforts is merited. In contrast, if the research results reveal limited to no impact on curriculum and teaching practices, then it will be evident that SBE reforms are inconsistent with their objectives. In a general sense Creswell (2005) supports the basic research formula used in this study when he says, "We study research problems so we can assist policy makers when they make decisions, help teachers and school officials solve practical problems, and provide researchers with a deeper understanding of educational issues" (p. 61). This

type of research instrument offers a corporate assessment of teacher perspectives which augments what has already been done by the Rand Corporation (2007) and CEP (2004). Precisely, it builds upon the groundwork already established and offers a platform for study upon which other researchers can build.

The secondary justification for this research method is the volume of pertinent data produced by this study which is not necessarily tied to the objectives of the study. The breadth and the scope of the data open the door for additional understanding of a multiplicity of aspects germane to teaching in Oregon public high schools. The report generated by this study will look intently at the impact which state-mandated standards are having on instructional practices, but the residual data can be informative in a whole host of post-research investigations. Data regarding demographics, teacher preparation, instructional support activities, assessment practices, school climate, student/teacher relationships, as well as other pertinent elements will now be available to other researchers.

Beyond the immediate data value, this research can provide crucial information for decision makers who are interested in evaluating the impact on, as well as the significance of, SBE on social studies instruction (Creswell, 2005). If the Oregon Department of Education considers whether to institute a mandated assessment in history and geography in the future, the results of this study could offer insight into the weakness or strengths of adopting a state-wide or district-wide curriculum assessment instrument. Overall, the results of this survey should lend insight to the Oregon Department of Education, social studies organizations, administrators, high school and college educators,

and the Oregon legislature, affording all of them quantitative data regarding the impact of SBE on instruction as well as the implications for teacher morale.

The survey method used in this study was chosen as the best way to reach a large cross-section of teachers from around the State of Oregon. The justification for this method over other avenues is that other research options did not afford such a broad study. For example, case studies were not used because of the limits of their scope and sampling size. Action research, another option, explores practical problems (Creswell, 2005), but does not allow for the broader consideration of teacher perceptions or curriculum alignment. Incorporating a range of schools from across the state—rural, suburban, and urban—was also important in order to evaluate the pervasiveness of the impact of SBE. Whereas other methods are applicable, the chosen methodology met both the criteria of wide-ranging data retrieval and purposeful qualitative data evaluation.

As noted, the form of research used in this study was the one used by the researchers in the Rand (2007) and CEP (2004) studies, and adopted for the same reasons. The present study is consistent particularly with the Rand (2007) SBA study in that they are similar in objectives and methodology. It is obvious that particular aspects of the Rand (2007) study served as a platform and that those aspects were replicated in this study. Adapting the Rand (2007) teacher survey to this research made it unnecessary to reinvent the study instrument since the framework already existed. The Rand (2007) study offered the opportunity for replication and the encouragement to augment the data that study produced. In similar fashion, this research encourages a continual investigation of initiatives associated with initiatives. A one-time research endeavor automatically encourages additional longitudinal efforts and/or more detailed qualitative research as a



natural follow-up. The survey effectively serves as a foundation, and the data collected stands as a milestone documenting history teacher perceptions of initiatives.

Finally, utilizing a minimally modified Rand (2007) questionnaire limited issues of validity and reliability. The device has already been tested, according to typical alpha and beta processes, and was thereby purged of problems and ambiguities. The data obtained from the Rand (2007) study aligned with the objectives of the study, demonstrating continuity between purpose and data collection. The multiple-state application of the instrument evidences the latitude and flexibility of the device, and its adaptability to various regional environments.

### **Direct Measurement and Instrumentation**

The primary data collection instrument used in this research was an electronic questionnaire modeled after the Rand (2007) Standards-Based Accountability under No Child Left Behind study (see Appendix A). That particular study questioned primary and middle-school teachers regarding the impact of initiatives in three states (California, Georgia, and Pennsylvania) in the realm of math and science. This longitudinal study is ongoing, and the 2007 report, the focus of this study, summarizes the finding for the 2003-2005 school years. The Rand (2007) instrument is easily adapted to the needs of this current study.

#### **Rand survey summary.**

The Rand (2007) study used multiple research components including surveys of superintendents, principals, and teachers; interviews; selective case study visits in two districts of each state; and state assessment data as well as Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) data. These researchers utilized a pilot-testing interview procedure to inform

them of any necessary modifications to their survey questionnaires during the draft stage.

The following Rand (2007) statement clarifies their approach.

At the school level, we gathered information from principals and teachers using surveys. These surveys addressed local actions related to components of NCLB (e.g., standards, assessments, supplemental services, student transfers, teacher qualifications) as well as the contextual factors that may have influenced these actions, such as the quality of leadership, the collaboration among teachers, and the extent of PD. . . . Principals and teachers responded at even higher rates [than superintendents], 85–83 percent, respectively in 2003-2004 and 86 and 87 percent respectively in 2004-2005 (p. 14).

### **Modifications to the Rand teacher questionnaire.**

For this study, minimal modifications were made to adapt the Rand Corporation (2007) teacher survey. Since the Rand questions are generic enough, they were easily applied to high school instruction in history with minimal exceptions. References to math and science were replaced by references to history and in a few cases geography, the core of social studies instruction (see Appendix A). Any reasonable evaluation of the redesigned instrument will reveal that there are minimal modifications of the original document and that its framework, content, and intentions were not altered or realigned. In summary, the essential instrument was kept intact, thereby maintaining its validity and integrity.

### **Particulars of the survey instrument.**

In general terms, the study's questions evaluate the teachers' familiarity with and adoption of state standards in their teaching. They address school and department alignment with state standards as well as the alignment of textbooks with statewide goals. The questions address familiarity with standards, overall perceptions of the value of an approach to education, and additional efforts to bring students in line with standards.

Some questions probe whether teachers are spending additional time outside of class to ensure student assimilation of social studies content as prescribed by state standards. Concerns regarding teacher morale and time allotments also find their way into the survey, as do issues of assessment practices. Adequate Yearly Progress, school climate, and demographic information were also evaluated.

There are eight sections of questions in the teacher questionnaire used in this study. Each section is further divided into topical categories. Section 1, titled *Your Students and Your Classes*, incorporates eight groupings of questions regarding courses taught, the number of teacher assigned students, and familiarity with state standards. Sections 2 and 3, titled *History Instruction* and *Geography Instruction* respectively, incorporate 13 groupings of questions regarding content alignment, curriculum scope compared to standards, textbooks and standards, competency assessments, progress tests, personalized aspects of instructional methodology including amounts of homework, content presentation forms, collegial conferences, the reviewing of assessment data to recognize low-performing students, and peer-to-peer instruction.

Section 4, titled *Accountability*, addresses teacher perceptions of colleague, principal, and student competency as a result of changes stemming from the state emphasis on accountability. Section 5, titled *School Climate*, addresses morale, collegiality, mission, overall cooperation of the school, classroom conditions, and administration support. Section 6, titled *Parent Engagement and Involvement*, addresses the issue of parental participation. Section 7 probes *Professional Development* and mentoring programming. Section 8, titled *Your Background*, probes teacher certification and academic degrees.

Similarly, the Rand (2007) teacher questionnaire is constructed of eight sections consisting of 177 questions which offer multiple-answer options in Likert-scale fashion. Examples include answer options from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* to questions about whether textbooks parallel state standards. Questions about familiarity with state standards use answers ranging from *Never heard of them* to *very familiar*. Questions pertaining to assigned homework use answers that range from *No different* to a *great amount*. For those questions that address the use of performance assessments, the questionnaire requires an answer from *never* to *often*. The following chart offers an overview of the categories and questions found in the survey instrument.

Table 3.1 Rand (2007) SBA Teacher Survey

Rand SBA Teacher Survey (2005)			
Section	Title	Number of Questions	General Explanation
Section 1	You and your Students and Classes	27	<i>7 categories of questions regarding courses taught, how many students, and familiarity with state standards</i>
Section 2	History Instruction	67	<i>13 categories of questions regarding content alignment, curriculum scope compared to standards, textbooks and standards, competency assessments, progress tests, personalized aspects of instructional methodology including amounts of homework, content presentation forms, collegial conferences, the reviewing of assessment data to recognize low-performing students, peer-to-peer instruction, etc.</i>
Section 3	Geography Instruction	67	<i>Same as above only referencing geography</i>
Section 4	Accountability	16	<i>2 categories reflecting perceptions of teacher/principal/student competency as a result of changes stemming from the state accountability emphasis.</i>
Section 5	School Climate	36	<i>4 categories that address morale, collegiality, shared mission, overall cooperation of the school, classroom conditions, and administration support.</i>

Section 6	Parent Engagement and Involvement	7	<i>1 category reflecting parent engagement and involvement.</i>
Section 7	Professional Development	20	<i>3 categories probing professional development and mentoring programming</i>
Section 8	Your Background	3	<i>3 categories which probe teacher certification and academic degrees</i>

## **Logistics and Rationale for the Qualitative Component**

### **Teacher interviews.**

The teacher interviews were designed to delve deeper into the answers to the electronic questionnaire. The selected six interviews incorporated a semi-structured eight-question exchange (see Appendix B) with respondent teachers from various geographic regions throughout the state. The interview questions are researcher developed, and not part of the original Rand (2007) or CEP (2004) study. Their purpose is to extract meaningful qualifying data to augment the answers from the questionnaire. Whereas the Rand Corporation (2007) and the CEP (2004) studies utilized a series of focus groups to elicit clearer understanding of the findings, this research study had the benefit of soliciting perspectives from some of the same teachers who completed the survey. The selection process specifically targeted teachers who had completed the questionnaire and who expressed an interest in being interviewed.

Logistically, the interviews were face-to-face and onsite. Meetings were slated with the selected teachers at their place of employment or other nearby suitable locations. An introduction was given to clarify the purpose of the interviews, which were approximately one-half to one full hour in duration. The questions encouraged open-ended answers, and interviewees were not discouraged from sharing their complete

thoughts on the topics. Answers to the interview questions were taken in note form and later synthesized and compiled in report form.

### **The value of teacher interviews.**

The benefit of the answers given in the interviews was that they aided in clarifying research concerns. The eight questions probed specifically for deeper clarification of how and in what ways curriculum became aligned with Oregon State standards in social studies. Concerns about the emphasis on standards in departmental meetings, and teacher development opportunities, were embedded into the question-and-answer exchange during the personal interviews. Clarifications of specific teacher assessment practices, with emphasis on test preparation and alternative progress tests, were also incorporated into the interviews. Probing the issues surrounding teacher morale revealed the depth of the impact that standards are having on the emotional and practical well-being of individual teachers. Impediments to the adoption of standards likewise were investigated. Even though insights derived from these limited interviews are imperfect determinants of generalized conclusions, they are nonetheless valuable in highlighting the impact education is having on a select group of teachers.

### **Sampling Design & Procedures**

The whole population of history teachers from school districts across the State of Oregon, including those from urban, suburban, and rural districts, was solicited for the study. These teachers were all petitioned to participate in the electronic survey by a physical mailing and several subsequent e-mail reminders. There are 975 history teachers (TSPC, 2009) in 197 elementary/ secondary school districts serving approximately 564,064 students in the public schools in Oregon (ODE, 2010). From the list of social

studies teachers from the TSPC, the list of current history teachers from each school was extracted, and those teachers were solicited to participate in the research. Every high school was contacted by phone to verify the reliability of the list of history teachers and to acquire teachers' e-mail addresses. Both male and female teachers were included in the participant pool.

Designations of schools as urban, suburban, or rural were determined by consulting the U.S. Census Bureau definitions for such regions. The participants selected one of these three geographic categories as part of their introduction to the survey. The U.S. Census Bureau 2000 defines population zones as Urban (UA), Urban Clusters (UC), and Rural. Urban or core census blocks have a population density of 1,000 people per square mile. Urban Clusters have a density of 500 people per square mile. Rural areas are those outside the Urban or Urban Cluster areas (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008). For the purpose of clarification this research will refer to the Urban Clusters as Suburban. This comparison criterion was designed to evaluate the comprehensive effect of educational reform efforts across the state. In particular, the differentiation of these regions makes possible a comparative look at the results of educational efforts.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Data collection procedures set out the parameters of data procurement. The following description clarifies the procedures used in data collection. The survey was posted on the SurveyMonkey site ([surveymonkey.com](http://surveymonkey.com)) which was available to all potential participants. Several electronic reminders were sent to encourage participation. After reading IRB particulars, participants were encouraged to post their answers to the survey questions electronically. Only limited demographic information was collected

from the survey, including geographic region, gender, teaching experience, and credentials. After the questions on demographics, teachers were prompted to answer the survey questions.

The electronic survey offered simple unrestrained access to the instrument, anonymity, and easy data capturing. Although some bias and response concerns are associated with electronic and mailed surveys (Berends, 2006; Dillman & Bowker, 1998), this method best supports a statewide evaluation. Participants' answers were recorded and electronically rendered in both numeric and percentage fashion on the SurveyMonkey site. This method of data collection ensured accurate registration of perceptions and allowed ease of tabulation.

Every reasonable attempt was made to encourage participation from the whole cross-section of teachers from districts within the state. The compiled list of prospective participants adequately reflects a diversity of contributors. It is assumed that all social, racial, linguistic, and economic attributes are represented in the study merely as a result of the breadth and the blindness of the selection process. For the purpose of research transparency, subsequently posted data synthesis information will be available to all Oregon teachers via an internet website link set up for that purpose (elowe1.com).

#### **Data analysis.**

The data was compared on couple of criteria. First, teacher perceptions regarding Oregon standards were evaluated based on the percentage of respondents supporting or rejecting premises (see Likert-scale examples: Appendix A). Second, the data was further filtered according to respondent population densities (urban, suburban, and rural) allowing for a greater comparison of the broad-based impact standards are having on



teaching. While gender distinctions were incorporated into the study, the results were not compiled or tabulated along those lines.

Teacher responses to questions were compiled in both numeric and percentage fashion, paralleling the Rand (2007) SBA study, and codified to determine what percentages of the respondents supported or rejected the essential premises of the questions from the survey. Respondent answers were fielded across the spectrum of the Likert-scaled potential answers and cataloged according to the range of answers to the question. For example, those strongly agreeing or agreeing were tabulated in support of the premise of the question while those strongly disagreeing or disagreeing were tabulated as opposed to the premise of the question. Similarly those who did not have knowledge of or an opinion on the premise were likewise juxtaposed with their affirmative or negative counterparts.

Responses to the questionnaire were divided into three regional categories based on their placement in either an urban, suburban, or rural school district (see previous U.S. Census Bureau designations). Urban school districts are defined as those schools residing in the major population centers like Portland, Salem, Eugene, and Medford. Suburban districts are those on the outskirts of larger population centers such as Portland (e.g., Tigard and Lake Oswego), Salem (e.g., Kaiser), and Eugene (e.g., Springfield) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009). The results, while informative showed that there were fewer respondents from urban areas than from suburban or rural areas and that there was about an equal number of respondents from suburban and rural areas. Therefore, the evaluation of regional differences resulted in a comparison of those in suburban population centers with those in rural areas. As previously noted, the purpose for these distinctions was to

see if there is any variance between large population centers and those further removed from the central influences of educational power. Any noted regional distinctions in data results imply a disparity concerning the universal adoption of standardized curriculum requirements or teacher practices, suggesting the need for additional research evaluations.

#### **Data tabulation.**

The results of the survey were tabulated based on their respective question segments or groupings. It is evident from the Rand (2007) report that with some exceptions the data was tabulated in this same fashion. The charted data reflects percentages of teacher responses to each of the possible answers. The interpretation of the data came effortlessly in categories where the aims of the questions are clearly evident. For example, in the segments where teachers are asked about alignment with state standards, the answers to the questions revealed individual teacher perceptions of that reality. It is noted that the questions in section one and section seven of the teacher survey are biographical and useful primarily as demographic and professional development clarifications.

The technical data collection, maps out in Likert-scale fashion the results of teacher perceptions regarding the integration of standards in their teaching practices, the alignment of curriculum with standards, familiarity with standardized assessment tests, and the implementation of additional forms of assessments. Additionally, the data reflects teacher views regarding collegial and administrative support, and the influence of implementing standards on morale. As this was a descriptive survey, the answers to the questions were compiled and rendered as percentage responses.

A further comparative analysis of the geographic regions was conducted to determine any variances among those regions. The geographic sections were compared on selective portions of the survey to determine if any differences exist. A t-test evaluation of 41 core questions was executed for this purpose. Additionally, as a result of the low number of respondents, another t-test evaluation of 32 representative questions was performed to determine differences in responses from early and late participants, to establish the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the survey results (Miller & Smith, 1983).

### **Design Limitations**

The limitations of this design include limits to the scope of the subjects being covered and limits to the depth ascertained from a case study. Given that this is not a longitudinal study, the results represent only a snapshot of teacher perceptions from the 2008-2009 academic school year. As a result of no statewide quantitative assessment data, the results are limited to teacher perceptions and therefore are not quantifiable as hard data. Since this study will only represent history, other social studies disciplines, like geography, economics and psychology were excluded from the research. The rationale for their exclusion is that history and geography have traditionally been the dominant disciplines in the social studies (Michaelis, 1992) and more emphasis has been placed on history standardization than any other social studies discipline. By design this study is therefore limited to history, which means that the data cannot necessarily be analogous to other social studies subjects.

The interviews, although valuable for lending additional insight to answers to questions on the questionnaire, are extremely limited in their representation of the overall population. Any richness of the data was mediated by the reality that little can be

generalized from the limited number of participants. It could be reasonably argued that inferences are difficult if not impossible to make with such a small sampling. Naturally, the depth of the interview experience will be comparatively shallow when compared to a more intensive case study. The constraints of the predetermined interview questions narrowed the parameters of the discussion, allowing for valuable qualifying data, but not rendering a full-fledged interview experience where teacher perceptions were open to an expansive spectrum of possible discussion avenues.

With no mandated social studies or history standardized assessment instrument offered by the Education Department of the State of Oregon, it is difficult to quantify the actual level of compliance with the standards. In the absence of such an instrument, the results of the questionnaire are subjective, consisting of the teachers' perceptions regarding compliance, effect, and implication. Likewise as already noted, since the sampling was constrained to a single time period, and was not a longitudinal study, the data represents only a snapshot of current educational compliance. Additional longitudinal studies are needed to certify the validity of the research results obtained from this one research project. Similarly, since the participant levels were only 16% of the total population, additional studies are necessary so that results can be ascertained with a higher degree of generalizability.

### **Non-response Rates**

It is commonly recognized that low survey response rates are problematic. While touting the benefits of electronic surveys, Dillman and Bowker (1998) note that there are four possible errors associated with web surveys which create some concern. These errors include coverage, sampling, measurement, and non-response. While all of these problems

are typical concerns in research studies, the non-response rate error is of vital concern and applicable to this study. Dillman and Bowker (1998) underscore the claim that the data can very likely be skewed or deceptive when the response rate is low. Similarly, Lindner, Murphy, and Briers (2001) citing Tuckman (1999) who recommends that “if fewer than about 80% of people who receive the questionnaire complete and return it, the researcher must try to reach a portion of the non-respondents and obtain some data from them. Additional returns of all or critical portions of the questionnaire by 5 to 10% of the non-respondents is required for this purpose” (p. 44).

Since the respondent level was only 16% of the total population, it was necessary to conduct further research to take into consideration the non-respondent population. According to other research experts like Miller and Smith (1983), several options are available that can bolster the reliability and generalizability of low participation study results. They posit five basic approaches to limited response rates; they are as follows:

1. Ignore non-respondents.
2. Compare respondents to the general population.
3. Compare respondents to the non-respondents.
4. Compare early to late respondents.
5. Double-dip respondents.

Of these five choices, some are appropriate and others inappropriate for addressing the low response rates in this study. Option number one, ignoring the non-respondents, doesn't appear reasonable because it does not adequately address the concern about limited participation. For this research, comparing the respondents to the general population is ill-guided since the whole of the population was solicited to participate in the study, and comparing the respondents to the non-respondents is not

currently a plausible logistical option. Additional complexities would arise from reoffering the survey, and the time delay between the original and subsequent surveys would further muddle the legitimacy of the comparison. Double-dipping was also not considered a viable option because reaching the non-respondents would involve the same complexities as comparing non-respondents to respondents. Nonetheless, if it could be surmised that the sample, which was extracted from the whole of the population, is representative (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 1998) then some of the concern associated with low-return rates would be abated. In that vein, a comparison of the early to late respondents appears both logistically and logically the best solution, and it is easily facilitated by the electronic survey process. Supporting this approach, Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (1996), as cited by Linder, Murphy, and Briers (2001) noted that if, after appropriate follow-up procedures have been carried out, a response rate of less than 75% was achieved, the researcher should attempt to describe how respondents might differ from non-respondents by comparing characteristics of respondents to those of the population, comparing early to late respondents, or comparing respondents to a small random sample of non-respondents. If the difference between the two groups is negligible, then the results could arguably be considered legitimate.

### **IRB Requirements**

IRB concerns were alleviated in this research project with clear IRB disclosures and the anonymity offered by the electronic data collection. Since the teachers were requested to complete the modified Rand (2007) SBI teacher questionnaire via the electronic process offered by SurveyMonkey, the process automatically insulated participants from personal disclosures and concerns about anonymity. As is appropriate,

they were required to offer their consent; a consent declaration was issued prior to participation in the study and with every subsequent study solicitation (see Appendix D). Every attempt was made to keep from disclosing the sources of survey responses. No personal data was obtained and the demographic and personal logistical information was not discernible. After agreeing to participate, any participants who changed their minds or reconsidered their participation were automatically excused from further involvement in the study by merely closing the program. To underscore the point, no reports or summaries of the data included personal names, school districts, or administrative references. Participants selected to be interviewed voluntarily offered their names and e-mail addresses, reaffirming their understanding of the IRB restrictions; upon completion of the summary report all personal pertinent information was destroyed. The process was designed to minimize the potential risk of injury to the participants, and every reasonable attempt was made to highlight the IRB disclosures and minimize the risk of personal discovery.

### **Chapter Summary and Conclusions**

Mixing quantitative and qualitative research models renders a deeper understanding and clarification of the data obtained from only a quantitative device. As noted, the use of a two-phase mixed-methods approach facilitates research that seeks to acquire quantitative data followed by qualitative data to enhance the understanding of the quantitative data (Creswell, 2005). The justification for the use of this type of research methodology is found in its facilitation of the objectives of this study, its common usage in social science educational investigations, the benefits of a multiple research approach, and the parallels offered by this study to the Rand (2007) research design.

The survey approach renders the study both plausible and desirable when results from a cross-section of the teaching population of the State of Oregon are sought. Surveying teachers drawn from the entire history teacher population of Oregon, gives a reasonable level of trustworthiness to the issue of generalizability. Offering survey participation to the whole of the population lessens the biases that may result from a random sampling. Moreover, by utilizing a questionnaire modeled after a nationally recognized longitudinal study, questions of validity and integrity are likewise minimized. Also, the ability to augment and build upon an authoritative study renders credibility to the intention of the study while adding to the body of knowledge which already exists. Although the merits of the study are dependent upon the integrity and reliability of the research process (Berends, 2006), the potential benefits of the study can provide important information for those in positions of making decisions regarding the legitimacy and implementation of imposed standards. This study offers a ground-breaking attempt in that it evaluates the SBE impact on history, a social studies discipline which up to this date has been virtually uninvestigated (Snow-Renner & Lauer, 2005). The collected data opens the door for additional data evaluation while offering a platform on which to build future research studies.

Having here in this chapter discussed in detail the methods used for this research enterprise the following chapter will unveil the data extracted from the survey instrument and interview experiences. Intentionally, chapter four will systematically discuss the survey data while aligning the specifics of the data with the four crucial realms of questions posited in the first chapter. Survey results organized around curriculum guidance, assessment activities, teacher practices, and school climate conditions will each



be delineate. Similarly to the modeled after Rand (2007) study, the respondent choices, in Likert-scaled derived percentages, are conveyed.

## Chapter 4

### Analysis of the Data

#### Introduction

This chapter offers a summary of the data extracted from this research study. Charts and summary data are included to clarify and substantiate assertions. These inclusions convey the substance of the information obtained from the research instruments used and offer the opportunity for the reader's own assessment. As a practical matter, each chart precedes the explanation of its content and a full rendering of the research tables are found in Appendix C.

In this study a teacher survey was performed, followed by interviews with selected teachers. The essential question posited was, At what level has Standards-Based Education reform initiatives influenced Oregon high school history instructions and classroom practices? The teacher survey asks questions about Oregon state standards and teaching practices. All Oregon high school history teachers were solicited to give their perspectives on a number of issues pertinent to the discussion, including curriculum guidelines, assessment activities, teacher practices, and climate conditions. Accordingly, the survey results convey some interesting insights into teacher perspectives and understandings pertinent to state-sponsored curriculum standards and assessment practices in high school history instruction. Respondents generally appeared to be knowledgeable and well informed and to have a good grasp of the history standards. The variations of responses reveal a variety of perspectives and at the same time demonstrate similarities in thought patterns. The following summary clarifies the finding of the survey results and codifies for clarity those results that are inevitably tied together.

## **The Sample**

The pool of public school history teachers consists of 975 teachers. These teachers represent all 197 school districts as defined by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE, 2010). Of the 975 prospective teachers, 157 completed the survey—a 16% return rate. Additional activities were needed to ensure the generalizability of the data. They included a comparison of early and late responders to determine if any significant difference existed in their respective responses (Miller & Smith, 1983).

## **The Teacher Survey**

The survey device is modeled after the Rand 2007 teacher survey *Implementing Accountability 2005* (Georgia Version) as part of the *Accountability Under No Child Left Behind* research endeavor. The survey was only altered with the substitution of history and relevant social science titles for the math and science topics used in the Rand study. The only exclusions from the original survey were question clusters #35 and #36, which relate to principal leadership issues and teacher relationships with the student parents (see Appendix E). Due to the length of the survey, these clusters were deemed not pertinent to the substance of the study under development. The survey consisted of 32 questions, many of which were clusters of related questions. Examples of survey question clusters are located in Appendix A.

## **Demographics**

Who are the teachers who participated in the study and what information was revealed in their demographic portraits?

The teachers who participated in the study are highly educated; most of them (83%) hold master's degrees. Over half of them have taught for more than ten years, and almost 95% have obtained standard or probationary teaching certificates.

Five of the questions had to do with demographic data, including geographic region, gender, years taught, and the highest degree and certificate held. Roughly 80% declared their school's geographic region is a suburban or rural area (approximately 40% each). The following demographic data is important because it lends insight into the total population and clarifies the particulars of the individual teachers who participated in the study.

Table 4.1 Regional Demographics

Question 1: Please select the correct option regarding the geographic region where your school resides			
Answer options	Response percent	Response count	
Urban (1000 people per square mile)	17.8%	28	
Suburban (500 people per square mile)	39.5%	62	
Rural (other than urban or suburban)	14.3%	68	
<b>Answered question</b>			157
<b>Skipped question</b>			0

The survey resulted in 17.8% self-designating themselves as urban dwellers (1000 people per square mile), 39.5 percent suburban (500 people per square mile), and 43.3 percent rural. An evaluation of the population by city as determined by state population statistics (U.S. Census Bureau, 2009) shows that 27% of the population is urban, 15% suburban, and 58% rural. These percentages were calculated by extracting the number of those from the overall population who live in the major urban and suburban centers from the total population.

Table 4.2 Gender Demographics

Question 2: Please Mark the correct box			
Answer option	Response percent	Response count	
Male	71%	111	
Female	29%	46	
<b>Answered question</b>			157
<b>Skipped question</b>			0

Gender is another demographic factor incorporated in the study. While it is noted that over two-thirds of the respondents were male, a representative group of females took part in the study. Of those who participated in the survey, 29.3 % are female and 70.7% are male. While these results appear disproportionate, they are in line with the gender distribution in the overall population of history teachers, 25.5 % of whom are female and 74.5% male. Thus the results of this study can be considered relatively representative.

With respect to teaching tenure, participants in the survey had a wide range of teaching experience. Just over 14% had one to three years, 9% had four to five years, and 23.5% percent had six to ten years. The largest group at just over 53% had more than ten years of teaching experience. This data shows that a high percentage of the participants were veteran teachers.

The demographics also show that the participants were well qualified. The bulk of them (83%) hold master's degrees, 1.3% has a Ph.D., and 15.6% possess only a bachelor's degree. These numbers demonstrate the preeminence of a master's level education for the vast majority of those who participated in the survey.

### **Method of Data Analysis**

Likert scale answers were used in the survey to ascertain participant perspectives. As a general rule, the scoring of answers used a process which combined scores depending on which side of the Likert scale they resided. Specifically, on the questions using a five-point rating system ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree (also including a fifth option, "I don't know"), the results for agree and strongly agree were combined, and so were the results for strongly disagree and disagree. Rounding up percentages, while generally resisted in the data analysis process, was done occasionally

for discussion purposes. Terms like “almost” or “just under” reflect answer percentages which are less than 0.2% for the declared rounded-up number. Please see the actual charts located in the Appendix A for precise renderings.

### **Curriculum Guidelines: Familiarity with State Standards.**

Are Oregon history teachers familiar with Oregon social studies standards, particularly history standards?

Table 4.3 Familiarity with Standards

<b>Question 4: How familiar are you with the Oregon Achievement Standards and the Oregon Performance Standards in the following subjects?</b>					
	<b>Never heard of them</b>	<b>Heard of them, but don't know much about them</b>	<b>Familiar with the main points, but not the details</b>	<b>Have a thorough understanding of them</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>
a. Oregon Achievement Standards for history	5%	8%	44.9%	42.9%	3.26
b. Oregon Performance Standards for history	5%	8%	41.0%	46.8%	3.3

For the most part, the evidence demonstrates that the teachers who participated in the study were familiar with Oregon state standards. The results underscore the reality that respondents are keenly aware of Oregon state achievement and performance standards. Teachers were asked about their familiarity with state achievement and performance standards in four social studies disciplines: history, geography, economics, and civics. Just fewer than 88% were familiar with or had a thorough understanding of history achievement and performance standards and nearly 75% were familiar with or had a thorough understanding of geography performance and achievement standards. The numbers for economics were lower at about 70%, and the numbers for civics were about

80%. Out of a rating value of 4, knowledge of achievement and performance standards in these four social studies disciplines averaged at a 3.03 point value.

### **Curriculum guidelines: alignment with standards.**

Have Oregon school districts aligned their history curriculum with state standards? Do history teachers find the state standards useful as a guideline for instruction?

The fundamental data pertinent to this research has to do with teachers' awareness of state standards in history and the implementation of those standards. Relevant to that discussion are questions about alignment, understanding of content, historical reasoning, and the use of standards for classroom planning. The answers to those questions offer insight into whether state content and performance standards are influencing teacher practices. The data from the survey reveals that most history teachers believe that they have aligned their teaching with Oregon state standards (a significant 83% agree or strongly agree). The additional supportive questions also indicate that teachers are aware of the span of content included in the state standards. Over 68% said that the content exceeded the time allotments afforded by the school year. Most of the participants (67%) also concluded that some desirable content was absent from the list of state standards. While the majority (62%) declared that state standards were helpful for lesson planning, the percentage was smaller than for other relevant questions.

Table 4.4 Teacher Appraisal of the Alignment with Standards

<b>Question 6: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Oregon standards in history?</b>						
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. The Oregon standards in history include more content than can be covered adequately in the school year	4.5%	23.4%	25.3%	43.5%	3.2%	3.18

b. The Oregon standards in history do not give enough emphasis to historical reasoning and problem-solving	2.0%	31.4%	35.9%	22.2%	8.5%	3.04
c. The Oregon standards in history do not cover some important content areas	7.0%	27.5%	38.6%	28.8%	4.6%	3.09
d. The Oregon standards in history are useful for planning my lessons	9.1%	24.7%	51.9%	11.0%	3.2%	2.75
e. I have aligned my teaching with the Oregon standards in history	4.6%	9.2%	53.6%	30.1%	2.6%	3.17

The questions concerning the teacher appraisal of state standards offered some interesting insights. The survey results showed that little assistance or control was provided for implementing state standards in history, yet over three quarters of the teachers said that the alignment with standards was a reality. Eighty-three percent of the history teachers surveyed said that they had aligned their teaching with the Oregon standards in history. While 62% found the Oregon standards in history to be useful for planning lessons, just below 34% said the standards were not useful. Other concerns were the limited attention given to logical reasoning in the standards, and the scope of content being too much to cover in the time allowed. Notably, 58% and 67% respectively said that historical reasoning and important content were lacking in the state standards. Sixty-nine percent of the teachers surveyed agreed or strongly agreed that Oregon history standards included more content than could be adequately covered in the school year (Question #6).

Table 4.5 Actions to Assist in the Use of Standards

<b>Question 5: Did your district or state ever take any of the following actions to assist schools and teachers using the Oregon standards in history for improving curriculum and instruction in history? If the action occurred, how useful was it to you as a teacher?</b>						
	<b>Did not occur</b>	<b>Not useful</b>	<b>Minimally useful</b>	<b>Moderately useful</b>	<b>Very useful</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. Established detailed curriculum guidelines aligned with the Oregon standards in history	21.3%	7.7%	21.3%	36.8%	12.9%	3.12



b. Established a specific pacing plan or instructional calendar indicating a schedule of instructional content throughout the year	49.0%	6.5%	14.2%	18.1%	12.3%	2.38
c. Monitored and provided feedback on the implementation of the standards in classrooms (e.g., by reviewing lesson plans or student's work or by conducting walk-throughs)	57.8%	9.7%	15.6%	12.3%	4.5%	1.96
d. Mapped out the alignment of textbooks and instructional programs to the Oregon standards in history	36.4%	10.4%	24.7%	21.4%	7.1%	2.53
e. Provided sample lessons linked to the Oregon standards in history	54.5%	1620.0%	16.2%	11.7%	1.9%	1.91

When asked whether actions taken by the district or state to align curriculum to standards were helpful, most of the results were mediocre with a high percentage revealing that these actions did not occur. Regarding guidance with the specific alignment of history standards by district or state entities, nearly 50% of the teachers surveyed believed that the state established detailed curriculum guidelines, aligned with Oregon state standards, were moderately to very useful, while 21.3% selected the survey option “did not occur.” The rating average regarding detailed curriculum guideline alignment was 3.12 out of 5. Almost 54% of the participants answered “did not occur” to questions about the establishment of specific pacing, monitored feedback, and the provision of sample lessons aligned with state standards.

Regarding professional development, 26% said there was no emphasis on state standards in professional development activities, 31% said there was a minor emphasis, and 22% and 19% respectively acknowledged a moderate to major emphasis during professional development opportunities (Question #28).

### **Textbooks and state standards.**

Are the textbooks used in high school history classrooms aligned with Oregon state standards?

Table 4.6 Alignment of Textbooks to Standards

<b>Question 7: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the history textbooks and curriculum materials provided by your school?</b>						
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. I am satisfied with the quality of history textbooks and curriculum materials in my school	19.2%	27.8%	37.7%	13.9%	1.3%	2.5
b. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are well aligned with the Oregon standards in history	6.0%	18.5%	59.6%	12.6%	3.3%	2.89
c. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are too difficult for the majority of my students	13.3%	55.3%	22.7%	67.0%	2.0%	2.29
d. I often need to supplement the history textbooks and curriculum materials with additional material to cover the Oregon standards in history adequately	2.0%	19.2%	35.1%	43.0%	7.0%	3.21

When asked about history textbooks and whether they align with Oregon state standards in history, the majority believed that they do. Fifty-one percent agreed or strongly agreed that the history textbooks their district uses are satisfactory. Additionally, 72% said that their textbooks were well aligned with Oregon Standards in history. To the question of textbook alignment, 28.5% answered moderately useful and very useful in contrast to 36.4% who declared that alignment did not occur (Question #5). The survey results revealed that 68% of the respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement that their district's history textbooks and curriculum materials were too difficult for the majority of their students, and 78% said that they supplemented the textbook and curriculum materials to cover Oregon standards in history adequately (Question #7).

#### **Assessment activities: Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test.**

How familiar with and reliant on this accountability assessment were the high school teachers across the state of Oregon?

The only state standard test addressing history is embedded in the broad ranging social science test (SSKST), which is voluntary and not punitive. The data reveals that teachers have a limited exposure to the SSKST test. Similarly, few schools require subject progress tests.

Table 4.7 Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test

<b>Question 8: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) in history? Please answer the questions whether or not your students are tested.</b>						
	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagreed</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. The history SSKST is a good measure of student's mastery of the Oregon standards in history	18.7%	18.7%	6.7%	7.0%	.55.3	3.55
b. The history SSKST is too difficult for the majority of my students	4.0%	15.9%	15.2%	2.0%	62.9%	4.04
c. The history SSKST includes considerable content that is not in our curriculum	2.7%	13.3%	18.7%	6.7%	58.7%	4.05
d. The history SSKST omits considerable content that is in our curriculum	2.0%	4.7%	24.7%	11.3%	57.3%	4.17
e. I have aligned my teaching with the history SSKST	18.7%	22.7%	7.3%	1.3%	50.0%	3.41
f. The history SSKST adequately measures historical reasoning and problem-solving	7.4%	15.4%	.054	7.0%	71.1%	4.13
g. I feel a great deal of pressure to improve my student's scores on the history SSKST	22.0%	18.7%	7.3%	3.3%	48.7%	3.38

The voluntary non-mandated Oregon Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) did not fare well in the survey results. The results regarding this assessment device disclosed that history teachers have little or no knowledge of it. A significant majority answered the questions regarding the content and value of the test by selecting the "I don't know" answer option. To the six questions about knowledge of the value, content, alignment, and assessment of problem-solving ability of the test, an average of

59% of respondents answered “I don’t know.” Only 8.4% of the respondents answered agree or strongly agree, and 12% strongly disagreed or disagreed. Additionally, 48.7 also acknowledged that they didn’t know if there was a great deal of pressure to improve their students’ SSKST scores. Over 86% of the respondents declared that the results of the test were not available to them. Seventy-eight percent determined that the SSKST test made no difference to their teaching practices, and 83% acknowledged that they did not have access to the results (Question #8, #9, #10, #11). Eighty-eight percent said that there was no emphasis on the SSKST assessments during professional development activities (Question #28).

Table 4.8 State’s Accountability System Under NCLB

<b>Question 20: To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the state’s accountability system under NCLB? (Mark one answer in each row)</b>					
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. The state’s accountability system supports my personal approach to teaching and learning	3.5%	16.7%	57.4%	28.5%	3.05
b. The state’s accountability system leaves little time to teach content not on the state tests	20.1%	45.8%	29.9%	4.2%	2.18
c. Because of pressure to meet the AYP target, I am focusing more on improving student achievement at my school	7.7%	37.8%	39.9%	14.7%	2.62
d. The possibility of my school receiving rewards or sanctions is a very strong motivator for me	2.8%	22.4%	35.0%	39.9%	3.12
e. The state’s accountability system is so complicated it is hard for me to understand	11.1%	43.1%	36.8%	9.0%	2.44
f. The accommodation policies regarding testing special education students (students with IEPs) and students who are English Language Learners (Limited English Proficient students) are clear to me	3.5%	42.4%	37.5%	16.7%	2.67
g. Overall, the state’s accountability system has been beneficial for students at my school	2.1%	21.1%	49.3%	27.5%	3.02

h. As a result of the state's accountability system, high-achieving students are not receiving appropriately challenging curriculum or instruction	19.4%	38.2%	30.6%	11.8%	2.35
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When asked whether the state's accountability system supports personal approaches to teaching and learning, 80% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Fifty-four percent of the respondents believed that the accountability system was complicated and hard to understand. Seventy-four percent felt that the accountability system was not an incentive or motivator. Just below 77% disagreed with the idea that the accountability system was beneficial to students. When asked whether the state's accountability test left time to teach content not on the state tests, 66% agreed. A majority of respondents believed that the high-achieving students were not being challenged: 57% marked strongly agree and agree, whereas 42% disagreed. Forty-six percent agreed and 54% strongly agreed that IEP and LEP accommodation policies regarding testing procedures were clear (Question #20).

#### **Assessment activities: history progress tests.**

Do Oregon school districts implement and require regular history progress tests?

Table 4.9 History Progress Tests

Question 12: Progress Tests		Yes	No
All teachers monitor their student's progress. Sometimes districts or schools require that additional test be administered. Are you required by your district or school to administer specific history progress tests (i.e., interim tests, benchmark tests, diagnostic tests) on a periodic basis to monitor your student's progress in history?		4.0%	97.4%
	Two to three times per year	Approximately every six to eight weeks	Approximately every two to four weeks

How often are the required history progress tests administered?	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
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The questions about assessment activities revealed that few teachers use high school history progress tests. When asked whether their districts required the teachers to give student progress tests in history, over 97% said no. Of the just under 4% in districts which require such tests, 43% offer them only two or three times per year. Seventy-one percent said the test scores are available to them within a 24 hour period. Fifty-seven percent said that the tests are multiple choice, and 43% said that the tests were administered on the computer. Likewise, 43% said the tests were *not* administered on the computer. Only 28%, or two of the seven respondents, said that the results are reported to the district. One hundred percent of the respondents either said that the test is not useful or they don't know whether the scores are associated with consequences for teachers. Of the three questions that asked whether the progress tests were good measures of mastery, relevant to the preparation for the SSKST test, or helpful in identifying gaps in curriculum and instruction, 64% of the respondents strongly disagree or disagree (Questions #12-#16).

### Teacher Practices

Have Oregon high school teacher practices changed as a result of the implementation of state standards in history?

Table 4.10 Activities in History Instruction

**Question 17: How often do you do each of the following activities in your history instruction. (Mark one answer per row regarding frequency) [If you teach history to more than one class, answer in terms of typical practice]**

Never	Rarely ( a few times a year)	Sometimes (once or twice a month)	Often (Once a week or more)	Rating Average
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Plan different assignments or lessons for groups of students based on their performance	53.0%	24.5%	46.4%	23.8%	2.89
Assign history homework	7.0%	12.6%	19.9%	66.9%	3.53
Re-teach topics because student performance on assignments or assessments did not meet you expectations	3.3%	29.1%	49.7%	17.9%	2.82
Have students work on extended history investigations or projects	1.3%	35.8%	45.0%	17.9%	2.79
Introduce content to the whole class through formal presentations or direct instruction	0.0%	6.0%	18.7%	75.3%	3.69
Review assessment results to identify individual students who need supplemental instruction	2.6%	29.1%	50.3%	17.9%	2.83
Review assessment results to identify topics requiring more or less emphasis	3.4%	21.1%	54.4%	21.1%	2.93
Provide help to individual students outside of class time	0.0%	8.0%	36.0%	56.0%	3.48
Confer with another teacher about alternative ways to present specific topics or lessons	3.3%	17.3%	47.3%	32.0%	3.08
Conduct a pre-assessment to find out what students know about a topic	11.3%	37.7%	38.4%	12.6%	2.52
Have students help other students learn history content (e.g., peer tutoring)	5.3%	27.3%	42.7%	24.7%	2.87
Refer students for extra help outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring)	16.8%	49.0%	26.2%	8.1%	2.26

Teacher practices are addressed in the survey. These questions establish the basis of instructional practices so that a comparison over the last year can be evaluated.

Regarding homework, 70% of the surveyed teachers assign homework either once or twice a week or once or twice a month. Almost 24% do it weekly. Twenty-four percent also acknowledged that they do it rarely or a few times a year. A relatively similar percentage (62%) assigns extended history projects or investigations. Almost 36% do not assign such projects. Seventy-five percent of history teachers introduce content through formal presentations or direct instruction. A significant percentage of teachers declare that they spend out-of-class time to help students. Ninety-two percent offer out-of-class assistance to students once a week (56%) or once a month (36%). Only 26% refer students to tutoring monthly, in contrast with 49% who take such actions rarely or a few

times a year. Because of concerns about student performance, teachers plan different assignments for students based on performance, reteach topics if student performance is poor, review assessments with students, review assessments to identify areas needing more or less emphasis in instruction, conduct pre-assessments, or have students engage in peer instruction. An average of 47% of teachers participated in the previous actions once or twice a month, whereas 19% engaged in such activities once a week or more. Similarly, 47% of teachers confer with other teachers, looking for alternative ways to present topics or lessons, once or twice a month, while 32% engage in such actions once or more a week. Most teachers registered no change in the above-mentioned actions during the current school year (2008-2009) as contrasted with the previous school year (2007-2008). An average 82% checked the “about the same” options for the questions in this section (the lowest percentage being 75% and the highest being 89%) (Questions #17 & #18).

Table 4.11 Changes to Features in your School

<b>Question 19: Please indicate how the following features of your school have changed as a result of the state's accountability system (including standards, assessments, adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets, rewards, and sanctions).</b>				
	<b>Changed for the worse</b>	<b>Did not change due to accountability system</b>	<b>Changed for the better</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. The principal's effectiveness as an instructional leader	18%	65%	18%	2.00
b. Teacher's general focus on student learning	12%	61%	27%	2.15
c. Teacher's relationships with their students	9%	78%	13%	2.04
d. Morale of the school staff	45%	45%	10%	1.66
e. Student's learning of important skills and knowledge	10%	74%	17%	2.07
f. Student's focus on school work	12%	78%	10%	1.99
g. Academic rigor of the curriculum	16%	67%	17%	2.01



h. My own teaching practices	7%	65%	29%	2.22
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Assessing the impact of accountability, including standards, assessment, adequate yearly progress targets, and district and state leverage, required answers to several questions. Overall, the survey results determined little alteration in teacher perceptions resultant from the institution of standards, assessments, adequate yearly progress targets (for Oregon these are evaluated for English and math), and district and state leveraging. To questions about the effectiveness of principals, personal teaching practices, general teaching practices, and the academic rigor of the curriculum, 60 to 65% answered “did not change.” Notably 28% did believe that their own teaching practices changed for the better as a result of accountability measures. Seventy-eight percent said that their relationship with their students did not change. Regarding students’ focus on work and learning important skills and knowledge, 78% answered “did not change.” For some teachers morale was impacted by accountability measures. Forty-four percent believed that the morale of the staff was changed for the worse by the advent of standards, assessments, annual targets, and the pressure exerted by accountability measures. In contrast, 45% claimed that there was no relevant change and 10% believed that morale changed for the better (Question #19).

Table 4.12 Conditions in Your School

<b>Question 21: To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the conditions in your school?</b>					
	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
a. Most of my colleagues share a focus on student learning	41.6%	53.7%	3.4%	1.3%	1.64
b. Our school has clear strategies for improving instruction	18.1%	56.4%	22.1%	3.4%	2.11
c. Teacher morale is high	6.8%	41.9%	35.1%	16.2%	2.61

d. Many new programs come and go in our school	27.7%	37.2%	30.4%	4.7%	2.12
e. There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at our school	12.1%	48.3%	28.9%	10.7%	2.38
f. Curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across different grade levels at our school	9.4%	35.6%	42.3%	12.8%	2.58
g. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be	16.1%	61.1%	20.1%	2.7%	2.09
h. I feel accepted and respected as a colleague by most staff members	49.3%	46.6%	2.7%	1.4%	1.56

An overwhelming number of respondents believed that their colleagues shared a focus on student learning; over 95% strongly agreed or agreed to this premise. Seventy-seven percent believed that their colleagues shared their belief and values regarding the central mission of the school, and 96% felt respected and accepted by their colleagues. When asked whether teacher morale was high, 49% agreed and 51% disagreed. Many history teachers (60%) believed that new programs come and go in their institution. Regarding consistency in curriculum, instruction, and materials, 60% agreed while 55% acknowledged that curriculum was not coordinated across different grade levels. When asked whether the respondent's school had clear strategies for improving instruction, a significant 74% agreed (Question #21).

### **School Climate: Impediments to learning.**

What school climate conditions exist that may hinder or prevent students from achieving high levels of academic performance?

Table 4.13 Hindrances to Academic Success

<b>Question 22: There are many conditions that may hinder or prevent students from achieving at high levels in school. To what extent is each of the following factors a hindrance to your student's academic success?</b>				
<b>Student and Family Conditions</b>				

	Not a hindrance	Slight hindrance	Moderate hindrance	Great hindrance	Rating average
a. Inadequate basic skills or prior preparation	0.041	0.156	0.272	0.531	3.29
b. Lack of support from parents	0.041	0.143	0.252	0.565	3.34
c. Student absenteeism and tardiness	0.02	0.116	0.218	0.646	3.49

When addressing the impact of standards and assessments on instruction, the possibility of existing impediments may hamper the success of both practices. It is undeniable that student complexities or lack of administrative support can hinder the successful implementation of standardized instruction. Teachers were asked about such impediments to solicit the level of hindrance they assigned to each. Additionally, they were asked about school climate conditions. The results indicate that impediments to education exist, but most of the respondents registered a slight to moderate hindrance concerning the majority of particular elements addressed in the survey. The exceptions to this general synopsis were in the areas of student ability and class size; teachers offered a range of responses from slight to great on the hindrance scale.

Regarding things that hinder student academic success, most respondents (82%) gave a moderate to great rating to inadequate or poor preparation and skills, lack of parental support, and student absenteeism or tardiness (Question #22).

Table 4.14 Classroom Conditions

Classroom Conditions					
	Not a hindrance	Slight hindrance	Moderate hindrance	Great hindrance	Rating average
d. Insufficient class time to cover all the curriculum	16.3%	36.1%	34.0%	13.6%	2.45
e. Wide range of student abilities to address in class	6.1%	24.3%	40.5%	29.1%	2.93
f. Large class size	15.5%	18.2%	43.2%	23.0%	2.74

In regard to insufficient class time, only 47% considered this a moderate to great hindrance. In contrast, 69% highlighted the range of student abilities as a moderate to great hindrance, and 66% considered large class sizes to be a hindrance (Question #23).

Table 4.15 School Conditions

<b>Question 24: School Conditions</b>					
	<b>Not a hindrance</b>	<b>Slight hindrance</b>	<b>Moderate hindrance</b>	<b>Great hindrance</b>	<b>Rating average</b>
h. Frequent changes in school priorities or leadership	33.8%	27.0%	23.0%	16.2%	2.22
i. High rate of teacher turnover	50.3%	29.3%	14.3%	6.1%	1.76
j. Lack of school resources to provide the extra help for students who need it	23.6%	26.4%	25.7%	24.3%	2.51
k. Lack of teacher planning time built into the school day	36.1%	27.2%	19.0%	17.7%	2.18
l. Other (Specify _____)	46.2%	3.8%	7.7%	42.3%	2.46

As a general summation, the survey participants considered changes in leadership, teacher turnover, lack of resources, or the lack of teacher planning time as minimal impediments. These averaged together at 63% of the participants rating these factors as not a hindrance or a slight hindrance. Of the school conditions listed on the survey, teacher turnover was the least hindrance (rated not a hindrance or a slight hindrance by 79%) and the lack of school resources the greatest (rated a moderate or great hindrance by 50%). The data reveals that teacher turnover appears to be of minimal concern and that school resources are a concern for half of the history teacher population (Question #24).

#### **School climate: professional development.**

Do professional development opportunities envelop and facilitate collaborate educational practice?

Table 4.16 Professional Development Activities

**Question 25: During the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how many times did you engage in each of the following professional development activities with other teachers or administrators? If you participated, how valuable was each for your own professional development? (Circle one number for frequency and, if you participated, circle one number for value in each row.)**

<b>Frequency</b>	Never	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Daily or almost daily	Rating average
a. Developing lessons or courses with other teachers	11.4%	40.9%	24.2%	16.8%	6.7%	2.66
b. Discussing teaching practices or instructional issues with other teachers	7.0%	17.6%	37.8%	26.4%	17.6%	3.43
c. Reviewing state test score results with other teachers	49.7%	40.3%	7.4%	7.0%	2.0%	1.65
d. Observing another teacher for at least 30 minutes at a time	50.3%	35.6%	5.4%	6.7%	2.0%	1.74
e. Receiving feedback from another teacher who observed in your class	51.7%	37.6%	6.0%	2.0%	2.7%	1.66
f. Acting as a coach or mentor to another teacher	41.2%	28.4%	13.5%	5.4%	11.5%	2.18
g. Receiving coaching or mentoring from another teacher	61.7%	23.5%	10.1%	2.7%	2.0%	1.6
h. Participating in teacher collaborative, networks, or study groups	25.5%	34.9%	27.5%	9.4%	2.7%	2.29
i. Participating in a school or district committee or task force focused on curriculum and instruction	35.8%	33.8%	20.9%	6.1%	3.4%	2.07

Survey results show that during the last school year and previous summer, teachers actively participated in professional development activities. However, the results also suggest that subject collaboration, mentoring, assessment discussions, and peer assessments were minimal. Some lesson or course developments and discussions regarding teaching practices and collaborative activities took place a few times a month, or in some cases twice a month. Teachers took part in school or district curriculum task forces a few times a year or once or twice a month, although almost 36% said they never participate in these activities (Question #25). A clear majority (57%) of respondents revealed that professional development opportunities did not align with curriculum standards, and that there was no emphasis, or only a minor emphasis, on standards during professional development opportunities.

Table 4.17 Professional Development Emphasis

**Question 28: During your participation in professional development activities in the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how much emphasis was placed on the following areas? If there was emphasis, to what extent did you change your teaching as a result of the professional development? (Circle one number for emphasis and, if there was emphasis, circle one number for instructional change in each row.)**

<b>Emphasis</b>	No emphasis	Minor emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Major emphasis	No change	Rating Average
a. History and history teaching	30.0%	24.8%	20.6%	22.7%	1.4%	2.4
b. Geography and geography teaching	61.6%	28.3%	8.0%	7.0%	1.4%	1.52
c. Instructional strategies for English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English-Proficient students)	32.1%	22.1%	21.4%	23.6%	7.0%	2.39
d. Instructional strategies for low-achieving students	11.3%	29.1%	35.5%	22.7%	1.4%	2.74
e. Instructional strategies for special education students (i.e., students with IEPs)	25.5%	39.0%	25.5%	9.2%	7.0%	2.21
f. Aligning curriculum and instruction with state and/or district content standards	26.2%	31.2%	22.7%	19.1%	7.0%	2.37
g. Preparing students to take the SSKST assessments	87.9%	5.7%	5.7%	0.0%	7.0%	1.2
h. Interpreting and using reports of student test results	68.1%	15.9%	12.3%	2.9%	7.0%	1.52

The data from the survey responses reveal that professional development opportunities were plentiful. Supporting that point, 22% said that they had 5–10 hours of professional development, 42% had 20–40 hours, and 29% had more than 50 hours. However, regarding professional development associated with history, 33% had zero hours, 40% had 5–10 hours, and 22% had 20–40 hours. By way of contrast, 74% had zero hours aligned with geography instruction (Question #27).

Interdepartmental and district developmental activities were limited, according to the responses in the survey. The development of lessons or courses with colleagues, discussion of practices, and the opportunity for teacher collaborations were noted as taking place either a few times a year or once or twice a month. However, 65% participated in reviewing test scores with colleagues, collaborative lesson developments, 55% acknowledged discussing teacher and instructional practices, and 62% took part in

collaborative or network groups. Thirty-three percent of the surveyed teachers did acknowledge participating in these activities a few times a year. Twenty-five percent stated that they never participated in teacher collaborations, networks, or study groups. Survey questions about observing other teachers, receiving teacher feedback, receiving coaching or mentoring, and participating in school or district task forces resulted in an average of 51% who said they never engage in these activities. The results revealed that 61% of the teachers never receive coaching or mentoring. In contrast 23% acknowledged that they receive coaching or mentoring a few times a year (Question #25). Regarding the value of discussing teaching practice or instructional issues, 50% of the teachers rated these activities as very valuable, and 43% rated them moderately valuable. An average of 41% considered the various professional development activities as moderately valuable (Question #26). A large percentage of teachers gave answers to the survey which demonstrate no changes to their teaching as a result of professional development activities that focused on history and geography teaching, LEP/low achieving/special education students, alignment with curriculum or SSKST assessments, or student test scores. An average of 64% stated that there was no change, and an average of 32% said there was a moderate change (Question #29). To the question whether professional development activities addressed the alignment of curriculum and instructional standards with state content standards, 26% declared no emphasis and 31% said there was a minor emphasis. A combined percentage of just under 42% regarded the emphasis on alignment of standards in professional development activities as moderate to major (Question #28).

### **Section summary and conclusions.**

In summary, the results of the survey suggest several general conclusions. First, history teachers in Oregon are aware of state content and performance standards and are generally aligning their curricula with them. Second, there exists minimal exposure to and knowledge of the Social Science Skills and Knowledge Test. Third, the usefulness of state curriculum standards is that they offer a functional guide for lesson development and planning. Fourth, across the state of Oregon, progress tests in high school history are not widely practiced. Fifth, teacher practices have not significantly been altered during the previous year as a result of state content and assessment standards. Sixth, professional development opportunities, during the last year, minimally addressed state history content standards. Seventh, school climate includes some hindrances which impede student success. Eighth, opportunities for collegial support and collaboration are nominal at best. Finally, the leverage wielded by state agencies and school districts on the adaptation and implementation of state standards and assessments is minimal if not inconsequential.

### **Suburban and Rural Analysis**

The comparison between suburban (Urban Clusters – U.S. Census Bureau) and rural school districts offers a comparative look at the implementation and impact of standards in different educational environments. An evaluation of Oregon curriculum standards and SBE reforms in various geographic regions produces a clearer picture of the influence of those efforts. Similarly, the breadth of the data obtained from a statewide assessment presents a broader panoramic view of SBE initiatives. To facilitate this endeavor a cross tab evaluation was performed on suburban and rural responses to



ascertain whether any serious differences existed. The following data compares the two regions, probing for significant differences.

Table 4.18 Regional t-test Summary

Regional t-test Summary Results							
Group Statistics							
	Region	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t	df	Significance Level
4a	Suburban	61	3.31	.847	-.088	127	0.93
	Rural	68	3.32	.701			
4b	Suburban	61	3.31	.827	-.086	127	.931
	Rural	68	3.32	.762			
6a	Suburban	58	3.29	.817	2.246	121	.026
	Rural	65	2.92	.989			
6b	Suburban	53	2.81	.878	.203	115	.839
	Rural	64	2.78	.723			
6c	Suburban	54	2.94	.712	-.282	118	.778
	Rural	66	2.98	.832			
6d	Suburban	56	2.73	.798	.448	120	.655
	Rural	66	2.67	.810			
6e	Suburban	59	3.20	.689	.103	120	.918
	Rural	63	3.19	.692			
7b	Suburban	56	2.80	.644	-1.491	118	.139
	Rural	64	2.98	.678			
8a	Suburban	25	1.96	.611	1.292	53	.202
	Rural	30	1.70	.837			
8b	Suburban	18	2.39	.698	-.174	44	.863
	Rural	28	2.43	.790			
8c	Suburban	20	2.65	.745	.511	48	.612
	Rural	30	2.53	.819			
8d	Suburban	20	3.00	.459	-.488	50	.628
	Rural	32	3.09	.777			
8e	Suburban	26	1.69	.679	-2.086	57	.041
	Rural	33	2.12	.857			
17a	Suburban	59	2.88	.911	.030	122	.976
	Rural	65	2.88	.740			
17b	Suburban	59	3.61	.670	1.239	122	.218
	Rural	65	3.45	.791			
17c	Suburban	59	2.76	.773	-.276	122	.783
	Rural	65	2.80	.733			
17e	Suburban	58	3.67	.574	-.339	121	.735
	Rural	65	3.71	.579			
18a	Suburban	58	2.17	.464	-.089	117	.929
	Rural	61	2.18	.500			
18b	Suburban	58	2.09	.388	-.571	117	.569
	Rural	61	2.13	.465			

18c	Suburban	58	2.07	.491	-1.869	116	.064
	Rural	60	2.23	.465			
18d	Suburban	58	2.21	.409	-.481	117	.631
	Rural	61	2.25	.471			
18e	Suburban	58	2.07	.368	-.638	117	.525
	Rural	61	2.11	.412			
18f	Suburban	58	2.10	.360	-.159	117	.874
	Rural	61	2.11	.412			
18i	Suburban	58	2.21	.450	.480	117	.632
	Rural	61	2.16	.522			
19e	Suburban	55	2.11	.497	.432	111	.667
	Rural	58	2.07	.491			
19f	Suburban	55	2.04	.470	.456	111	.649
	Rural	58	2.00	.375			
19g	Suburban	55	2.02	.561	.167	111	.867
	Rural	58	2.00	.592			
20a	Suburban	55	2.91	.727	-.423	116	.673
	Rural	63	2.97	.782			
20g	Suburban	54	2.89	.691	-.956	114	.341
	Rural	62	3.02	.735			
21c	Suburban	59	2.58	.914	.032	120	.975
	Rural	63	2.57	.777			
21e	Suburban	59	2.51	.838	1.775	121	.078
	Rural	64	2.25	.777			
21f	Suburban	59	2.61	.851	1.302	121	.195
	Rural	64	2.42	.752			
22a	Suburban	58	3.22	.937	-.584	119	.560
	Rural	63	3.32	.820			
22b	Suburban	58	3.28	.854	-1.151	119	.252
	Rural	63	3.44	.757			
22c	Suburban	58	3.38	.855	-1.524	119	.130
	Rural	63	3.59	.638			
23e	Suburban	59	2.93	.868	.074	120	.941
	Rural	63	2.92	.848			
23f	Suburban	59	2.97	.928	3.026	120	.003
	Rural	63	2.43	1.027			
28a	Suburban	58	2.29	1.108	-.295	112	.769
	Rural	56	2.36	1.212			
28f	Suburban	58	2.17	.994	-2.117	114	.036
	Rural	58	2.59	1.109			
29a	Suburban	52	1.60	.603	-.621	105	.536
	Rural	55	1.67	.668			
29f	Suburban	51	1.37	.528	-1.603	105	.112
	Rural	56	1.55	.630			

It was found that between the two regions some similarities and some differences exist with respect to curriculum guidance issues. Regarding achievement standards in history, in the suburban districts just under 51% of the teachers declared that they had a thorough understanding of those standards, whereas only 44% of the rural teachers gave the same response. In fact, 48% of the rural teachers said they were familiar with the main points but not the details. Suburban and rural teachers were closer in their understanding of performance standards but still not equal; 54% of suburban teachers and 47% of rural teachers said they understood the standards. When asked whether the district or state provided assistance with specific paced plans, monitored and provided feedback on the implementation of standards, mapped out alignment with standards, and provided sample lessons, significant numbers of teachers acknowledged that these things did not occur. Forty-five percent of suburban and 50% of rural teachers said they received no assistance with specific paced plans, and 66% of suburban and 47% of rural teachers said they received no help with lesson plans. When compared on the question of lesson plan guidance, the two reported similar results—just over 62% of suburban and just under 62% of rural educators marked agree or strongly agree. With regard to aligning teaching with Oregon standards in history, a significant majority of both suburban (91%) and rural (82%) teachers said their courses were aligned with standards. Asked whether their textbooks aligned with standards, 71% of suburban teachers agreed or strongly agreed as did 77% of rural teachers.

The data reveals that some differences exist between suburban and rural districts in assessment activities, but overall the results are similar. A substantial majority of teachers answered “I don’t know” to the SSKST test questions. The vast majority of

teachers in both the suburban and rural areas admitted their lack of knowledge about whether the SSKST was a good measure of student mastery, was too difficult for their students, included content not in the curriculum, or whether their teaching aligned with the test. Responses ranged from 49% to 69% with both regions acknowledging insufficient understanding of how to answer the questions. However, there was a 12% difference between suburban and rural teachers on questions about the difficulty of the test and a 14% separation on the issue of whether the test omitted considerable content; in both cases the suburban teachers appeared less informed than the teachers in the rural districts. To the question about alignment of teaching with the SSKST, 55.9% of suburban teachers and 49.2% of rural teachers said “I don’t know.” Teachers in both areas overwhelmingly said that their schools and districts do not require progress tests: 98% of suburban teachers and over 95% of rural teachers are not obligated to administer progress tests. While the scores from the assessment category of questions demonstrate that the majority of both suburban and rural teachers are uninformed about the SSKST and do not offer progress tests, the results show some differences between the two.

The pattern of teacher practices for both suburban and rural teachers, according to survey results, demonstrates little change in teaching habits for the school year 2008-2009. More than 70% of the suburban and rural teachers selected the choice “about the same as 2007-2008 school year.” In multiple cases the spread between percentages is no more than 3% to 5%. However, on the question of homework, 84% of suburban teachers and 77% of rural teachers assigned similar amounts of homework as in the preceding year. Furthermore, a larger percentage of suburban teachers (84%) acknowledged that they reviewed assessment results to determine whether more or less emphasis should be

placed on certain topics than did rural teachers (78%). In contrast, 81% of suburban teachers and 88% of rural teachers conducted pre-assessments at the same level as the previous school year. According to the study results, the teachers in both regions did not change their general focus on student learning as a result of the state's accountability system—just under 62% of suburban teachers and just over 65% of rural teachers said there had been no change. Regarding the academic rigor of the curriculum, 69% of suburban teachers and over 65% of rural teachers marked “did not change.” While 29% of teachers in the suburban and rural districts believed that their own teaching practices changed for the better as a result of the state's accountability program, including state standards, 69% of suburban and 60% of rural teachers marked the “did not change” option. When asked whether the state's accountability system supports the teacher's own personal approach to teaching and learning, 76% of suburban and just under 78% of rural teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed. Finally, when asked about the coordination of curriculum between departmental colleagues and across grade levels, a higher percentage of rural teachers agreed or strongly agreed that this coordination took place. Sixty-seven percent of rural teachers and 54% of suburban teachers affirmed curriculum consistency between teachers. Fifty-four percent of rural teachers affirmed continuity between grade levels, but only 42% of suburban teachers agreed that curriculum, instruction, and learning materials were coordinated across different grade levels.

School morale and climate conditions for both regions reveal similarities in responses. Teacher morale appears to be relatively high in both regions. Just fewer than 51% of suburban and rural teachers rated morale in their schools high by selecting agree or strongly agree. Poor climate conditions such as inadequate basic skills and preparation,

lack of parental support, student absenteeism and tardiness, insufficient class time, a wide range of student abilities, and large class sizes can negatively impact student learning. For the majority of suburban (51%) and rural (just under 51%) teachers, insufficient time was not a hindrance or only a slight one. However, the range of student abilities and large class sizes were noted as substantial hindrances. For teachers in the suburban districts, low student ability troubled 66% of the teachers and 76% noted concerns about large class size. By way of contrast, 76% of the rural district teachers were concerned about low student ability, and 54% said that large class size is a major impediment. Lack of support from parents and high levels of absenteeism were also considered major impediments for both suburban and rural teachers. In each case over 80% of teachers cited lack of parental support as a moderate to great hindrance with more than 50% rating the issue a great hindrance. It is notable, however, that 10% more rural teachers considered parental support a great hindrance than did the suburban teachers. Over 80% of suburban and rural teachers cited absenteeism as considerable impediment. A difference again exists between these regions; 8% more rural teachers than suburban teachers marked student absenteeism and tardiness as a great hindrance that prevented students from achieving at high levels academically.

Some similarities and some differences were noted between regions concerning teacher preparations and professional development experiences. While just fewer than 30% of suburban teachers said there was no emphasis on history and history teaching in their professional development activities during the school year 2008-2009, 34% of rural teachers gave the same response. However, a substantial difference exists between suburban and rural schools concerning those who marked history and history teaching as

having a minor emphasis. Thirty-two percent of suburban teachers, but only 17% of rural teachers (roughly half as many), said that there was a history component in their professional development activities, albeit as a minor emphasis. Both suburban (48%) and rural (45%) teachers cited a moderate change in their teaching stemming from the limited influence of history and history instruction from their professional development activities. Even though the majority of teachers from both regions answered “no emphasis” or “moderate emphasis” to the question whether the aligning of curriculum and instruction with state standards was incorporated in their professional development sessions, a larger percentage of suburban teachers (27%) registered a moderate emphasis than did the rural participants (19%).

### **Interview Process & Procedures**

What qualitative insight was offered by the interview data extracted from the eight questions used in the follow-up interviews?

Table 4. 19 Interview Question Chart

Interview Question Chart	
Numeric Reference	Questions
1	Describe what types of occasions, in-service opportunity, or departmental support activities were used to enhance your knowledge or practice of standards in history during the last year.
2	How has the morale of teachers in your school been affected by the implementation of state standards and assessment opportunities?
3	In what specific ways have your teaching practices changed or altered as a result of mandated curriculum standards or state sponsored assessments in history?
4	What relationship do you see between standardized curriculum/assessments and quality classroom instruction?

5	Describe the types of history performance tests, if any, which are currently being administered in your school.
6	What concerns or issues do you have with the current state mandated standards or assessments in history?
7	What forms of feedback information have you received during the last year (2008-09) regarding the Social Science Knowledge and Skill Test results?
8	Describe any impediments you are aware of regarding the adaptation or implementation of academic standards and assessments in history instruction in your school.

Six interviews were conducted as follow-up activities to the teacher survey. As noted the instrument used in the interviews was a series of eight questions designed to add a qualitative understanding to the quantitative survey results. The questions in the interview were intentionally open-ended to allow for candid answers offering the interviewees freedom to address the questions individually. The teachers were selected by their willingness to participate in the project.

### **Interviewee demographics.**

The demographic characteristics of the six interviewees are as follows: All of the interviewees were seasoned veteran teachers. Of the six, five were male and one was female. This works out to a 16% female participation, which is less than the representative population of 25% female history teachers in the state of Oregon. All of the interviewees were veteran teachers who have taught for more than ten years. According to their testimonies, a two of them had been at one point or the other a department chair or primary history teacher. One had been department chair and also was a member on the Oregon CIM committee in the past. Several referenced their involvement with the state's Proficiency-Based Admissions Standards System (PASS)



program. Two of the interviewees were from the urban/suburban area, and the other four resided in rural towns. The population of the smallest two towns was about 1200 and just under 8000 in the 2000 census. The midsized towns ranged from 27,000 to 49,000 inhabitants. The urban/suburban region has a population of almost 90,000 inhabitants. The student population of the schools represented by the interviewed teachers ranged from 750 to about 2000 students.

Teachers ranged from 15 to 27 years of teaching experience. Several had taught for 17 years. Two of them were currently AP history teachers and another one was slated to teach AP during the 2009-2010 year. Overall, AP courses were described in positive terms by the interviewees. One teacher admitted that they have mixed feelings about the AP exam. He was concerned about the need to sprint through the content so that the students would be prepared for the exam rather than teaching the content for the content's sake. Another teacher was concerned about the amount of content; she believed that content built around standards limited creativity and was difficult to implement.

#### **Interview essentials and synopsis.**

The data extracted from the interviews acknowledged several realities. First, each believed that their school's curriculum aligned with state standards in history, but that limited departmental or district activities were constructed around establishing and evaluating curriculum standards. Second, the morale of the teachers was minimally affected by the implementation of standards. While each expressed concerns regarding the insinuation that curriculum standards could encourage teaching to the test, the overall morale was portrayed as positive. Several of the interviewees believed that content standards were especially valuable for new teachers, but as teachers became seasoned

they were quite capable of determining content requirements on their own. Third, the interviewees agreed that teachers were essentially autonomous regarding curriculum and instruction in their respective schools. Fourth, in contrast each affirmed that the content they were teaching was influenced by the state curriculum standards, but proficiency and adaptation of standards was not enforced. Since there was no enforcement by mandated assessments, accountability was minimal. By way of qualification, one teacher exclaimed that “education is not an industrial process,” implying that effective teaching is more an art than a science.

During the discussion with the interviewees the issue of Advanced Placement (AP) courses and exams entered the conversation unsolicited by the interviewer. In a general sense the interviewees compared AP requirements to those mandated by the state of Oregon, including standards and the possibility of an eventual mandated assessment. The interviewees were well aware of the adoption and use of AP courses, which have clear standards and assessment. In several cases, the interviewees taught AP courses. The consensus was that these courses were effective, and because students maintained a stake in the outcome the success rates were high. Since this topic came up unsolicited in almost every interview, the interviewer probed further for a comparison between AP requirements and state-sponsored curriculum standards and assessments. The interviewees made a distinction between the College Board content requirements and the state sponsored curriculum guidelines. Essentially they said that the AP exams were well developed and that because students had a stake in the outcome they were motivated in the course. The interviewees also confirmed that, by implication, students came into the

course knowing what was expected, and that the higher achieving students were the ones signing up for the AP courses.

All but one of the six considered themselves ignorant regarding the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test. Generally they were aware of the existence of the test, but did not have students participating in taking it. Since there were no students in their schools who had taken the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test, there was no feedback regarding student performance on the test. Unique district or school performance tests were not required by any of the schools in which the teachers were employed. Therefore, minimal comparative evaluations in the field of history were realized. Although they all described themselves and most of their colleagues as competent professionals, the interviewees acknowledged that the absence of a mandated standardized assessment had little effect on their compliance with state standards. The interviews essentially conveyed that except initially, state mandated standards had little impact upon instructional practices. As already mentioned, the initial alignment of standards may have altered content selections, but by and large content and performance standards were regarded as minimally intrusive. Concerning quality classroom instruction and state history standards, the interviewees expressed the position that quality instruction resulted from competent teachers more than from content requirements.

On the subject of the potential impediments to the implementation of history content standards and assessments, the interviewees raised multiple concerns. First, all acknowledged that the absence of a mandated assessment hindered and negated any real form of accountability or leveraged influence. As a case in point, the interviewees acknowledged that progress tests were not administered at their schools. One of the

interviewees did say that at her school they were beginning to introduce departmental content tests to their students. Second, most of the interviewees clearly stated that they were opposed to a mandated assessment because of the fear that they would be forced to water down their curriculum and teach to the test. The narrow confines of the curriculum and teaching to the test were the concerns most frequently expressed. Also, some issues were raised regarding the competency of a test constructed by educational specialists at the Department of Education level. Third, the interviewees affirmed as well as clarified that they felt supported by their administrators and did not consider them to be impediments.

In their own words, the responses of the interviewed teachers presented a valuable perspective on the concerns of the survey questions. The following summary encapsulates interviewed teacher perspectives.

*Question #1* – All but one of the interviewees said that standards had not been addressed in their in-service training during the last year. One mentioned that a couple of years ago they had a “power standards” in-service and worked in groups addressing those standards.

*Question #2* – Regarding morale, the interviewees agreed that standards were “not having much impact.” In some cases older teachers in their respective institutions grumbled because they did not want to be told what to teach. The absence of a mandated test minimized the impact standards would have had on morale. One teacher stated that the standards had a sort of a positive impact; the implication was that the standards offered the opportunity to “steal good ideas” but left nothing to be upset about. Another teacher said that “there was no noticeable

effect,” and yet another said that there was a “mildly negative” effect, especially when compared to the English and science departments, which took the brunt of a mandated assessment system. There were some references to concerns and anxieties when teachers thought that they may be evaluated by the results of mandated assessments.

*Question #3* – When asked about changes or alterations in teaching, the teachers interviewed used expressions like “not at all,” “very little,” “they haven’t,” and “no direct change.” One teacher mentioned that he assumed the standards probably had an impact on new teachers, presumably altering their practices. Generally, these veteran teachers believed that they had a good grasp of what was to be taught and that only small adaptations were warranted by the push for standards; they considered their focus to be student-oriented, which was in their academic frame of reference more beneficial than being content-oriented. In the words of one teacher, the district was not pushing for changes or alterations in instructional practices aligned with standards, so the teachers were considered the experts and essential left alone to do “what we want to do.”

*Question #4* – In reference to the relationship between standardized curriculum and assessments, and their relationship to quality classroom instruction, the interviewees all echoed the point that quality instruction is tied to teacher competency. While standards serve as good guidelines, especially for new or novice teacher, quality instruction is the result of teacher ability. Good teachers know the content and know what is expected of them. Generally speaking these

history teachers said unless there was a problem, administrators left them alone to accomplish their jobs; generally, administrators maintain a “hands off policy.”

*Question #5* – When asked about performance tests, all said that their institution did not require or utilize them, except for AP tests. One teacher stated that there was some collaboration between colleagues regarding tests, only because two teachers in that teacher’s department shared tests and used them with some slight modifications. This sharing was not required but seemed advantageous. One of the teachers provocatively stated that he/she “hoped that there would never be any” standardized history tests. It was generally conveyed by the interviewees that in the absence assessment aligned with curriculum standards no leverage or major impetus exists for standardized or performance tests.

*Question #6* –The interviewees mentioned many concerns about current state mandated standards and assessments. One teacher felt that the whole process was “a waste of time.” Another thought that the content necessary to include in an exam would not be practical for students to assimilate. Another believed that the standards were too generalized. One felt that the scope of content mandated by the standards could not completely be covered; this point was acknowledged with the comment, “There is not such a thing as essential knowledge in history.”

Regarding the introduction of a mandated assessment, one interviewee was concerned that assessments would result in “shallow teaching over a lot of materials.”

*Question #7* – Apparently according to the teachers interviewed, the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test is not widely used. None of them were aware

of any students in their institution who had taken the test. The absence of knowledge of this test correlates with the results from the survey. One teacher remarked upon the “hesitation of teachers to base assessments on that which doesn’t matter.

*Question #8* – When asked about impediments in their institutions to the promotion of standards and assessments, interviewees expressed some concerns. Among these concerns were limited administrator follow-through, financial restraints that restricted professional development, and other topics such as English standards taking away from the promotion of history standards. Another participant noted that teachers are generally opposed to standardized tests; they are threatened by imposed standards and institutional inertia, and think that there needs to be some demonstration that the requirements of imposed standards would exceed the current curriculum. One of the teachers said that he/she was not aware of any impediments, but that coordination and willingness were evident. One interviewee said that his/her current school’s capital improvements, student demographics, overall resistance to teaching to the test, and teacher turnover were all impediments. Some concern regarding the absence of administrative oversight was also mentioned, although not really qualified. One teacher pointed out that as an honest individual he/she was “shocked to see the latitude that teachers have with the curriculum selection.” Finally, there were some who said that there were no impediments.

### **Early and Late Responders**

Is there a difference between the early and late responders to the survey?

Table 4.20 Early &amp; Late Responders t-test Summary

Early & Late Responders Group Statistics: t-test							
Question	Respondents	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	t-score	df	Significance Level
4a	Early	76	3.24	.846	-.558	152	.578
	Late	78	3.31	.726			
4b	Early	75	3.25	.824	-.936	151	.351
	Late	78	3.37	.740			
5a	Early	60	3.68	.911	-.072	117	.943
	Late	59	3.69	.836			
5b	Early	37	3.84	1.014	1.170	75	.246
	Late	40	3.58	.958			
6a	Early	72	3.10	.981	-.404	145	.687
	Late	75	3.16	.901			
6d	Early	70	2.67	.793	.102	144	.919
	Late	76	2.66	.809			
6e	Early	71	3.20	.710	1.131	144	.260
	Late	75	3.05	.820			
7b	Early	69	2.83	.785	.123	141	.902
	Late	74	2.81	.696			
8e	Early	38	1.84	.789	.073	71	.942
	Late	35	1.83	.785			
12a	Early	73	1.95	.229	-.864	146	.389
	Late	75	1.97	.162			
17a	Early	73	2.89	.809	-.322	146	.748
	Late	75	2.93	.811			
17b	Early	74	4.15	5.578	.948	147	.345
	Late	75	3.53	.684			
17e	Early	74	4.42	6.104	1.042	146	.299
	Late	74	3.68	.599			
18a	Early	69	2.20	.440	.486	140	.628
	Late	73	2.16	.500			
18b	Early	69	2.09	.411	-.124	140	.902
	Late	73	2.10	.446			
18e	Early	69	2.12	.404	.753	140	.453
	Late	73	2.07	.347			
19d	Early	64	1.59	.660	-.926	132	.356
	Late	70	1.70	.667			
19e	Early	64	2.00	.471	-1.320	132	.189
	Late	70	2.11	.526			



19f	Early	64	1.94	.432	-.788	132	.432
	Late	70	2.00	.482			
19g	Early	64	1.94	.531	-1.205	132	.230
	Late	70	2.06	.611			
19h	Early	64	2.17	.579	-.746	132	.457
	Late	70	2.24	.523			
20a	Early	67	3.12	.862	.916	139	.361
	Late	74	3.00	.682			
20g	Early	66	3.09	.779	.918	138	.360
	Late	74	2.97	.740			
21e	Early	71	2.44	.874	.741	144	.460
	Late	75	2.33	.811			
21f	Early	71	2.62	.817	.430	144	.668
	Late	75	2.56	.858			
22a	Early	69	3.45	.814	1.935	142	.055
	Late	75	3.17	.891			
22b	Early	69	3.52	.797	2.318	142	.022
	Late	75	3.19	.926			
22c	Early	69	3.64	.707	2.256	142	.026
	Late	75	3.35	.830			
23e	Early	70	2.90	.903	-.406	143	.685
	Late	75	2.96	.877			
23f	Early	71	2.90	1.876	.632	144	.528
	Late	75	2.75	.960			
28a	Early	70	2.71	1.024	2.055	137	.042
	Late	69	2.33	1.159			
29f	Early	66	1.48	.638	.603	126	.548
	Late	62	1.42	.588			

Low response rates are a concern for all researchers especially for those using survey instruments. To increase the validity of the data, the results of the early and late responders to the survey were evaluated to determine if there existed a significant difference in response rates. Several key question blocks were compared utilizing a t-test evaluation. The data conveyed minimal to no differences between those who responded early and those who responded after a couple of e-mail reminders were sent. The first set of responders included those who completed the survey prior to June 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009 while the

second set of responders completed the survey between June 10, 2009 and June 14, 2009. The previous chart represents extracted results from the data analysis.

Thirty-two variables, inclusive of all four crucial categories (Curriculum Guidance, Assessment Activities, Teacher Practices, and Climate Conditions), were evaluated. The data from the t-test essentially demonstrated that there existed no difference between the early and late respondents to the survey. The only exceptions to this overall assessment are in the area of climate conditions inclusive of professional development opportunities. In the realm of the lack of support from parents and student absenteeism a significant difference was noted in the t-test. Likewise, a difference existed between early and late participants concerning the influence exerted by professional development opportunities. Instructional change evaluations, resulting from professional development opportunities that emphasized history and history teaching, showed a difference between the two groups. Analysis of the means of both groups revealed some variance in these aforementioned specific variables, whereas in the other 29 tests no significant difference was noted.

### **Chapter Summary and Conclusions**

In summary, the survey produced several pertinent results. First, history teachers in the state of Oregon are aware of standards and are generally aligning their curriculum with those state content and performance standards. Second, there exists minimal exposure to and knowledge of the Social Science Skills and Knowledge Test. Most teachers confess a level of ignorance or apathy regarding the test. Third, usefulness of state curriculum standards is that they have offered a functional guide for lesson development and planning. Fourth, progress tests in high school history across the state

are not widely given. Fifth, teacher practices have not significantly been altered during the previous year as a result of state content and assessment standards. Sixth, professional development opportunities during the last year minimally addressed state history content standards. Seventh, school climate includes some hindrances which impede student success. Eighth, collegial support practices and collusion opportunities are nominal at best. Ninth, the leverage wielded by state agencies and school districts regarding the assurance of adoption and implementation of state standards and assessments is minimal if not inconsequential. And lastly, the interviewed teachers considered state standards minimally intrusive and found the idea of a mandated assessment instrument problematic but possibly valuable as a leveraging device or as a subject validating tool.

In this chapter the reader was afforded a synopsis of the raw data from both the survey and interview processes. In the subsequent chapter, the researcher will attempt to construct a synthesis of the data deposited here in chapter four. Poignantly, chapter five will offer an interpretation of the data, address complexities inherent in the results, and postulate residual gaps requiring future exploration. The interpretive portion of final chapter should render the reader some level of data clarity while offering several justifiable conclusions.

## Chapter 5

### Findings, Conclusions, and Implications

#### Introduction

The core research question addressed in this study investigates: At what level has Standards-Based Education reform initiatives influenced Oregon high school history instructions and classroom practices. By soliciting teacher perceptions of actions associated with curriculum guidance, teacher practices, assessment activities, and school climate conditions this research study surmises the implications of NCLB reforms on secondary history coursework. These elements are evaluated by a survey instrument which probes for degrees, tangible means, and the extent to which change is manifest. Selective follow-up interviews explore for a deeper understanding of answer posited in the survey. The net result of the study offers a picture of perceptual compliance with imposed state content standards in history, but infers a limited to minimal amount of change resulting from the national mandating of such standards. The absence of any required or definitive evaluating instrument leaves the question of compliance unsatisfactorily unanswered.

The research results in this study offer insights, anticipated realities, and some surprises. To clarify this, an evaluation of the study exposes several pertinent points. Although history teachers in Oregon grasp the implementation of practices and embrace the value of standards, they resist the idea of mandated assessments. Teachers harbor concerns about the role of governance and the potential leveraging associated with standards, especially regarding mandated assessments; this demonstrates that they are apprehensive and resistant to oversight in their classrooms. Interestingly, the teachers

who were interviewed readily accept Advanced Placement (AP) requirements, but oppose universal assessments and department-wide evaluations. According to the participants in the survey, teaching practices during the 2007-2008 school year have been minimally influenced by Oregon's standards accountability system, as have morale, time allotments, and teacher/student interactions. Concerns surrounding the scope and dominance of standards and the narrowing of the curriculum are still cited as major obstacles to the overall acceptance of reform measures. School environment and instructional impediments exist, but are not major sources of distress regarding the implementation of reforms. Of greater concern to this research is the understanding that administrative, departmental, and state level support and leverage, typically initiated to guarantee the implementation and perpetuation of standards, appears minimal or nonexistent.

A quick review of the results from this study renders some clarity concerning teacher perceptions of initiatives, but also leaves an unsettling level of ambiguity regarding the impact of standards on classroom practices. Unresolved concerns about assessment requirements, or the lack thereof, still linger in the minds of this researcher and many of the interviewed history teachers. That there have been only minimal changes to teaching practices causes ambivalence, rendering teachers' perceptions of implementation somewhat doubtful. The overall picture arising from the study warrants an ongoing and fuller investigation of the primary assumptions underlying this research; those assumptions most notably refer to improved student performance and enhanced curricular continuity.

As noted in chapter one, the audience including teachers, department heads, administrators, the Oregon Department of Education, and professional history

organizations all have a vested interest in the results of this study. Pointedly the specifics of this research project and the posited conclusions offer worthwhile insights to these educational professions in that they add to the body of existing research concerning SBE; a relevant topic of interest. In particular, if the objective of curriculum-based reforms is to establish definitive content standards and assessments that will bolster student performance, then the educational leaders in the state of Oregon should consider the following research recommendations. Of particular note, the data results from this study are clearly beneficial to those educational authorities who are involved in aligning state curricular policies with NCLB requirements. Strong administrative support for SBE initiatives speaks volumes regarding the level of commitment for state-sponsored reform programs. Since Oregon appears to have a substantial history of reliance upon these kinds of reform efforts, it would appear that educational authorities in the state have a major stake in their success. The results of this study should provide policy makers and educational power brokers at the state level with valuable insights into how teachers across the state perceive these reform efforts.

Educational authorities will be satisfied to hear that the survey overwhelmingly shows that teachers affirm that they have embraced content standards and are well informed about them. It will be especially comforting to these authorities to know that even without a mandated assessment, the majority of the teachers assert that curriculum alignment has taken place. Less settling will be the finding that teachers, according to their survey responses, do not acknowledge support or ongoing facilitation for standards. The study results unveil a gaping hole regarding state, district, and school activities which bolster, encourage, and maximize the use of educational efforts. It would appear

from this study that especially novice teachers lack the support apparatus necessary to ensure that their students assimilate standardized content requirements. Those at the Oregon Department of Education should note that the national criteria for evaluating compliance, as depicted in the Rand (2007) study, are not being modeled in Oregon; the absence of a mandated test in the social studies like those utilized in other states (California, Texas, etc.) hampers the ability to effectively assess the implementation of standards.

Similarly, the educational experts in Salem should note the opposition to, or at least apprehension concerning, mandated assessments in high school history. The minimal utilization of the SSKST implies limited support for the objectives and potential benefits of the test. The survey results, along with information on the degree of participation in the test obtained from the ODE, confirm that the test is not reaching its intended goal of demonstrating student competency in the social studies. While the general consensus is that participation in the test is lacking because the test is voluntary, more investigation seems warranted. Further exploration as to why schools and districts are not taking advantage of the test would seem a natural consequence of limited participation. In the social studies, implementing a mandatory test appears to face an uphill battle, at least in selling the idea to teachers. Should there be any future development of a standardized history test, including teachers in its construction seems paramount if success is to be achieved. Teacher support will play an important role if such a test is to be implemented and adhered to. In a similar vein, since the NCSS is a major lobbying force for standards and assessment tests, the Oregon chapter will need to help construct the bridge of acceptance with teachers if such tests are to become a reality.

Administrators should view the data and recognize that they are playing only a small portion of the role that implementation and adoption of standards requires, especially if they believe, as do the initiators of SBE, that standardized content and assessments are capable of raising the level of student performance. There needs to be more facilitation of the planning, mapping, monitoring, and professional development processes to guarantee the continuation of support for standards. As local leaders, administrators have the power to encourage or discourage the reform, or to approach the matter apathetically. Strong leadership at the local level goes a long way toward promoting informed and guided positive change. For example, the survey results show that there is a limited amount of departmental collaboration related to the implementation of standards. To improve this situation, administrative initiatives are needed to encourage such activities as classroom visitations and mentoring by colleagues, cross-grade continuity of curriculum, and participation in committees that focus on curriculum and instructional needs.

The limitations of this study seem fairly apparent, and yet there are several significant boundaries to the results of this study which need to be emphasized. While data from the study is beneficial in that it speaks directly to the influence of NCLB initiatives and ferrets out particular teaching practices which represent compliance or instructional change, the data is heavily reliant upon teacher perceptions. Even though the objective of the study was to solicit teacher perceptions, it is quite clear that more quantifiable data would ensure compliance and change, and would demonstrate the implementation of SBE reforms with a higher measure of verifiability. The absence of any measurable way to determine student achievement constrains the results of this study.



In contrast, previous studies in the areas of English, math, and science have had the advantage of assessment data to measure improvement associated with SBE efforts. As is apparent, this study was forced to rely upon individual teacher appraisals in a multiplicity of teaching arenas without the advantage of supportive data. With respect to professional development, progress tests, and collaborative activities it is reasonable to assume teacher honesty, yet the data again relied solely upon individual teacher assessments without verification from administrators or district superintendents. Therefore, the scope of this study only investigated teachers and did not, as in the Rand (2007) study, take into consideration other educational positions of authority, leaving valuable expert stakeholders unrepresented.

The qualitative portion of the study was confined to a limited number of six interviews, all of which were with seasoned teachers who volunteered to participate; this left out the voices of newer teachers who may have offered different perspectives. In the same vein, more in-depth qualitative case studies of specific schools were not included in this study, thus limiting the discovery of additional levels of understanding germane to teacher perspectives on survey questions. Additionally, this study was conducted in a single period of time, and thus gives only a snapshot of the perspectives on NCLB during the school year 2008–2009. In contrast, a longitudinal study would have provided a comparison of results over several years' time. Also additional models of reforms other than SBE were not discussed or compared, thereby limiting the conversation to only the current NCLB reform initiated efforts.

### **Participants of the Survey**

Do the participants of the survey represent the overall population?

The demographic composition of participants in this study reflects the overall population of the history teachers in the state of Oregon from a number of standpoints. The geographic location, gender, tenure, certifications, and educational preparation of the participants appear to be typical of the population being solicited. In particular, the respondents to the survey constitute a range of teachers from all geographic sectors of the state and include male and female teachers. As expected, respondents have a wide range of experience, but an equality of teacher preparation.

While the survey included approximately equal numbers of teachers from rural and suburban areas, there were fewer (almost 18%) from urban populations. The percentage of female and male participants is similar to the actual gender composition in the state. While a higher percentage of veteran teachers than novices completed surveys, the results demonstrate a range of teaching experience and levels. Fifty-three percent have taught for more than ten years, and 31.5% have taught between four and ten years. Fourteen percent have taught between one and three years. These numbers, although skewed toward seasoned teachers, represent a cross section of teacher experience. That almost half of the population represented in the survey had taught for ten or fewer years implies a good range of participation. Fifteen percent of the teachers held BA or BS degrees and most, over 83%, had completed a master's degree. Thus it is clear that the vast majority of participants were well prepared for their vocation.

The six teachers selected to participate in the personal interviews constituted a narrower portion of the teacher population. They came from different regions and were representative of both rural and suburban populations. However, gender ratios were not so representative: one female and five males. They were, however, all seasoned teachers

with significant teaching tenures ranging from 15 to 27 years. This afforded them a depth of knowledge which was highly valuable for the study, but did minimize the variant perspective that would have been offered by less seasoned teachers.

### **Urban/suburban/rural.**

The demographics derived from the survey reveal some interesting information about the survey participants. The largest percentage of respondents were those from rural areas followed closely by a similar number from the suburban regions. The number of those from urban areas was significantly lower (17.8%) than those from suburban (39.5%) and rural (43.3%) communities. This difference can be reasonably explained away by the fact that the distinction between urban and suburban was somewhat blurred, causing participant confusion. Even though the U.S. Census Bureau definitions were incorporated in the demographic questions, some ambivalence seems apparent. The response rate for the urban sector (18%) was a cause for concern, especially when the population representing the urban areas should have been about 27%. The question arises, Why did so few responses come from the urban areas? It appears that some confusion results from the U.S. Census Bureau's designation of an urban center, which is based on population numbers per square mile. Since the respondents were responsible for determining their own geographical designation, those living in the urban or suburban areas were probably perplexed. The distinction between urban and suburban, on one hand, and rural on the other seems clear enough that those distinctions stand and are valid, but the distinction between urban and suburban was evidently blurred in the minds of the participants. In support of this point, two of the interviewees were from the greater Portland area, but designated themselves as suburban, not urban, when according to the

census criteria, they should have defined themselves as urban. Fortunately, the data outcome still supports the conclusion that the results of the survey represent school districts around the state of Oregon, and that all geographic areas were effectively assimilated into the study.

The data also reveals that there were for the most part no significant differences in survey responses between the suburban and the rural regions. This infers that the perceptions of teachers concerning the adoption of standards, the rudiments of assessment activities, and the classroom instructional practices of teachers as they relate to state mandated curriculum standards were essential universal. If the data results had revealed a notable difference, then concerns over the widespread influence of state mandated curriculum standards would have been raised. However since they virtually parallel, those potential concerns are abated.

As noted, the data analysis results from the t-test offer a picture of continuity regarding responses in both regional areas. Demographically both were well represented in the study, suburban at 39.5% and rural rendering 43.3% of the population. A t-test analysis was performed which would have easily revealed whether there were any variation in the adaptation of requirements. Only 4 of the 41 t-tests conveyed a significance level below .05. Those questions include: Oregon history standards in history include more content than can be adequately covered (question #6a); the consideration of instructional alignment of teaching with the SSKST (question #8e); the impediment of large class sizes (question #23f); professional development activities where the alignment of content to standards was stressed (question #28f). In three of the four questions (#6a, #23f, #28f) the suburban participants registered agreement or

disagreement with the question being posited. In particular the suburban teachers held to the belief that there was more content than could be covered, large class sizes were more of an impediment, and that professional development opportunities by and large did not focus on curriculum and instructional alignment with state standards. These results were juxtaposed against the rural teachers who were not to the same level concerned with class size, who found professional development opportunities inclusive of standards instructions, and to a lesser degree considered the standards to have more content than could be typically covered in a school year. In contrast, regarding aligning teaching with the history SSKST test, the rural teacher had a higher percentage registering alignment with the test, even though the overwhelming majority of both suburban and rural conveyed an absence of knowledge about the test.

#### **Gender issue.**

Gender considerations are typically incorporated in research studies to guarantee a representative sample and to see if there are any distinguishable gender differences in study results. In this study, gender designations were included to determine that both male and female participants were represented, but no evaluation of differences was assessed. While it is clear that gender distinctions are valuable comparisons worthy of inclusion, this researcher contemplated the scope of the existent study and decided it was sensible to exclude a cross-tab evaluation based on gender differences. From a purposeful point of view, I would encourage others to consider this type of an evaluation and enthusiastically look forward to the results. Nonetheless, from the results it is evident that both genders were well represented in the study. The response rate for males was 70% and for females just under 30%. Based on the TSPC list of public school history

teachers, about 25% of the history teachers are female. That places the percentage of females in the survey responses slightly higher than the percentage of females in the total population of history teachers. Even though the female respondent rate was slightly higher than the male/female ratio in the general population, it is safe to conclude that the survey fairly represents the gender pattern of Oregon's history teachers. While the data was not evaluated based on gender distinctions, the results still leave open the possibility for follow-up evaluation along those lines.

#### **Education and certification.**

The education and certification of survey participants demonstrate a highly professional teacher force. As previously summarized, 84% of the respondents earned a master's degree or higher. Only 3.9 % of the teachers held a temporary or provisional certificate, leaving the remaining 96% holding a standard or regular certification. Fourteen percent of the teachers had three or fewer years of teaching experience, while 31% had 4 to 10 years, leaving 53% of the respondents with 10 or more years of teaching experience. Overall, the respondent population represents a highly experienced and seasoned group of teachers.

#### **Demographic section summary.**

Participating teachers were well educated, adequately certified, and representative of the gender distinctions of the population. Although there are some complexities in the data, including a high percentage of veteran teachers and a low percentage of urban teachers, the population seems reasonably representative. Even though the survey included a slightly higher percentage of female participants, the 5% difference need not result in any skewing of the data. The high percentage of veteran teachers is likewise

noted, and since there was no data outlining the statewide longevity of teaching tenures, no definitive explanation for this anomaly, at this juncture, can be postulated. However, speculations about reasons for this should include the possibilities that (a) Oregon has a high teacher retention rate, (b) veteran teachers were more willing to participate in this survey than novice teachers, or (c) the percentages reflected in the survey accurately represent the actual population. Recognizing that speculations like these are not authoritative and may be invalid, no conclusion can be reached; nonetheless, these possible explanations should be considered if this study is replicated or augmented by future research.

### **Curriculum Guidance**

Germane to this study are the questions regarding curriculum guidance. If it can be demonstrated that teachers are aligning their curriculum with content standards, using textbooks aligned with standards, and receiving state-induced curriculum support, then it is reasonable to conclude that standards are being implemented. The data results from the surveys support the conclusion that teachers believe that they are adhering to state standards in history. However, the state and administrative support structures appear minimal, raising concerns about the continued resilience of implementation efforts.

#### **Familiarity with state standards.**

To what degree are Oregon history teachers familiar with Oregon social studies standards in history?

It is clear from the results of the survey that history teachers across the state of Oregon are aware of and use standards as guidelines for their course and curriculum development. A significant number of respondents (87%) acknowledged that they are familiar with and understand achievement and performance standards. The Rand (2007)

study correlates with the result of this research, in that 95% of math teachers and administrators in the three states were familiar with or had thorough understanding of state standards. Almost 50% of the respondents in the present study said that their curriculum guidelines were aligned with state standards. Similarly in the Rand (2007) study, 70 to 90% of the middle school math teachers reported aligning their instruction to state content standards. The evidence from this study suggests that most teachers are aware of state standards and curriculum parameters and follow those guidelines. Responses to several questions in the survey also indicate a good understanding of content standards. For example, questions regarding alignment of standards with textbooks, as well as questions revealing content gaps in the standards themselves, demonstrate the point. Sixty-seven percent noted that Oregon standards in history do not cover some important content areas, and a substantial 72% agreed that history textbook materials were well aligned with standards.

In contrast, it is clear that curriculum compliance with standards did not follow a rigorous process of standards mapping or the evaluation of standards compliance since 36% and 57% respectively did not engage in those activities. From the aforementioned survey numbers, it is evident that the district and the state verification of standards implementation in Oregon have not been fully enforced in history instruction. The limits of leverage exerted at the state level imply limited follow-up regarding standards and instructional practice. Forty-nine percent said that no specific paced plan or instructional calendar was established in their schools. More to the point, while teachers readily affirmed their knowledge and alignment with state content standards in history, they also



revealed that their district and state entities did not establish, monitor, map out, or provide support for the implementation of content and performance standards.

The data shows that administrative oversight of standards was absent. Forty-nine percent said that no calendar or schedule for instructional practices was established. Fifty-four to fifty-seven percent said there was no district or state monitoring and feedback, and no provision of sample lesson plans pertaining to standards. In contrast, the Rand (2007) study showed that in Pennsylvania more than 64% of the math teachers acknowledged district involvement in instructional calendars, detailed curriculum guidelines (66%), and sample lesson plans aligned with standards (76%). In Georgia the percentages were higher, exceeding 70% for the same supportive actions to align standards (Ibid). However, all of the survey results need to be qualified with the point that they reflect teacher perceptions, not objective quantifiable realities. The Rand (2007) study makes this valuable point when referring to teacher perceptions: “The fact that teachers report aligning instruction with standards should not be interpreted as evidence that their instruction covers all of the material in the standard, especially given the frequency with which teachers described the standards as too numerous to cover” (p. 99). Further support for this premise is seen in additional results from their national survey that contrasts with the finding that curriculum alignment is transpiring. For example, one-half of elementary teachers identified insufficient class time to cover the entire curriculum as a moderate to great hindrance to their students’ academic success (Rand, 2007). Therefore, teacher perceptions that full integration of standards has been achieved should be taken with some reservations. The Rand (2007) researchers concluded that “the results presented in this chapter [summary] suggest that some NCLB goals are being

realized—educators are aligning their instruction with state standards, are using achievement data to make decisions about instruction, and are working to improve student achievement on state tests” (p. 111). Nonetheless, the teachers could conceivably be exaggerating the belief that standards are fully implemented.

In summary, the Oregon history teachers are aware of the state-mandated content and performance standards. Similar results from the Rand study attest that respondents in this study are as familiar with mandated content requirements as participants in the Rand SBA study. In contrast, it appears from the data that, unlike the Rand study of Pennsylvania, Georgia, and California, Oregon districts are not currently being supported by administrative practices that foster or promote the use of designated plans or activities that assist in standards alignment.

#### **Textbook alignment.**

At what level do the textbooks reflect state standards?

Textbook alignment is crucial to facilitate instruction. Since textbooks represent the core content for history instruction in the state’s public schools, they offer the essential roadmap to content alignment. That is why teachers in the Rand study and this study required knowing whether the alignment of the two was inherent and maintained. The history teachers in the state determine whether textbooks are aligned with standards, and if it is assumed that they are aware of the particulars in those standards, it is also safe to assume that they are accurate in their judgment of textbooks.

Regarding textbooks, 72% of teachers in this study agree or strongly agree that their textbooks are aligned with state standards. Even though supplemental materials are used by the majority of teachers (78%), and teachers don’t believe that their textbooks are

too rigorous for their students (68%), as inferred from answers to the survey, they still believe that their textbooks are consistent with the state content standards. Since teachers are in the best position to determine whether textbooks are aligned with state standards, it is reasonable to assume that their assessments are legitimate. The Rand (2007) study makes the point effectively when it says, “Teachers are in a unique position to see the effects of accountability policies on teaching and learning, and it is important to take their concerns seriously when considering revisions to those policies” (p. xxii).

#### **Alignment with standards.**

To what degree have Oregon school districts aligned their history curricula with state standards and do they use them for curriculum instruction?

Evidence from the survey results and the subsequent interviews suggests that most teachers believe that curriculum is aligned with standards and that the state standards provide adequate guidance for curriculum development. The teachers have already testified that their textbooks are complementary and relevant to the state standards in history. Similarly, 84% agree that their individual content selections align with Oregon standards, and just under 63% said that they found those standards valuable for planning lessons. Yet veteran teachers represented in the interviews felt that the aforementioned conclusion was questionable.

Perceptions of alignment with standards are additionally supported by a couple of results from the survey. The majority of teachers were apprehensive about their ability to adequately cover the content included in the state standards (69%), and were concerned about the limits of historical reasoning and problem solving included in the standards (58%). The interviewees revealed that they used the standards as a measuring device to determine compliance, but that the standards were especially “valuable to novice

teachers” who lack experience and in many cases limited guidance. They believed that new teachers were able to obtain direction from the content and performance standards. But the interviewees, clearly veteran teachers, were confident that their experience as teachers afforded them some accrued ability which enabled them to transcend the curricular restraints of state standards. They believed that they were meeting, indeed superseding, the scope and compliance set forth in the state standards. The interviewees, like the majority of the surveyed population (63%), felt strongly that their curriculum was aligned with standards. By way of contrast, a higher percentage (73%) of the middle school math teachers in the Rand (2007) study referenced the standards of their state as being useful for planning lessons. So while not statistically ascertained, a high percentage of Oregon history teachers believe that their teaching aligns with state standards requirements. It is relatively easy to believe that the teachers are accurate in their assessment, especially if one considers the passage of time since the inauguration of NCLB; this lends support to such claims.

#### **Curriculum, consistency, and continuity.**

The question of curriculum and its relation to standards surfaces at this point in the discussion. The pertinent issues are cross-curriculum practices, textbook selection, and general curriculum practices. While curriculum alignment seems to have taken place, at least in the minds of the participating teachers, changes in teacher practice and collaboration on curriculum appear to be minimal. For example, minimal collaboration across grade levels leaves lingering questions about content uniformity.

Is there consistency in curriculum across grade levels? Regarding the coordination of curriculum among various grade levels, 60% said there was consistency of curriculum,

instruction, and learning materials among classes at the same grade level, but 55% noted a lack of coordination across different grade levels. Regarding textbook selection, most teachers considered their textbooks aligned with standards, and they are generally satisfied with them. Just fewer than 52 % stated that they were satisfied with their school's history and curriculum materials and 72% acknowledged that their school's textbooks were aligned with Oregon standards. Forty-three percent of the teachers still augment their textbooks with additional materials to ensure that the Oregon standards are adequately covered. While teachers in the survey acknowledged the guidance benefits of official standards, they were reluctant to be hedged in by them or constrained by a formal list of requirements. The standards were generally considered judicious guidelines for designing a curriculum. In the Rand (2007) study, 83% of teachers acknowledged the alignment of curriculum guidelines to standards and 69% revealed that more teachers focused on standards as a result of the NCLB implementation.

### **Assessment Activities**

The importance of assessment activities to the adoption and implementation of standards cannot be overemphasized. Testing experts agree that assessment instruments are crucial for gauging and guaranteeing the effectiveness of student assimilation of content standards, and therefore curriculum standardization (Phelps, 2005). The absence of any Oregon mandated test in history leaves the question of influence and implementation unanswered. Considering that no validation tool exists, it is reasonable to conclude that no definitive answer to the question whether the curriculum has been standardized is achievable. The data reveals that few students are taking advantage of the voluntary Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test and that district or school

performance tests are not being implemented. The absence of this crucial assessment data leaves the research with no means to verify compliance. However, the research does imply that assessment concerns and the value of mandated assessments are still prominent in the minds of teachers; they seem to have a bitter-sweet relationship with assessments.

According to the survey, performance evaluations of students affect teacher-student interaction and classroom procedures. Even though there is no mandated assessment, teachers felt that more needs to be done to identify poor performing students and problems in content areas. It can only be assumed that teachers were referring to their own assessment apparatus when acknowledging low performing students. Sixty-eight percent, identified poor performing students and 75% identified content topics as needing more attention. When student performance on assessments did not meet expectations, nearly 68% of the teachers went over the material with their students again. So while no state accountability results and no measurable way to ensure compliance with state standards exist, teachers are still measuring student performances and addressing their deficiencies. This provokes the researcher to wonder if student performances are benefiting from the emphasis on standards, especially if it is true that teachers are using state mandated standards in their teaching. Equally, the Rand (2007) study offered a bleak picture regarding the benefit of state accountability to students. Only 37% considered the state accountability system to be beneficial to students. Similarly, this research offered a bleak picture of the benefit to students of this state's accountability system. Only 23% agreed or strongly agreed that the state's accountability system benefited students.

### **Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test.**

To what extent are Oregon history teachers well-informed about the Social Science Knowledge and Skills test and do they require regular history progress tests?

It is evident from the results of this study that most Oregon history teachers are uninformed about the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) and that few schools or districts require periodic history progress tests. In contrast, the Rand study verified that science and math teachers participated in standardized assessments in their discipline, and that many teachers were required to administer progress tests. In Oregon, in lieu of a state mandated history or social studies assessment, the voluntary Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test is offered. Even though the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) was first operational in the 2003-04 school year (Oregon Department of Education), most of the teachers who participated in this study did not use it. One of the interviewees noted that he had never heard of it prior to seeing it in the survey.

The survey data conveys the reality that teachers are largely unfamiliar with the SSKST. When the seven questions in the survey addressing the SSKST test were evaluated, an average of 57% responded with the answer of "I don't know." From these results it is clear that a large percentage of Oregon history teachers are unaware of the SSKST test. According to Leslie Phillips, Social Science Assessment Specialist at the Oregon Department of Education, and her colleague Steve Slater, just under six thousand high school students in Oregon took the SSKST test in 2008-09, or about 14% of the tenth grade population. Administering this test appears to be up to individual teachers, or in some cases school districts. As a result, just under 14% of the respondents noted that

they focus more on Oregon standards in history because their students take the test. It is evident from results like these that the test has little bearing upon teacher practices.

It is also evident from the survey and interview results that teachers harbored a considerable apprehension regarding mandated standardized assessments. Particularly from the interviews it was clear that teachers were nervous about state mandated assessments. Some felt that the tests represent a threat; they questioned the purpose of the tests and wondered whether the tests could be used as an evaluation tool for teacher competency. Other concerns echo the reality that the previous social science test developed by the department of education was extremely faulty (Bigelow, 1999).

Several other concerns surfaced regarding the implementation of a standardized test in history. For example, the way such a test would be constructed was questioned. Who would construct the test, and how would the test accurately represent all of the curriculum content? Other concerns included the limitations inherent in standardized tests, especially multiple-choice tests. Opponents of these assessment instruments voiced concerns about their limitations and questioned their ability to test for cognitive skills. Nonetheless, a disparity exists between those who rejected the idea outright and those who see some inherent value in its use. For example, several of this study's interviewees believed that mandated tests would offer the social studies more credibility and would leverage student seriousness regarding the subject matter of history. In contrast, some interviewees were adamantly opposed to mandated history assessments. One of their major concerns was the difficulty of constructing a test that could properly measure what transpires in the classroom; in their minds this type of universal test is difficult if not impossible to construct. A similar criticism surfaced in the Rand study. Teachers



expressed concerns that the mandated tests were not always aligned with standards, and that there existed a narrowing of curriculum (Rand, 2007). Teachers in the Rand (2007) study were similarly aware that there often was a disparity between the state's accountability requirements and local resources and programs intent on supporting compliance.

The Rand (2007) study suggests that while teachers are resistant to change, standardized assessments can result in student improvement; at least it is fair to say that the correlation between the two was apparent to the Rand researchers as exemplified in the following comment: "Although teaching styles are fairly resistant to change, research has shown that high-stakes testing can influence both what is taught and how it is taught" (Rand 2007, p. 7). The report continues, "Responses to other survey items suggested that accountability led to improvements in the academic rigor or curriculum, staff focus on student learning, students' focus on schoolwork, and, perhaps as a consequences, student learning of important knowledge and skills" (Ibid, p. 54).

All of the interviewees in the present study noted the absence of any mandated state assessment as an obstacle standing in the way of a serious, calculative, and evaluative guarantee of the adoption of practice. Even though none of the interviewees desired the implementation of a mandated assessment instrument, each acknowledged the leverage such a device would yield. In two interviews it was noted that a mandated test would add credibility to the discipline. In the Vancouver/Camas pilot interviews, participants noted that since Washington places a heavy reliance on the WASL accountability tests, social studies would automatically demand more attention, similar to that of the other core subjects, should the test be mandated. Nonetheless, the issue of

standardized testing continued to provoke apprehension over the narrowing the content and the implication that teachers would be forced to teach to the test. As previously noted, teachers also were concerned about the possible punitive consequences of such tests.

### **Progress tests.**

Like the SSKST, Oregon teachers did not in any significant numbers embrace progress tests. Teachers were for the most part not required by their school or district to administer interim, benchmark, or diagnostic tests. In the absence of such required standardized tests, limited responsibility is placed upon teachers for content. As a couple of interviewees expressed in their comments on the topic, administrators assume that teachers are responsible professionals who are teaching what is required by their discipline. As long as there are no complaints, they can close the door and teach without interruption.

To stress the point, progress tests are not readily implemented in history classes around the state of Oregon. Since over 97% of those surveyed documented that they were not required by their districts to give history progress tests, it is evident that student progress is not being evaluated on a comparative basis. Of the seven teachers who admitted that their institutions require history progress tests only four initiated them within an eight-week period. In contrast, in the Rand (2007) study middle school math teachers in California (42%), Georgia (62%), and Pennsylvania (50%) were required to administer progress tests. While the numbers of science teachers offering progress tests in the Rand study were significantly less than the math teachers, and given the fact that math may by necessity require more progress testing, it is still notable that in contrast to

the Rand survey very few Oregon high school history teachers were required to administer progress tests.

By way of comparison, it is noted that the existence of such tests does not automatically guarantee compliance. The respondents to the Rand (2007) study acknowledged that progress tests were neither punitive nor positively rewarded. The reports states, “Finally, most teachers reported that there were no incentives and no consequences for teachers associated with results from progress tests” (Rand 2007, p. 73; also note chart p. 74). However, it is important to note that based on the Rand (2007) study, teachers did acknowledge an increased focus on student achievement resulting from the implementation of accountability systems. As the report says, “Teachers reported an increased focus on student achievement in their schools as a result of NCLB, as well as other beneficial changes including increased curriculum coordination and increased rigor of school curriculum” (Rand 2007, p. 132). It was equally noted in Rand (2007) study, that accountability leverages improvement in student achievement, but it also tends to narrow the teaching emphasis.

#### **Assessment section summary.**

In this section it was effectively revealed that the majority of Oregon history teachers are unfamiliar with the Social Science Knowledge and Skill test offered by the Oregon Department of Education as a means of determining mastery in the areas of social science and, in particular, history (55% cited they didn’t know whether it was a good measurement device and almost 63% couldn’t tell if it was too difficult for their students). Of those that are aware of the test, less than 8% of the participants considered it a good measure of the mastery of Oregon standards in history. The absence of a mandatory state

history test and any district or school progress tests leaves the question of compliance open for discussion. Since no leverage is offered to enforce compliance and demonstrate competency, the results of Oregon's SBE efforts are not significantly verifiable. Likewise, the recognition that no progress tests were utilized by the vast majority of history teachers in Oregon leads the researcher to believe that schools and districts have no way of verifying alignment of curriculum with state standards.

Not surprisingly, Oregon teachers by and large did not acknowledge a significant impact on their teaching resultant from assessment requirements. The majority of teachers' perceptions (over 73%) reveal that students' learning of important skills and knowledge and student focus on school work has not changed as a result of the state's accountability system. In parallel to the previous point, over 60% of teachers thought that the teacher's focus on student learning also did not change as a result of the state's accountability system. In contrast, 27% believed it changed for the better. What this says to the researcher is that the majority of teachers marked a limited relationship between the state's accountability system and change in student practices or renewed teacher focus on student learning. By way of comparison, the Rand (2007) study results generalize the data pertaining to student learning; 34% of teachers in California, 50% in Georgia, and 29% in Pennsylvania do not believe that the state's accountability system has benefited students.

### **Teacher Practices**

In what tangible ways have Oregon high school teacher practices changed as a result of the implementation of state standards in history?

The core issue in this research project is whether or not classroom instruction has been altered by the implementation of standards and standardized assessments. The

central question addresses whether teacher practices have changed as a result of the implementation of state standards in history? The answer to that question is that in some significant ways the content has been guided by these standards, but the absence of a mandated assessment apparatus has minimized the ability to ascertain the level of influence that standards have had on instruction and instructional practices. In contrast, the Rand (2007) study used assessment results to determine the legitimacy of claims regarding the alignment with standards and the impact on classroom instruction as indicated by the emphasis on teaching about test-taking practices.

Alterations in curriculum, assessments, student interaction, and classroom time allotments speak to the question of how much teachers modify their practice as a result of the state accountability systems. Change over time implies an alteration of current practices that is initiated by efforts. While the previous discussion explains the changes in curriculum and assessment practices, which speak directly to instruction, additional survey questions address change from a variety of other indicators. In this study, all of these indicators imply that change did not occur at any significant level.

Research results showed that changes in teaching practices were minimal. Surveyed teachers suggested (by their answers to the survey) that their academic rigor and personal teaching practices did not change as a result of the state's accountability processes, including standards, assessments, AYP targets, rewards and sanctions (many of these are deemed irrelevant to history in Oregon). Sixty-seven percent of survey respondents said that the rigor of their curriculum stayed the same, whereas only 16% believed it changed for the worse or for the better. Twenty-eight percent revealed that the state's accountability process changed their teaching practices for the better, whereas

65% stated that the accountability system did not change their practices. Only 6.6% believed it changed their teaching practice for the worse. These results indicate that for the majority of history teachers the state's accountability system had a minimal effect on their teaching practices. In fact, nearly 80% said that the state's accountability system is in conflict with their own approach to teaching and learning. Similarly, nearly 66% believed that the state accountability system leaves little time to teach content not related to the state test. Since there is no mandated assessment, and the adjoining reference includes standards in the cluster, it is assumed that teachers are referring only to their own content standards in their responses.

By way of comparison, in the section in the Rand (2007) study titled "My own teaching practice" (p. 153) middle school teachers in California (45%), Georgia (56%), and Pennsylvania (32%) acknowledged change in their school as a result of the state's accountability system. Ninety percent of teachers in California, 85% in Georgia, and 87% in Pennsylvania said that the state's accountability system left little time to teach content not on state tests (Rand, 2007). In the present study, with nearly 77% of teachers disagreeing with the idea that "overall, the state accountability system has been beneficial for students in my school," it is evident that the majority of teachers in Oregon do not look upon the state's accountability system in a positive way.

Likewise, according to the survey, minimal change from the previous year (2007-2008) occurred in assignments, homework, projects, presentations, teacher collaboration, individual student assistance, reassessments, or the review of assessments. The survey resulted in acknowledgement of minimal change in overall classroom instruction, and teachers affirmed that the state's accountability system had only a minimal influence.

Sixty-five percent marked that their school had not changed as a result of the state's accountability system, which included standards and assessment. Also 60% didn't believe that the state's accountability process changed the teacher's focus on student learning. Another 73% believed that the "Students learning of important skills and knowledge" did not change as a result of the state's accountability system. Similarly 78% noted that the focus of students on their work also did not change. Just fewer than 74% recorded no change in student learning of important skills and knowledge during that same period of time. The survey results showed that 75% of teachers noted no change during the school year (2008-2009) in assignment planning, instructional assessments, homework, history projects, formal presentations, assessment reviews, student support practices, teacher collaboration, and pre-assessments. In contrast, the Rand teachers noted a variety of ways SBA influenced instruction, including the fact that alignment took place and student proficiency levels were achieved, even though some noted that content was narrowed (Rand, 2007).

### **Climate Conditions**

To what degree has teacher morale changed, and what, if any, school climate conditions exist that may hinder or prevent students from achieving high performance levels?

School climate conditions often speak to the success level of teaching institutions. Teacher morale is often looked at to determine whether support or opposition is rendered, especially regarding educational systems and reform innovations. If teachers are satisfied (morale is good), then it is assumed that the school is performing at some optimal level. Additionally, discussions of climate conditions also include systemic impediments which can hamper the overall ability of a school to perform at its best. The research data here confirms that opinion is evenly divided between those who see morale declining and

those noting no negative impact, yet at some level negative school climate still impedes student success in Oregon public high schools.

### **Teacher morale.**

A possible negative effect on teacher morale is often cited as a prime example of resistance to imposed standards and mandated assessments. The history teachers involved in this research offered mixed views of the impact that state standards were having on teacher morale. Fifty-one percent disagreed with the statement that teacher morale in their institution was high. Similarly, another question directly tied to the state's accountability system resulted in an almost even split: one percentage point separated those who believed morale had been diminished from those that believed no change was evident. When asked about school staff morale, 44% said that morale has changed for the worse, whereas 45% believed no change has occurred and 10% noted a positive change in morale resultant from the state's accountability system. In the Rand (2007) report, teachers said that morale was reduced as a result of the state's accountability system: An average of 55% from the three states believed that morale was worse. In Pennsylvania, with the highest percentage of the recorded states, the results showed that 67% of teachers believed that the standards reduced staff morale (Rand, 2007). The evidence from teachers surveyed in the present study may be inconclusive, but it reveals a picture of similar reservations regarding the effect of the state's accountability system on teacher morale. Teachers express apprehension about the effect of state standards on morale as well as the belief that the state's accountability in Oregon has had some minimal positive effect or no real influence.



**Specific impediments.**

What school climate conditions exist that may hinder or prevent students from achieving high performance levels?

A high percentage of history teachers cited inadequate student skills and preparation, lack of parental support, and student absenteeism and tardiness as moderate to great hindrances to student achievement. Each of these received a greater than 80% rating as a hindrance. From these results it is safe to conclude that history teachers in Oregon considered these impediments significant roadblocks to the learning/teaching experience. In contrast to the survey results, interviewed teachers minimized the concern about these impediments.

When asked in the interviews about hindrances to the implementation of standards, teachers focused more on the resistance of colleagues, or in one case, physical plant renovations. In the interviews, few references were made to the impediments resulting from student proclivities or home life, while in the survey, teachers expressed strong levels of concern over school climate impediments. Teachers in the survey were divided about the issue of insufficient time to cover material, but they were more united regarding the impact of the range of student ability and large class sizes. They rated these two factors 69% and 66% respectively as moderate to great hindrances. Most other encumbrances, like poor leadership, teacher turnover, and limited planning time, did not result in a definitive position in the minds of the majority of Oregon teachers. Interestingly, the lack of school resources garnered a 50/50 split as a high-level hindrance affecting students. In the Rand (2007) study, 61% of teachers rated large class size as a moderate to great hindrance, and they also rated insufficient time at 51%, inadequate

student skills at 84%, lack of parental support at 83%, absenteeism and tardiness at 75%, and the wide range of student ability at 74%.

It is evident from the data produced by the present research that student preparation, parental support, large class size, the range of student abilities, and absenteeism are impediments blocking high achievement for students in Oregon history courses; however, other climate conditions, like collegiality, administrative leadership, time allotments, teacher turnover, and curricular issues, were inconsequential in the minds of the history teachers surveyed. In the Rand (2007) study the barriers to school improvement, including funding, instructional resources, staffing, skill and knowledge, and professional development, resonated with teachers. More importantly the “Majorities of teachers at both levels in all three states reported that inadequate basic skills and prior preparation, lack of support from parents, and student absenteeism and tardiness were moderate to great hindrances to students’ academic success” (Rand 2007, p. 119).

#### **Professional development opportunities.**

Do professional development opportunities facilitate or promote educational practice?

The survey results signify that curriculum alignment and professional development associated with content standards have a limited impact on teaching practices. Although the majority of history teachers spent a considerable number of hours participating in professional development activities, 33% said that they spent zero hours in professional development related to history or history instruction. Forty percent noted that they spent between five and ten hours in the professional development relevant to history during the last school year (2008-2009). Twenty-six percent declared that there was no emphasis on alignment of curriculum and instruction with state or district content

standards in their professional development activities during the last school year (including the previous summer). Almost 42% declared a moderate to major emphasis was placed upon content standards and alignment. Overall, 61% of the teachers surveyed said the professional development opportunities relevant to alignment of curriculum and instruction with state or district standards resulted in no change to their teaching. Thirty-two percent affirmed a moderate change to their teaching as a result of professional development related to content standards. This lack of emphasis provokes an additional concern regarding the value placed upon history standards. Only a vigilant effort to emphasize standards can ensure their prominence and longevity in the classroom. As the authors of the Rand study point out, teachers require district and state support if they are to maintain standards and properly balance them against assessment requirements. As the report states, “States and districts also need to assist teachers in their efforts to adopt instructional approaches that are well matched to standards without leading to excessive text preparation” (Rand 2007, p. xxi).

### **Relevance to the Literature Review**

The literature review is relevant to this study because it provides a framework for the discussion of educational reform. It sets the parameters and establishes the essential constructs of the discussion. In the literature, there is a strong emphasis on importance of curriculum standards to reform efforts. The literature reviewed for this study establishes the important role that content standardization has had in the history of American education. It reveals the reality that standardized assessments are the primary instruments used to evaluate the adoption of a universal curriculum. Likewise the literature also divulges that high school historical instruction has always relied heavily upon a

standardized content. Additionally, vigorous promotion of history standards by the NCSS demonstrates the primacy they hold in social studies learning. Each of these factors is significantly relevant to this study because this research project builds on previous literature and research projects which explore perceptions, influence, and legitimacy associated with SBE reform efforts.

Efforts to improve student performance, and by inference to direct teacher practices, are forged by the reform initiatives constructed around standards. NCLB just represents the most recent effort in this long endeavor to improve education along the lines of universal content. Since this is the reality, it is crucial to evaluate whether reform initiatives based on content standards are positively affecting classroom practices and instruction. The Rand Corporation and the CEP studies suggested that implementing statewide discipline-specific content standards produced a positive result. The present research project has taken the historical realities, the influences of the NCSS on social studies, and the research previously carried out and has adapted their lingering questions to Oregon high school history coursework. In essence, this research, as an extension of the historical precedent, has continued the dialog, postulated the probabilities, and fostered the debate posed in the literature review. However, the results of this research study still leave unresolved the essential question of at what level standards influence classroom instruction, an outcome that parallels the historical debate.

In that vein, the literature previously reviewed in this study demonstrates a number of crucial points that are pertinent to this study and need to be revisited if some sense is to be garnered from this research endeavor. It is evident from any reasonable evaluation that there exists stark differences and some parallels between the literature and

the results of this study. To begin with the history of American education shows an established trend toward reform by means of instituting content standards and demonstrating competency by the use of standardized assessment instruments. Since this approach is the primary vehicle used for educational change, it seems prudent to determine how successful these efforts have been. First, in comparison with the studies highlighted in the literature review these survey results demonstrate that Oregon history teachers acknowledge minimal change in their instructional practices, relationship to curricular particulars, and interactions with students. Similarly, the emphasis on standardized assessments as a decisive determinant of improvement in student performance may be irrelevant to this study since there are no mandated or punitive measures in the social studies in Oregon public schools. Second, social studies, and history instruction particularly, have always been closely aligned with sets of standards; for alignment purposes teachers use those standards. The NCSS as the purveyor of standards has played a vital role in establishing high school social studies curriculum standards. A close look at the NCSS standards reveal parallels to many state standards, including those in Oregon, which implies that the organization does exert influence at the state level. The existence of content standards in history is pertinent because it shows that historical instruction has been influenced by standards in the discipline for some time. Third, historically standards have been tied to assessment devices used to validate content assimilation. While teachers in this study acknowledged alignment, the absence of an assessment device leaves the answer to the question of alignment uncertain. This uncertainty means that the results from this study have to be tempered by the fact that a standardized assessment has not been instituted. Therefore, the conclusions reached by

studies in the literature review, which were supported by factual assessment data, can only be minimally confirmed by this research. That is why as a descriptive study this research parallels the efforts of previous researchers but falls short in arriving at definitive agreement with their results. Fourth, natural concerns about standardized assessments are not effectively resolved in this research. The Rand and the CEP studies validate the conclusion that assessment instruments are prone to narrowing curriculum and provoking teachers to teach to the test, but this study cannot support or deny that fact. Do standards lead to a narrowing of content and teaching to the test? The question remains effectively unanswered. Fifth, the later renditions of the CEP study (CEP, 2007) imply that the original results showing improvement of student performance are mitigated by more recent recognitions that surges in student scores are not continuing. While some of that may be attributed to the amount of time since the initial legislation was implemented, it still calls into question whether the influences that standards have on learning are consistent. Minimal influence, let alone improved student performance, is ascertained in this study. Sixth, the historical data from the NAEP shows that, despite several significant educational legislative actions, student scores in history, as well as other disciplines, have not significantly improved. Lingering concerns about student improvements are registered in the more recent CEP (2007) evaluations, and these concerns are also prevalent in this research study. Seventh, the parallel portions of the Rand (2007) and CEP (2004) studies are not replicated in this study with the exception of teacher perceptions concerning alignment with standards, teacher climate, and morale. This study then offers only a portion of the overall evaluation offered by the Rand (2007) study. Other disparities between the two studies are these: Issues like instructional

changes, which are investigated by the Rand researchers, are not replicated in this study; neither are specific distinctions, like an emphasis on in-service or instruction for teachers geared to education. Nonetheless, the primary issue of teacher perceptions of classroom practices is pertinent and congruent in both studies.

### **Research Study Summary**

In summary, the impact of standards on teaching practices appears to be more implicit than explicit. While teachers acknowledge alignment with standards, several signals communicate a tepid interest in state standards by schools, teachers, and districts across Oregon, at least regarding history. Unlike some other states, like California or South Carolina, which are strong proponents of state-mandated content standards and associated assessments, Oregon districts and schools, at least in the social sciences, don't appear to be approaching standards and assessments aggressively. This fact is unveiled by a look at the particulars from the study, which highlight no assessment component, minimal change in teaching practices, limited implementation and reinforcement support, and the apparent lack of cross-grade collaboration. A brief synopsis of the study's findings is as follows:

1. According to teachers, history curriculum in Oregon public schools is aligned with state standards.
2. Accountability measures are not universal and few schools are employing performance tests or taking advantage of the SSKST.
3. The state's accountability system, in so far as it is relevant to the discipline of history, isn't pervasive enough to guarantee compliance with state content standards.

4. The majority of teachers do not believe that state standards are having a significant influence on teacher practices.
5. Administrative support and leverage for standards is minimal at best.
6. History teacher development activities in Oregon schools are not focusing on or emphasizing standards and standards alignment.

Needless to say, all of these factors imply a lukewarm approach to state standards and make it difficult to determine the real effect of SBE reform efforts on history instruction in Oregon.

The brief encapsulation of survey results reveals an apparent dichotomy between teachers' responses to questions of reform and Oregon high school history instructional practices. While on the one hand history teachers acknowledge familiarity with standards and the alignment of courses with them, on the other those teachers exist primarily in isolation with limited collaboration, appear resistant to mandated assessments, acknowledge minimal changes in their instructional process, and claim that they receive minimal professional development associated with history instruction and history standards. Beyond the guidance or alignment of standards, little modification of teaching practices has transpired that can be directly tied to the implementation of state content and performance standards in history, at least during 2008-09. Regarding district and school support for standards, teachers reported limited professional development activities tied to standards and history instruction; this demonstrates a low level of commitment to ensuring the continual alignment with state-mandated standards. Similarly, negligible use of the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test by schools and districts further suggests that schools and teachers are not highly supportive of state



sponsored assessment tests that are designed to verify student assimilation of course content. Correspondingly, a minimal number of schools (4%) represented in the study affirm that they have adopted school or district progress tests; this demonstrates a propensity to move away from such tests and fosters the idea that schools are generally evasive when it comes to evaluating students in any comparative sense. Of the mere 3% of the survey respondents who acknowledged that their school or district requires history progress tests, 66% percent (four teachers) considered the history progress tests as ineffective for identifying and correcting gaps in the curriculum or instruction. In the interviews, teachers made it perfectly clear that the absence of a mandated test minimized the necessity to verify compliance with state standards, even though they still held out the idea that their content was aligned to the state's standards. By way of a reminder, a significant 65% of history teachers in Oregon stated that the state's accountability system, which included content and performance standards, did not change their own teaching practices. As is apparent from the questions clustered around activities in instruction, teachers designated no substantial changes in their instructional practices. The specific survey results ranged from 75% to 89% of teachers noting no change during the school year (2008-09) for assignment planning, instructional assessments, homework, history projects, formal presentations, assessment reviews, student support practices, teacher collaboration, and pre-assessments. While the consistency of these teacher responses does not imply that standards are ineffective, it also does not convey confidence that the perpetuation of standards would result in student improvement. While it is true that some teachers (23%) said that the state's accountability system benefits students, the vast

majority rejected that notion. Clearly, almost 80% stated that the state's accountability system was in contention with their own personal approach to teaching and learning.

In comparison, the survey participants believed that their colleagues hold to high levels of professionalism and values regarding the mission of the school. Overall, the collegial climate for history teachers was positive. A significant 95% of those surveyed announced that their colleagues share a united focus on student learning, and 76% believed that their colleagues were unified in support of their school's central beliefs and values. While the morale issue produced mixed results (45% said morale did not change, and 51% disagreed that teacher moral was high), it is apparent that teacher perceptions of negative morale are in some part associated with the state's SBE inclinations. Regarding personal respect and relationships, just fewer than 96% believed that they had strong staff support.

The survey results for professional development activities show that little time is spent on standards and cohesion. While this refers to the most recent 2008-2009 year and may be skewed because of the high percentage of veteran teachers who have already aligned course instruction with standards, it still suggests that newer teachers are not receiving help with adopting standards and aligning their courses with them. However, this lack of support may have to do with the institution of the Oregon CIM program in the early nineties, which may explain why currently only limited efforts are being extended to reinforce history standards. While this may offer some explanation as to why there is an absence of significant emphasis, the question of continued diligence to inform new or novice teachers still seems pertinent and therefore of concern.

Additionally, there does not appear to be much collaboration between grades and colleagues. The reality that curriculum was not coordinated well across grade levels adds to the concerns as to whether there is a cohesive approach to history instruction (55% of the survey respondents acknowledge this concern). Moreover, the general absence of mentoring and collaboration implies that teachers largely work in isolation. The majority of respondents revealed that they never have been observed by another teacher (50%), or received coaching or mentoring (61%) from another teacher.

The key importance of this research is that it presents a pertinent picture of high school history curriculum standards and instructional practices. Moreover, by focusing on history instruction, an under-researched core curriculum, it sheds new light on the implications of NCLB-inspired state-mandated standards. The data offers a sobering picture of statewide teacher views on standardized initiatives and accountability measurements—views which reflect appreciation, compliance, and resistance. The evidence from the study also accentuates the minimal emphasis and support offered by authoritative bodies concerning the maintenance and enforcement of state-mandated standards in history.

By looking at curriculum guidelines, assessment activities, teacher practices, and school climate conditions for history instruction in Oregon, this research examined the influence of SBE reform efforts in high school history classes across the state. The focus of the research opens up a new avenue for looking at SBE in that it exposes the weaknesses inherent in the current Oregon effort in the social studies. More pointedly, at an administrative level the results from this study reveal a somewhat complacent approach regarding efforts to reform instruction in Oregon high school history

classrooms. The research data does, however, echo many of the findings concerning teacher perceptions demonstrated in other studies that are heavily relied upon by this study (Rand, 2007; CEP, 2004); in that regard it reaffirms conclusions previously established by larger multi-state studies.

Since the study results demonstrate teacher knowledge of and a level of compliance with state-mandated standards, the educational power brokers in Salem can consider their standardization efforts in some respects successful. If the results of data had implied limited knowledge or compliance, the mandate by educational authorities would have been to call for a higher level of assertiveness to counteract what appears to be the present level of complacency. While there is a high probability that teachers are complying with state mandated standards, no comfort should be awarded to proponents of SBE efforts because the results of this study are in no way definitive or decisively skewed in their direction. Had greater support been demonstrated in the data findings, the results would have been more definitive. One might ask what then in particular does this study say about the universality of curriculum and instruction? It says that teachers, by and large, have a lot of latitude in the realm of history instruction and that continuity or universality of content is implicit but not fully guaranteed. It is not my judgment that those conclusions are necessarily problematic, but they do reveal at least in the area of history instruction, that definitive statements of improvement or even compliance with standards are illusive.

It appears to me that three choices concerning high school history surface from the overarching conclusions posited by this study. Option one, the current level of compliance with state-mandated standards is acceptable and should be maintained.

Option two, an assessment instrument capable of ensuring curricular compliance needs to be constructed and instituted because the research results appear to encourage the exploration, necessity, and establishment of such a quantifiable assessment instrument. Option three, a different approach to reform which still complies with the NCLB mandates needs to be explored and decided upon.

The first option assumes that the data results from the study validate the efforts presently ongoing regarding standards and that there is no need in the social studies to elevate the assurance of compliance and implementation. This assumption implies that previously constructed state reform efforts have achieved the desired educational results, and the more recent reforms emphasized by NCLB just facilitate what was already in place; if that is the case, then the current methodological approach seems reasonable and no real change is desirable.

The second option assumes a measure of uncertainty regarding the implementation and longevity of standards and leads to the belief that the leveraging ability of a mandated assessment is prudent. In that vein, if the goal in Oregon high school history instruction is full implementation of SBE reform initiatives, then this research data presents several concerns worthy of reexamination. In particular, the data indicates multiple areas where disconnections exist between the intended goals of SBE and the initiatives being offered in history instruction in Oregon; more precisely, it suggests that the manifestations of reforms appear to be misaligned with the intended goals in that they do not meter consistent oversight and accountability measures into the process. If it is the desire of the state legislature or ODE to ensure the adoption of state standards and offer quantifiable evidence of the benefits, then several recommendations

need to be considered. First, support services need to be offered in regard to alignment with standards. At a state or district level, curriculum mapping as well as an instructional calendar, at least as a guideline, should be established. Second, accountability measures need to be instituted which at minimum include onsite reviewing of curricular plans. At a higher level, an accountability system needs to be implemented which evaluates student proficiencies in history relative to the state standards. While it is likely that a mandated statewide assessment will eventually be developed, in the meantime progress tests could be instituted which serve as monitoring devices to ensure the implementation of standards and give some assurance of consistency within grade parameters. Third, additional support should be given to collegial enterprises and teacher preparation. Districts should encourage peer mentoring and teacher collaboration. Similarly, professional development opportunities need to address standards in a more consistent and wholesale fashion by requiring discipline-specific sessions germane to curriculum guidelines associated with mandated standards.

The third option opens up the possibility of looking at NCLB mandates in history from another perspective. Because of the uniqueness of the social studies as a set of disciplines, more creative solutions could be investigated. Those solutions would need to be established in conjunction with the objectives of the subject matter. If the goal of mandated standards is elevated student comprehension and historical critical analysis consistent with NCLB requirements and collegiate expectations, then alternative assessments could be employed. Rather than instituting a typical mandated assessment, a more localized approach to compliance could be implemented. As a suggestion, a statewide requirement for student essays matched to sections of standards could be

employed and graded by department teachers. These teachers would of course need supportive elements to provide instruction and reinforcement, and to maintain the correlation between the standards and the essay requirements. Naturally, curriculum guidance, scoring rubrics, and other resources would need to be developed and offered by the ODE. It appears to me that this method of compliance is one example which would ensure the universality of history standards and offer a measure of accountability while at the same time sidestepping a number of concerns associated with high-stakes assessment instruments.

### **Future Research**

The limits of this study reveal a need for a better process to evaluate the influence of reform efforts to impose initiatives on teaching. More research needs to be enacted to quantify the influence of standards on teaching practices and to determine the extent of inference that standards lend to improved student performance. The Rand (2007) study likewise suggests a need for clearer information about alignment, capacity-building efforts to help educators engage more effectively in school improvement, and more valid measures of teacher and school effectiveness. Their assessment sums up the abundance of unanswered questions surrounding education as it pertains to Oregon high school history instruction. The benefits of SBE can only be ascertained by more effective assessments that quantify the actual improvements to instructional practices and student learning. This study therefore encourages the development of better assessment tools to aid in the evaluation of SBE compliance, and subsequent studies which can support or deny the value of SBE to Oregon high school history teachers and students.

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## Appendixes

## Appendix A

### Teacher Survey Instrument

**1. Please select the correct option regarding the geographic region where your school resides.**

- Urban (1000 people per square mile)
- Suburban (500 people per square mile)
- Rural (other than urban or suburban)


**2. Please mark your gender.**

MALE	FEMALE

**3. In a typical week, to how many students do you teach history, geography, economics (Write a number in each row. Please count each student only once per row.)**

- a. History \_\_\_\_\_ students
- b. Geography \_\_\_\_\_ students
- c. Economics \_\_\_\_\_ students
- d. Civics \_\_\_\_\_ students


**4. How familiar are you with the Oregon Achievement Standards and the Oregon Performance Standards in the following subjects? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Never heard of them	Heard of them, but don't know much about them	Familiar with the main points, but not the details	Have a thorough understanding of them	
a. Oregon Achievement Standards for history	1		2		3 4
b. Oregon Performance Standards for history	1		2		3 4
c. Oregon Achievement Standards for geography	1		2		3 4
d. Oregon Performance Standards for geography	1		2		3 4
e. Oregon Achievement Standards for economics	1		2		3 4
f. Oregon Performance Standards for economics	1		2		3 4
g. Oregon Achievement Standards for civics	1		2		3 4
g. Oregon Performance Standards for civics	1		2		3 4

**5. Did your district or state ever take any of the following actions to assist schools and teachers using the Oregon standards in history for improving curriculum and instruction in history? If the action occurred, how useful was it to you as a teacher? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Did not occur	Not useful	Minimally useful	Moderately useful	Very useful
a. Established detailed curriculum guidelines aligned with the Oregon standards in history	1		2		3 4 5

b. Established a specific pacing plan or instructional calendar indicating a schedule of instructional content throughout the year	1	2	3	4	5
c. Monitored and provided feedback on the implementation of the standards in classrooms (e.g., by reviewing lesson plans or students' work or by conducting walk-throughs)	1	2	3	4	5
d. Mapped out the alignment of textbooks and instructional programs to the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4	5
e. Provided sample lessons linked to the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4	5

**6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Oregon standards in history? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I don't know
a. The Oregon standards in history include more content than can be covered adequately in the school year	1	2	3	4	5
b. The Oregon standards in history do not give enough emphasis to historical reasoning and problem-solving	1	2	3	4	5
c. The Oregon standards in history do not cover some important content areas	1	2	3	4	5
d. The Oregon standards in history are useful for planning my lessons	1	2	3	4	5
e. I have aligned my teaching with the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4	5

**7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the history textbooks and curriculum materials provided by your school? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I don't know
a. I am satisfied with the quality of history textbooks and curriculum materials in my school	1	2	3	4	5
b. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are well aligned with the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4	5
c. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are too difficult for the majority of my students	1	2	3	4	5
d. I often need to supplement the history textbooks and curriculum materials with additional material to cover the Oregon standards in history adequately	1	2	3	4	5

**8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) in history? Please answer the questions whether or not your students are tested. (Circle one number in each row.)**

Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I don't know
-------------------	----------	-------	----------------	--------------

a. The history SSKST is a good measure of student's mastery of the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4	5
b. The history SSKST is too difficult for the majority of my students	1	2	3	4	5
c. The history SSKST includes considerable content that is not in our curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
d. The history SSKST omits considerable content that is in our curriculum	1	2	3	4	5
e. I have aligned my teaching with the history SSKST	1	2	3	4	5
f. The history SSKST adequately measures reasoning and problem-solving skills.	1	2	3	4	5
g. I feel a great deal of pressure to improve my student's scores on the history SSKST	1	2	3	4	5

**9. During this school year, was the following information or assistance regarding last year's (2007-08) history SSKST results available to you? If available, how useful was it for guiding your instruction? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Not available	Not useful	Minimally useful	Moderately useful	Very useful applicable
a. Reports of last year's history test results for the students you taught last year	1	2	3	4	5
b. Reports of last year's history test results for the students you teach this year	1	2	3	4	5
c. History test results summarized for each student subgroup (e.g., special education, race/ethnicity, economically disadvantaged)	1	2	3	4	5
d. History test results disaggregated by topic or skill	1	2	3	4	5
e. Computer software or systems for re-analyzing history test results	1	2	3	4	5
f. Workshops or meetings where history test results are presented and explained	1	2	3	4	5
g. Training on how to use history test results for instructional planning or school improvement	1	2	3	4	5

**10. Think about ways in which your teaching is different because of the history Social Science Knowledge & Skills Test than it would be without the SSKST. How much do the following statements describe differences in your teaching due to the history SSKST? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	As a result of the history SSKST: difference	A small amount	A moderate amount	A great deal
a. I assign more homework or more difficult homework	1	2	3	4
b. I search for more effective teaching methods	1	2	3	4
c. I focus more on the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4
d. I focus more on topics emphasized in the history SSKST (e.g., shifting instructional time from history to other social science instruction)	1	2	3	4
e. I look for particular styles and formats of problems in the history SSKST and emphasize those in my instruction (e.g., using particular styles of graphs; using specific key phrases)	1	2	3	4

f. I spend more time teaching general test-taking strategies (e.g., time management, eliminating wrong multiple-choice options, filling in answer sheets)	1	2	3	4
g. I spend more time teaching history content (e.g., by replacing non-instructional activities with history instruction)	1	2	3	4
i. I offer more assistance outside of school to help students who are not proficient (i.e., not meeting the standard) on the history SSKST	1	2	3	4
j. I rely more heavily on multiple-choice tests in my own classroom assessment	1	2	3	4
k. I rely more heavily on open-ended tests (e.g., essays, portfolios) in my own classroom assessment	1	2	3	4

**11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about student results from the history SSKST administered last school year (2007-08)? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree	I do not have access to results
a. I received the SSKST results in a timely manner	1	2	3	4	5
b. The SSKST results were clear and easy to understand	1	2	3	4	5
c. The SSKST results helped me identify and correct gaps in curriculum and instruction	1	2	3	4	5
d. The individual student results helped me tailor instruction to students' individual needs	1	2	3	4	5
e. The SSKST results allowed me to identify areas where I need to strengthen my content knowledge or teaching skills	1	2	3	4	5

**12. All teachers monitor their student's progress. Sometimes districts or schools require that additional tests be administered. Are you required by your district or school to administer specific history progress tests (i.e., interim tests, benchmark tests, diagnostic tests) on a periodic basis to monitor your student's progress in history? (Circle one number.)**

**Yes** ..... (continue on with the survey)

1
2

**No** ..... (if no skip down to question #17)

**13. How often are the required history progress tests administered? (Circle one number.)**

Two to three times per year .....

1
---

Approximately every six to eight weeks.....

2
---

Approximately every two to four weeks .....

3
---

**14. How soon are the scores from the required history progress tests available to you? (Circle one number.)**

The same day I administer them.....

1
---

The next day .....

2
---

Within one week .....

3
---

Two to four weeks later .....

4
---

More than four weeks later .....

5
---

The scores are not available to me .....

6

**15. Please indicate whether the required history progress tests have the following characteristics. (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Yes	No	don't know
a. The test contains only multiple-choice questions	1	2	3
b. The students take the test on computers	1	2	3
c. The results are reported to your principal	1	2	3
d. The results are reported to the district	1	2	3
e. There are consequences (e.g., rewards or sanctions) for teachers associated with performance on these tests	1	2	3

**16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the required history progress tests? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
a. The history progress tests are a good measure of student's mastery of the Oregon standards in history	1	2	3	4
b. The history progress tests are good preparation for the history SSKST	1	2	3	4
c. The history progress test results help me identify and correct gaps in curriculum and instruction	1	2	3	4

**17. How often do you do each of the following activities in your history instruction? How has the frequency changed this school year (2008-09) compared to last school year (2007-08)? (Circle one number for frequency and one number for change in each row. If you teach history to more than one class, answer in terms of your typical practice.)**

*If you did not teach history last year, please check here and answer only Column 1.*

COLUMN 1 Frequency of Activity

	Never	Rarely (few times a year)	Sometimes (once or twice a month)	Often (once a week or more)
a. Plan different assignments or lessons for groups of students based on their performance	1	2	3	4
b. Assign history homework	1	2	3	4
c. Re-teach topics because student performance on assignments or assessments did not meet your expectations	1	2	3	4
d. Have students work on extended history investigations or projects	1	2	3	4
e. Introduce content to the whole class through formal presentations or direct instruction	1	2	3	4
f. Review assessment results to identify individual students who need supplemental instruction	1	2	3	4
g. Review assessment results to identify topics requiring more or less emphasis in instruction	1	2	3	4
h. Provide help to individual students outside of class time	1	2	3	4

i. Confer with another teacher about alternative ways to present specific topics or lessons	1	2	3	4
j. Conduct a pre-assessment to find out what students know about a topic	1	2	3	4
k. Have students help other students learn history content (e.g., peer tutoring)	1	2	3	4
l. Refer students for extra help outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring)	1	2	3	4

18, How has the frequency changed this school year (2008-2009) compared to last school year (2007-2008)? [Note this a follow-up question from Question #17] (Mark one answer in each row) Change in 2008-09 compared to 2007-08.

Column Two - Frequency Change	Column 2		
	Less than 2007-08	About the same as 2007-08	More than 2007-08
a. Plan different assignments or lessons for groups of students based on their performance	1	2	3
b. Assign history homework	1	2	3
c. Re-teach topics because student performance on assignments or assessments did not meet your expectations	1	2	3
d. Have students work on extended history investigations or projects	1	2	3
e. Introduce content to the whole class through formal presentations or direct instruction	1	2	3
f. Review assessment results to identify individual students who need supplemental instruction	1	2	3
g. Review assessment results to identify topics requiring more or less emphasis in instruction	1	2	3
h. Provide help to individual students outside of class time	1	2	3
i. Confer with another teacher about alternative ways to present specific topics or lessons	1	2	3
j. Conduct a pre-assessment to find out what students know about a topic	1	2	3
k. Have students help other students learn history content (e.g., peer tutoring)	1	2	3
l. Refer students for extra help outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring)	1	2	3

19. Please indicate how the following features of your school have changed as a result of the state's assessments, adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets, rewards, and sanctions). (Circle one number in each row.) If this is your first year working at this school please check here and skip to Question #20.

First Year

<i>As a result of the state's accountability system:</i>	Changed for the worse	Did not change due to accountability system	Changed for the better
a. The principal's effectiveness as an instructional leader	1	2	3
b. Teachers' general focus on student learning	1	2	3
c. Teachers' relationships with their students	1	2	3



d. Morale of the school staff	1	2	3
e. Students <input type="checkbox"/> learning of important skills and knowledge	1	2	3
f. Students <input type="checkbox"/> focus on school work	1	2	3
g. Academic rigor of the curriculum	1	2	3
h. My own teaching practices	1	2	3

**20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the state's accountability system under NCLB? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. The state's accountability system supports my personal approach to teaching and learning	1	2	3	4
b. The state's accountability system leaves little time to teach content not on the state tests	1	2	3	4
c. Because of pressure to meet the AYP target, I am focusing more on improving student achievement at my school	1	2	3	4
d. The possibility of my school receiving rewards or sanctions is a very strong motivator for me	1	2	3	4
e. The state's accountability system is so complicated it is hard for me to understand	1	2	3	4
f. The accommodation policies regarding testing special education students (students with IEPs) and students who are English Language Learners (Limited English Proficient students) are clear to me	1	2	3	4
g. Overall, the state's accountability system has been beneficial for students at my school	1	2	3	4
h. As a result of the state's accountability system, high-achieving students are not receiving appropriately challenging curriculum or instruction	1	2	3	4

**21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the conditions in your school? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Most of my colleagues share a focus on student learning	1	2	3	4
b. Our school has clear strategies for improving instruction	1	2	3	4
c. Teacher morale is high	1	2	3	4
d. Many new programs come and go in our school	1	2	3	4
e. There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at our school	1	2	3	4
f. Curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across different grade levels at our school	1	2	3	4
g. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be	1	2	3	4
h. I feel accepted and respected as a colleague by most staff members	1	2	3	4
i. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff members	1	2	3	4
j. Teachers in our school are continually learning and seeking new ideas	1	2	3	4

**22. There are many conditions that may hinder or prevent students from achieving at high levels in school. To what extent is each of the following factors a hindrance to your student's academic success? (Circle one number in each row.)**

<b>Student and Family Conditions</b>	Not a hindrance	Slight hindrance	Moderate hindrance	Great hindrance
a. Inadequate basic skills or prior preparation	1	2	3	4
b. Lack of support from parents	1	2	3	4
c. Student absenteeism and tardiness	1	2	3	4

**23. Classroom Conditions**

	Not a hindrance	Slight hindrance	Moderate hindrance	Great hindrance
d. Insufficient class time to cover all the curriculum	1	2	3	4
e. Wide range of student abilities to address in class	1	2	3	4
f. Large class size	1	2	3	4
g. Inadequate instructional resources (e.g., textbooks, equipment)	skipped	skipped	skipped	skipped

**24. School Conditions**

	Not a hindrance	Slight hindrance	Moderate hindrance	Great hindrance
h. Frequent changes in school priorities or leadership	1	2	3	4
i. High rate of teacher turnover	1	2	3	4
j. Lack of school resources to provide the extra help for students who need it	1	2	3	4
k. Lack of teacher planning time built into the school day	1	2	3	4
l. Other (Specify - _____ )	1	2	3	4

**25. During the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how many times did you engage in each of the following professional development activities with other teachers or administrators? If you participated, how valuable was each for your own professional development? (Circle one number for frequency and, if you participated, circle one number for value in each row.)**

<b>Frequency</b>	Never	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Daily or almost daily
a. Developing lessons or courses with other teachers	1	2	3	4	5
b. Discussing teaching practices or instructional issues with other teachers	1	2	3	4	5
c. Reviewing state test score results with other teachers	1	2	3	4	5
d. Observing another teacher for at least 30 minutes at a time	1	2	3	4	5
e. Receiving feedback from another teacher who observed in your class	1	2	3	4	5
f. Acting as a coach or mentor to another teacher	1	2	3	4	5
g. Receiving coaching or mentoring from another teacher	1	2	3	4	5
h. Participating in teacher collaboratives, networks, or study groups	1	2	3	4	5
i. Participating in a school or district committee or task force focused on curriculum and instruction	1	2	3	4	5

26. If you participated [in professional development activities], how valuable was each for your own professional development? [This question extends from question #25 related to professional development] (Mark one answer in each row for the value) Value

Value	Not valuable	Moderately valuable	Very valuable
a. Developing lessons or courses with other teachers	1	2	3
b. Discussing teaching practices or instructional issues with other teachers	1	2	3
c. Reviewing state test score results with other teachers	1	2	3
d. Observing another teacher for at least 30 minutes at a time	1	2	3
e. Receiving feedback from another teacher who observed in your class	1	2	3
f. Acting as a coach or mentor to another teacher	1	2	3
g. Receiving coaching or mentoring from another teacher	1	2	3
h. Participating in teacher collaboratives, networks, or study groups	1	2	3
i. Participating in a school or district committee or task force focused on curriculum and instruction	1	2	3

27. During the current school year (2008-09) (including last summer), approximately how many hours of formal professional development did you participate in from any source (e.g., district or school workshops, new teacher training, university courses)? (Mark one answer in each row, as applicable)

	zero	5-10 hours	20-40 hours	50 or more hours
a. Total professional development hours? If you wrote zero, Skip to Question 30	1	2	3	4
b. How many hours were focused on history or history instruction?	1	2	3	4
c. How many hours were focused on geography or geography instruction?	1	2	3	4

28. During your participation in professional development activities in the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how much emphasis was placed on the following areas? If there was emphasis, to what extent did you change your teaching as a result of the professional development? (Circle one number for emphasis and, if there was emphasis, circle one number for instructional change in each row.)

Emphasis	No emphasis	Minor emphasis	Moderate emphasis	Major emphasis
a. History and history teaching	1	2	3	4
b. Geography and geography teaching	1	2	3	4
c. Instructional strategies for English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English-Proficient students)	1	2	3	4
d. Instructional strategies for low-achieving students	1	2	3	4
e. Instructional strategies for special education students (i.e., students with IEPs)	1	2	3	4
f. Aligning curriculum and instruction with state and/or district content standards	1	2	3	4
g. Preparing students to take the SSKST assessments	1	2	3	4
h. Interpreting and using reports of student test	1	2	3	4

results

29. If there was emphasis; to what extent did you change your teaching as a result of the professional development? [This question stems from question #28] (Mark on answer in each row for instructional change) Instructional Change

<b>Instructional Change</b>	No change	Moderate change	Major change
a. History and history teaching	1	2	3
b. Geography and geography teaching	1	2	3
c. Instructional strategies for English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English-Proficient students)	1	2	3
d. Instructional strategies for low-achieving students	1	2	3
e. Instructional strategies for special education students (i.e., students with IEPs)	1	2	3
f. Aligning curriculum and instruction with state and/or district content standards	1	2	3
g. Preparing students to take the SSKST assessments	1	2	3
h. Interpreting and using reports of student test results	1	2	3

30. Including this year, how many years have you taught on a full-time basis? (Mark the appropriate answer)

<b>One year</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Two to three years</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Four to five years</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Six to ten years</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>More than ten years</b>	<b>5</b>

31. What is the highest degree you hold? (Mark the appropriate answer.)

BA or BS .....	1
MA or MS .....	2
PhD or EdD.....	3
Other (Specify _____)	4

32. What type of teaching certification do you hold? (Circle one number.)

Not certified	1
Temporary, provisional, or emergency certification (requiring additional coursework and/or student teaching before regular certification can be obtained.)	2
Regular, standard, or probationary certification in my main teaching assignment (Probationary certification refers to initial certification issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period.)	3

Regular, standard, or probationary certification not in my main teaching assignment (Probationary certification refers to initial certification issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period.)

4

## Appendix B

### Interview Prologue and Questions

#### Interview Prologue:

This interview is a part of an overall survey project being conducted by Eric Lowe in conjunction with his Ph.D. research performed while at Oregon State University. The goal of this interview is to probe for clarity regarding the answers to the history teacher survey. The questions, used in this interview, spring directly from the various sections of questions posited in the survey. Participation in this interview is voluntary without any compulsion; by agreeing to participate in the interview the interviewee is offering implicit approval of their willingness to be interviewed and recognizes that their answers will be incorporated into the overall summary of the research project. The identity of the interviewee will be kept strictly confidential and only known to the primary researcher. The interview will be audio taped to guarantee accuracy, but all recordings will subsequently be destroyed or erase upon the completion of the research written report. All transcripts will likewise be destroyed upon the completion of the summary reports. The questions in this interview are intentionally open-ended to allow for candid answers while offering the interviewee the freedom to address them individually.

#### Dissertation Interview Questions:

1. Describe what types of occasions, in-service opportunity, or departmental support activities were used to enhance your knowledge or practice of standards in history during the last year.
2. How has the morale of teachers in your school been affected by the implementation of state standards and assessment opportunities?
3. In what specific ways have your teaching practices changed or altered as a result of mandated curriculum standards or state sponsored assessments in history?
4. What relationship do you see between standardized curriculum/assessments and quality classroom instruction?
5. Describe the types of history performance tests, if any, which are currently being administered in your school.
6. What concerns or issues do you have with the current state mandated standards or assessments in history?
7. What forms of feedback information have you received during the last year (2008-09) regarding the Social Science Knowledge and Skill Test results?
8. Describe any impediments you are aware of regarding the adaptation or implementation of academic standards and assessments in history instruction in your school.

## Appendix C

## Teacher Survey Charts and Data

1. Please select the correct option regarding the geographic region where your school resides.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Urban (1000 people per square mile)	17.8%	28
Suburban (500 people per square mile)	39.5%	62
Rural (other than urban or suburban)	43.3%	68
<i>answered question</i>		<b>157</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

2. Please mark the correct box for your gender.		
Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Male	70.7%	111
Female	29.3%	46
<i>answered question</i>		<b>157</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>0</b>

In a typical week, how many students do you teach history, geography, economics, civics? (enter a number on each row as it is applicable)			
Answer Options	Response Average	Response Total	Response Count
a. history	92.91	13,751	147
b. geography	59.69	3,880	64
c. economics	41.48	2,489	60
d. civics	55.89	3,521	63
<i>answered question</i>			<b>156</b>
<i>skipped question</i>			<b>1</b>

<b>4. How familiar are you with the Oregon Achievement Standards and the Oregon Performance Standards in the following subjects? (Mark one answer in each row)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Never heard of them</b>	<b>Heard of them but don't know much about them</b>	<b>Familiar with the main points, but not the details</b>	<b>Have a thorough understanding of them</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Oregon Achievement Standards for history	7	12	70	67	3.26	156
b. Oregon performance Standards for history	7	12	64	73	3.30	156
c. Oregon Achievement Standards for geography	10	28	72	44	2.97	154
d. Oregon performance Standards for geography	10	30	69	46	2.97	155
e. Oregon Achievement Standards for economics	9	40	68	37	2.86	154
f. Oregon performance Standards for economics	9	38	68	38	2.88	153
g. Oregon Achievement Standards for civics	7	27	78	44	3.02	156
h. Oregon performance Standards for civics	8	24	77	46	3.04	155
<b><i>answered question</i></b>						<b>156</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>						<b>1</b>



<b>5. Did your district or state ever take any of the following actions to assist schools and teachers using the Oregon standards in history for improving curriculum and instruction in history? If the action occurred, how useful was it to you as a teacher? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Did not occur</b>	<b>Not useful</b>	<b>Minimally useful</b>	<b>Moderately useful</b>	<b>Very useful</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Established detailed curriculum guidelines aligned with the Oregon standards in history	33	12	33	57	20	3.12	155
b. Established a specific pacing plan or instructional calendar indicating a schedule of instructional content throughout the year	76	10	22	28	19	2.38	155
c. Monitored and provided feedback on the implementation of the standards in classrooms (e.g., by reviewing lesson plans or students work or by conducting walk-through)	89	15	24	19	7	1.96	154
d. Mapped out the alignment of textbooks and instructional programs to the Oregon standards in history	56	16	38	33	11	2.53	154
e. Provided sample lessons linked to the Oregon standards in history	84	24	25	18	3	1.91	154
<i>answered question</i>							<b>155</b>
<i>skipped question</i>							<b>2</b>

<b>6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Oregon standards in history? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. The Oregon standards in history include more content than can be covered adequately in the school year	7	36	39	67	5	3.18	154
b. The Oregon standards in history do not give enough emphasis to historical reasoning and problem-solving	3	48	55	34	13	3.04	153

c. The Oregon standards in history do not cover some important content areas	1	42	59	44	7	3.09	153
d. The Oregon standards in history are useful for planning my lessons	14	38	80	17	5	2.75	154
e. I have aligned my teaching with the Oregon standards in history	7	14	82	46	4	3.17	153
<i>answered question</i>							<b>154</b>
<i>skipped question</i>							<b>3</b>

<b>7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the history textbooks and curriculum materials provided by your school? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. I am satisfied with the quality of history textbooks and curriculum materials in my school	29	42	57	21	2	2.50	151
b. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are well aligned with the Oregon standards in history	9	28	90	19	5	2.89	151
c. The history textbooks and curriculum materials are too difficult for the majority of my students	20	83	34	10	3	2.29	150
d. I often need to supplement the history textbooks and curriculum materials with additional material to cover the Oregon standards in history adequately	3	29	53	65	1	3.21	151
<i>answered question</i>							<b>151</b>
<i>skipped question</i>							<b>6</b>

<b>8. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the Social Science Knowledge and Skills Test (SSKST) in history? Please answer the questions whether or not your students are tested. (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I don't know</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. The history SSKST is a good measure of student's mastery of the Oregon standards in history	28	28	10	1	83	3.55	150
b. The history SSKST is too difficult for the majority of my students	6	24	23	3	95	4.04	151
c. The history SSKST includes considerable content that is not in our curriculum	4	20	28	10	88	4.05	150
d. The history SSKST omits considerable content that is in our curriculum	3	7	37	17	86	4.17	150
e. I have aligned my teaching with the history SSKST	28	34	11	2	75	3.41	150
f. The history SSKST adequately measures mathematical reasoning and problem -solving	11	23	8	1	106	4.13	149
g. I feel a great deal of pressure to improve my student's scores on the history SSKST	33	28	11	5	73	3.38	150
<b><i>answered question</i></b>							<b>151</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>							<b>6</b>

<b>9. During this school year, was the following information or assistance regarding last year's (2007-08) history SSKST results available to you? If available, how useful was it for guiding your instruction? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not available</b>	<b>Not useful</b>	<b>Minimally useful</b>	<b>Moderately useful</b>	<b>Very useful/applicable</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Reports of last year's history test results for the students you taught last year	126	8	14	2	1	1.30	151
b. Reports of last year's history test results for the students you teach this year	128	8	12	2	1	1.28	151
c. History test results summarized for each student subgroup (e.g., special education, race/ethnicity, economically disadvantage d)	128	11	8	0	2	1.23	149
d. History test results disaggregated by topic or skill	128	8	8	5	1	1.29	150
e. Computer software or systems for re-analyzing history test results	138	9	2	0	3	1.16	152
f. Workshops or meetings where history test results are presented and explained	135	8	5	2	1	1.19	151
g. Training on how to use history test results for instructional planning or	133	11	3	3	1	1.20	151

school improvement	
	<i>answered question</i> 152
	<i>skipped question</i> 5

<b>10. Think about ways in which your teaching is different because of the history SSKST than it would be without the SSKST. How much do the following statements describe differences in your teaching due to the history SSKST? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>No difference</b>	<b>A small amount</b>	<b>A moderate amount</b>	<b>A great deal</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. I assign more homework or more difficult homework	124	8	4	2	1.16	138
b. I search for more effective teaching methods	107	9	13	7	1.41	136
c. I focus more on the Oregon standards in history	92	26	15	4	1.50	137
d. I focus more on topics emphasized in the history SSKST (e.g., shifting instructional time from history to other social geography instruction)	104	23	9	2	1.34	138
e. I look for particular styles and formats of problems in the history SSKST and emphasize those in my instruction (e.g., using particular styles of graphs; using specific key phrases)	110	16	10	1	1.28	137
f. I spend more time teaching general test-taking strategies (e.g., time management, eliminating wrong multiple-choice options, filling in answer sheets)	107	19	11	0	1.30	137
g. I spend more time teaching history content (e.g., by replacing non-instructional activities with history instruction)	106	14	14	3	1.37	137
i. I offer more assistance outside of school to help students who are not proficient (i.e., not meeting the standard) on the history SSKST	114	14	8	1	1.24	137

j. I rely more heavily on multiple-choice tests in my own classroom assessment	106	14	14	3	1.37	137
k. I rely more heavily on open-ended tests (e.g., essays, portfolios) in my own classroom assessment	101	15	12	10	1.50	138
<i>answered question</i>						<b>138</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>19</b>

<b>11. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about student results from the history SSKST administered last school year (2007-08)? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>I do not have access to the results</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. I received the SSKST results in a timely manner	5	3	11	5	116	4.60	140
b. The SSKST results were clear and easy to understand	6	5	10	2	117	4.56	140
c. The SSKST results helped me identify and correct gaps in curriculum and instruction	7	11	4	1	117	4.50	140
d. The individual student results helped me tailor instruction to student's individual needs	9	10	3	1	117	4.48	140
e. The SSKST results allowed me to identify areas where I need to strengthen my content knowledge or teaching skills	7	9	5	1	117	4.53	139
<i>answered question</i>						<b>140</b>	
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>17</b>	

**12. All teachers monitor their student's progress. Sometimes districts or schools require that additional tests be administered. Are you required by your district or school to administer specific history progress tests (i.e., interim tests, benchmark tests, diagnostic tests) on a periodic basis to monitor your student's progress in history? (Mark yes or no)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Yes - (continue on with the survey)	4.0%	6
No - (If no skip down to question #17)	97.4%	147
<i>answered question</i>		<b>151</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>6</b>

**13. How often are the required history progress tests administered? (select one of the following options)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
Two to three times per year	42.9%	3
Approximately every six to eight weeks	28.6%	2
Approximately every two to four weeks	28.6%	2
<i>answered question</i>		<b>7</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>150</b>

**14. How soon are the scores from the required history progress tests available to you? (Select one of the following options)**

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
The same day I administer them	42.9%	3
The next day	28.6%	2
Within one week	28.6%	2
Two to four weeks later	14.3%	1
More than four weeks later	42.9%	3
The scores are not available to me	14.3%	1
<i>answered question</i>		<b>7</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>150</b>

**15. Please indicate whether the required history progress tests have the following characteristics. (Mark one answer in each row.)**

Answer Options	Yes	Not useful	Don't know	Rating Average	Response Count
a. The test contains only multiple-choice questions	4	2	1	1.57	7
b. The students take the test on computers	3	3	1	1.71	7

c. The results are reported to your principal	2	3	2	2.00	7
d. The results are reported to the district	2	3	2	2.00	7
e. There are consequences (e.g., rewards or sanctions) for teachers associated with performance on these tests	0	2	5	2.71	7
<i>answered question</i>					<b>7</b>
<i>skipped question</i>					<b>150</b>

<b>16. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the required history progress tests? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. The history progress tests are a good measure of student's mastery of the Oregon standards in history	2	2	2	0	2.00	6
b. The history progress tests are good preparation for the history SSKST	2	1	2	0	2.00	5
c. The history progress test results help me identify and correct gaps in curriculum and instruction	2	2	1	1	2.17	6
<i>answered question</i>						<b>6</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>151</b>

<b>17. How often do you do each of the following activities in your history instruction? (Mark one answer per row regarding frequency) [If you teach history to more than one class, answer in terms of your typical practice.] Frequency of Activity</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Never</b>	<b>Rarely (a few times a year)</b>	<b>Sometimes (once or twice a month)</b>	<b>Often (Once a week or more)</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Plan different assignments or lessons for groups of students based on their performance	8	37	70	36	2.89	151
b. Assign history homework	1	19	30	101	3.53	151



c. Re-teach topics because student performance on assignments or assessments did not meet your expectations	5	44	75	27	2.82	151
d. Have students work on extended history investigations or projects	2	54	68	27	2.79	151
e. Introduce content to the whole class through formal presentations or direct instruction	0	9	28	113	3.69	150
f. Review assessment results to identify individual students who need supplemental instruction	4	44	76	27	2.83	151
g. Review assessment results to identify topics requiring more or less emphasis in instruction	5	31	80	31	2.93	147
h. Provide help to individual students outside of class time	0	12	54	84	3.48	150
i. Confer with another teacher about alternative ways to present specific topics or lessons	5	26	71	48	3.08	150
j. Conduct a pre-assessment to find out what students know about a topic	17	57	58	19	2.52	151
k. Have students help other students learn history content (e.g., peer tutoring)	8	41	64	37	2.87	150
l. Refer students for extra help outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring)	25	73	39	12	2.26	149
<i>answered question</i>						<b>151</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>6</b>

<b>18. How has the frequency changed this school year (2008-09) compared to last school year (2007-08)? [Note: this is a follow-up question from question #17] (Mark one answer in each row) Change in 2008-09 compared to 2007-08</b>					
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Less than 2007-08</b>	<b>About the same as 2007-08</b>	<b>More than 2007-08</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Plan different assignments or lessons for groups of students based on their performance	5	109	31	2.18	145
b. Assign history homework	7	118	20	2.09	145

c. Re-teach topics because student performance on assignments or assessments did not meet your expectations	6	111	27	2.15	144
d. Have students work on extended history investigations or projects	2	113	30	2.19	145
e. Introduce content to the whole class through formal presentations or direct instruction	4	124	17	2.09	145
f. Review assessment results to identify individual students who need supplemental instruction	2	122	20	2.13	144
g. Review assessment results to identify topics requiring more or less emphasis in instruction	2	121	22	2.14	145
h. Provide help to individual students outside of class time	3	124	18	2.10	145
i. Confer with another teacher about alternative ways to present specific topics or lessons	6	110	29	2.16	145
j. Conduct a pre-assessment to find out what students know about a topic	5	124	16	2.08	145
k. Have students help other students learn history content (e.g., peer tutoring)	4	117	21	2.12	142
l. Refer students for extra help outside of the classroom (e.g., tutoring)	5	129	11	2.04	145
<i>answered question</i>					<b>145</b>
<i>skipped question</i>					<b>12</b>

**19. Please indicate how the following features of your school have changed as a result of the state's accountability system (including standards, assessments, adequate yearly progress (AYP) targets, rewards, and sanctions). (Mark one answer in each row.) [If this is your first year working at this school please skip to Question #20] As a result of the state's accountability system:**

<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Changed for the worse</b>	<b>Did not change (due to accountability)</b>	<b>Changed for the better</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. The principal's effectiveness as an instructional leader	24	89	24	2.00	137
b. Teacher's general focus on student learning	17	83	37	2.15	137
c. Teacher's relationships with their students	12	106	18	2.04	136
d. Morale of the school staff	61	62	14	1.66	137
e. Student's learning of important skills and	13	101	23	2.07	137

knowledge					
f. Student's focus on school work	16	107	14	1.99	137
g. Academic rigor of the curriculum	22	92	23	2.01	137
h. My own teaching practices	9	89	39	2.22	137
<i>answered question</i>					<b>137</b>
<i>skipped question</i>					<b>20</b>

<b>20. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the state's accountability system under NCLB? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. The state's accountability system supports my personal approach to teaching and learning	5	24	74	41	3.05	144
b. The state's accountability system leaves little time to teach content not on the state tests	29	66	43	6	2.18	144
c. Because of pressure to meet the AYP target, I am focusing more on improving student achievement at my school	11	54	57	21	2.62	143
d. The possibility of my school receiving rewards or sanctions is a very strong motivator for me	4	32	50	57	3.12	143
e. The state's accountability system is so complicated it is hard for me to understand	16	62	53	13	2.44	144
f. The accommodation policies regarding testing special education students (students with IEPs) and students who are English Language Learners (Limited English Proficient students) are clear to me	5	61	54	24	2.67	144
g. Overall, the state's accountability system has been beneficial for students at my school	3	30	70	39	3.02	142

h. As a result of the state's accountability system, high-achieving students are not receiving appropriately challenging curriculum or instruction	28	55	44	17	2.35	144
<i>answered question</i>						<b>144</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>13</b>

<b>21. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements about the conditions in your school? (Mark one answer in each row.)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Most of my colleagues share a focus on student learning	62	80	5	2	1.64	149
b. Our school has clear strategies for improving instruction	27	84	33	5	2.11	149
c. Teacher morale is high	10	62	52	24	2.61	148
d. Many new programs come and go in our school	41	55	45	7	2.12	148
e. There is consistency in curriculum, instruction, and learning materials among teachers in the same grade level at our school	18	72	43	16	2.38	149
f. Curriculum, instruction, and learning materials are well coordinated across different grade levels at our school	14	53	63	19	2.58	149
g. Most of my colleagues share my beliefs and values about what the central mission of the school should be	24	91	30	4	2.09	149
h. I feel accepted and respected as a colleague by most staff members	73	69	4	2	1.56	148
<i>answered question</i>						<b>149</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>8</b>

<b>22. There are many conditions that may hinder or prevent students from achieving at high levels in school. To what extent is each of the following factors a hindrance to your student's academic success? (Mark one answer in each row.) Student and Family Conditions</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not a hindrance</b>	<b>Slight hindrance</b>	<b>Moderate hindrance</b>	<b>Great hindrance</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Inadequate basic skills or prior preparation	6	23	40	78	3.29	147
b. Lack of support from parents	6	21	37	83	3.34	147
c. Student absenteeism and tardiness	3	17	32	95	3.49	147
<i>answered question</i>						<b>147</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>10</b>

<b>23. Classroom Conditions (Mark one answer in each row)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not a hindrance</b>	<b>Slight hindrance</b>	<b>Moderate hindrance</b>	<b>Great hindrance</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
d. Insufficient class time to cover all the curriculum	24	53	50	20	2.45	147
e. Wide range of student abilities to address in class	9	36	60	43	2.93	148
f. Large class size	23	27	64	34	2.74	148
<i>answered question</i>						<b>148</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>9</b>

<b>24. School Conditions (Mark one answer in each row)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not a hindrance</b>	<b>Slight hindrance</b>	<b>Moderate hindrance</b>	<b>Great hindrance</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
h. Frequent changes in school priorities or leadership	50	40	34	24	2.22	148
i. High rate of teacher turnover	74	43	21	9	1.76	147
j. Lack of school resources to provide the extra help for students who need it	35	39	38	36	2.51	148

k. Lack of teacher planning time built into the school day	53	40	28	26	2.18	147
l. Other (Specify _____)	12	1	2	11	2.46	26
<b>answered question</b>						<b>148</b>
<b>skipped question</b>						<b>9</b>

**25. During the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how many times did you engage in each of the following professional development activities with other teachers or administrators? (Mark one answer in each row for frequency) Frequency**

Answer Options	Never	A few times a year	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Daily or almost daily	Rating Average	Response Count
a. Developing lessons or courses with other teachers	17	61	36	25	10	2.66	149
b. Discussing teaching practices or instructional issues with other teachers	1	26	56	39	26	3.43	148
c. Reviewing state test score results with other teachers	74	60	11	1	3	1.65	149
d. Observing another teacher for at least 30 minutes at a time	75	53	8	10	3	1.74	149
e. Receiving feedback from another teacher who observed in your class	77	56	9	3	4	1.66	149
f. Acting as a coach or mentor to another teacher	61	42	20	8	17	2.18	148
g. Receiving coaching or mentoring from another teacher	92	35	15	4	3	1.60	149
h. Participating in teacher collaborative, networks, or study groups	38	52	41	14	4	2.29	149
i. Participating in a school or district committee or task force focused on curriculum and instruction	53	50	31	9	5	2.07	148
<b>answered question</b>						<b>149</b>	
<b>skipped question</b>						<b>8</b>	

<b>26. If you participated [in professional development activities], how valuable was each for your own professional development? [This question extends from question #25 related to professional development] (Mark one answer in each row for the value) Value</b>					
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Not valuable</b>	<b>Moderately valuable</b>	<b>Very valuable</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Developing lessons or courses with other teachers	17	66	55	2.28	138
b. Discussing teaching practices or instructional issues with other teachers	8	61	71	2.45	140
c. Reviewing state test score results with other teachers	80	42	5	1.41	127
d. Observing another teacher for at least 30 minutes at a time	44	43	33	1.91	120
e. Receiving feedback from another teacher who observed in your class	46	40	33	1.89	119
f. Acting as a coach or mentor to another teacher	33	62	28	1.96	123
g. Receiving coaching or mentoring from another teacher	50	37	30	1.83	117
h. Participating in teacher collaborative, networks, or study groups	24	68	35	2.09	127
i. Participating in a school or district committee or task force focused on curriculum and instruction	50	56	19	1.75	125
<i>answered question</i>					<b>141</b>
<i>skipped question</i>					<b>16</b>

<b>27. During the current school year (2008-09) (including last summer), approximately how many hours of formal professional development did you participate in from any source (e.g., district or school workshops, new teacher training, university courses)? (Mark one answer in each row, as applicable.)</b>						
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Zero</b>	<b>5-10 hours</b>	<b>20-40 hours</b>	<b>50 or more hours</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. Total professional development hours? If you wrote zero, Skip to Question #30	9	33	64	44	2.95	150
b. How many hours were focused on history or history instruction?	47	57	32	5	1.96	141

c. How many hours were focused on geography or geography instruction?	103	32	2	2	1.30	139
<i>answered question</i>						<b>150</b>
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>7</b>

<b>28. During your participation in professional development activities in the 2008-09 school year (including last summer), how much emphasis was placed on the following areas? (Mark one answer in each row for emphasis) Emphasis</b>							
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>No emphasis</b>	<b>Minor emphasis</b>	<b>Moderate emphasis</b>	<b>Major emphasis</b>	<b>No change</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
a. History and history teaching	43	35	29	32	2	2.40	141
b. Geography and geography teaching	85	39	11	1	2	1.52	138
c. Instructional strategies for English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English-Proficient students)	45	31	30	33	1	2.39	140
d. Instructional strategies for low-achieving students	16	41	50	32	2	2.74	141
e. Instructional strategies for special education students (i.e., students with IEPs)	36	55	36	13	1	2.21	141
f. Aligning curriculum and instruction with state and/or district content standards	37	44	32	27	1	2.37	141
g. Preparing students to take the SSKST assessments	123	8	8	0	1	1.20	140
h. Interpreting and using reports of student test results	94	22	17	4	1	1.52	138
<i>answered question</i>						<b>141</b>	
<i>skipped question</i>						<b>16</b>	



<b>29. If there was emphasis; to what extent did you change your teaching as a result of the professional development? [This question stems from question #28] (Mark one answer in each row for instructional change)</b>					
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Instructional Change</b>			<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
	<b>No change</b>	<b>Moderate change</b>	<b>Major change</b>		
a. History and history teaching	60	59	12	1.63	131
b. Geography and geography teaching	86	38	2	1.33	126
c. Instructional strategies for English Language Learners (i.e., Limited English-Proficient students)	75	52	6	1.48	133
d. Instructional strategies for low-achieving students	57	71	5	1.61	133
e. Instructional strategies for special education students (i.e., students with IEPs)	79	46	6	1.44	131
f. Aligning curriculum and instruction with state and/or district content standards	80	43	8	1.45	131
g. Preparing students to take the SSKST assessments	114	11	0	1.09	125
h. Interpreting and using reports of student test results	110	15	0	1.12	125
<i>answered question</i>					<b>138</b>
<i>skipped question</i>					<b>19</b>

<b>30. Including this year, how many years have you taught on a full-time basis? (Mark the appropriate answer)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
One Year	3.2%	5
Two to three years	11.0%	17
Four to five years	9.1%	14
Six to ten years	23.4%	36
More than ten years	53.2%	82
<i>answered question</i>		<b>154</b>
<i>skipped question</i>		<b>3</b>

<b>31. What is the highest degree you hold? (Mark the appropriate answer)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
BA or BS	15.6%	24
MA or MS	83.1%	128
PhD or EdD	1.3%	2
Other _____	0.6%	1
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>154</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>3</b>

<b>32. What type of teaching certification do you hold? (Mark the appropriate answer)</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Temporary, provisional, or emergency certification (requiring additional coursework and/or student teaching before regular certification can be obtained.)	3.9%	6
Regular, standard, or probationary certification in my main teaching assignment (Probationary certification refers to initial certification issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period.)	94.2%	145
Regular, standard, or probationary certification not in my main teaching assignment (Probationary certification refers to initial certification issued after satisfying all requirements except the completion of a probationary period.)	6.5%	10
<b><i>answered question</i></b>		<b>154</b>
<b><i>skipped question</i></b>		<b>3</b>

## Appendix D

**Informed Consent Document**

You are invited to participate in an educational research project being conducted by Eric Lowe as part of his doctoral work in education at Oregon State University. This research hopes to ascertain the impact of NCLB initiated standards-based reform efforts in Oregon. You are being solicited to participate in this study because you reside in the pool of teachers who teach high school history courses. If you choose to participate, we would like to invite you to take a 20 minute online survey (via Survey Monkey) probing your perceptions regarding the adaptation of curriculum standards, assessment practices, and your current teaching experience. Six respondents will also be randomly solicited to participate in a follow-up hour long interview. The risks will be minimized by several factors including maintaining the security of all respondent surveys and interview data. No record of any individual's name will be registered. Participants will only enter personal demographic data that includes geographic region identification, gender, years of teaching experience, acquired degrees, and teaching certificate. None of the specific information from the surveys will be made public except in summary report form. There are no inherent benefits to participating in this survey. Participation in this survey is completely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw or stop at any time without any risk or loss of benefits. Please make a printed copy of this document to keep for your records.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this study, please contact Oregon State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) Human Protections Administrator at (541) 737-4933 or by e-mail [irb@oregonstate.edu](mailto:irb@oregonstate.edu).

If you have any general questions, concerns, or problems please contact me Eric Lowe at [lowee@onid.orst.edu](mailto:lowee@onid.orst.edu). If you prefer, you may contact Dr. Michael Dalton, principal investigator, at (541) 737.8577 or by email at [michael.dalton@oregonstate.edu](mailto:michael.dalton@oregonstate.edu).

Thank you for your participation.

Sincerely,  
Eric Lowe

Please access the following web address to participate in the study.  
[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=84Bo3qrQtJ9Dmt790Sdxkw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=84Bo3qrQtJ9Dmt790Sdxkw_3d_3d)

## Appendix E

**Omitted Rand Original Teacher Survey Question Clusters**

**25. Think about the leadership your principal provides at your school. To what extent do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about your principal's leadership? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
a. Communicates a clear academic vision for my school	1	2	3	4
b. Sets high standards for teaching	1	2	3	4
c. Encourages teachers to review the Oregon standards and incorporate them into our teaching	1	2	3	4
d. Helps teachers adapt our curriculum based on an analysis of SSKST test results	1	2	3	4
e. Ensures that teachers have sufficient time for professional development	1	2	3	4
f. Enforces school rules for student conduct and backs me up when needed	1	2	3	4
g. Makes the school run smoothly	1	2	3	4

**26. How often do the following kinds of contact occur between you and the parents of your students? (Circle one number in each row.)**

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often
a. I require students to have their parents sign-off on homework	1	2	3	4
b. I assign homework that requires direct parent involvement or participation	1	2	3	4
c. I send home examples of excellent student work to serve as a model	1	2	3	4
d. For those students who are having academic problems I provide parents with specific activities they can do to improve their student's performance	1	2	3	4
e. For those students who are having academic problems, I try to make direct contact with their parents	1	2	3	4
f. When I contact parents and ask for a face-to-face meeting, they always agree and attend	1	2	3	4
g. For those students whose academic performance improves, I send messages home to parents	1	2	3	4

## Appendix F

**Oregon High School History Standards****High School for Social Sciences  
Standards By Design.**

Standards By Design: High School for Social Sciences 06/08/2010 9/11

Plain text denotes benchmark standards. Material in *Italics* is eligible for statewide assessment.

**High School**

High school students study world and U.S. history from approximately 1900 to the present. They also consider the interrelationship of the levels and branches of government as they are involved in creating government policy. In Economics, students look at specialization, competition, and the creation of economic policy. They also investigate the risks of entrepreneurship, investment, and various economic policies and practices. Geography study includes using geographic representations to describe and explain resource use, depletion, and renewal, physical and climate change, population characteristics and migration, and cultural characteristics and change. Students use Social Science Analysis to fully explain issues, including the significance; to gather and analyze data; to view events, issues, or problems from varied and opposed perspectives, considering short- and long-term effects; and to reach refined, supported conclusions.

**History**

Historical Skills: Interpret and reconstruct chronological relationships.

SS.HS.HS.01 Reconstruct, interpret, and represent the chronology of significant events, developments, and narratives from history.

*SS.HS.HS.01.01 Reconstruct the chronological order of significant events related to historical developments.*

*SS.HS.HS.01.02 Interpret the relationship of events occurring over time.*

*SS.HS.HS.01.03 Interpret timelines, charts and graphs illustrating chronological relationships.*

Historical Skills: Analyze cause and effect relationships, including multiple causalities.

SS.HS.HS.02 Compare and contrast institutions and ideas in history, noting cause and effect relationships.

Historical Skills: Understand, recognize, and interpret change and continuity over time.

SS.HS.HS.03 Recognize and interpret continuity and/or change with respect to particular historical developments in the 20th century.

Historical Skills: Identify and analyze diverse perspectives on and historical interpretation of historical issues and events.

SS.HS.HS.04 Understand how contemporary perspectives affect historical interpretation.

Historical Skills: Understand relationships among events, issues, and developments in different spheres of human activity (i.e. economic, social, political, cultural).

No standards currently exist for this CCG.

### **World History**

Understand and interpret events, issues, and developments within and across eras of world history.

SS.HS.HS.05 Understand the causes, characteristics, lasting influence, and impact of political, economic, and social developments in world history.

*SS.HS.HS.05.01 Understand how innovations in industry and transportation created the factory system, which led to the Industrial Revolution and transformed capitalism.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.02 Understand how the Agricultural Revolution contributed to and accompanied the Industrial Revolution.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.03 Understand the concepts of imperialism and nationalism.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.04 Understand how European colonizers interacted with indigenous populations of Africa, India, and Southeast Asia, and how the native populations responded.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.05 Understand the major consequences of imperialism in Asia and Africa at the turn of the century.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.06 Understand Japanese expansion overseas and the consequences for Japan and Asia during the 20th century.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.07 Understand the impact of the Chinese Revolution of 1911, and the cause of China's Communist Revolution in 1949.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.08 Identify and understand the causes and consequences of the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the impact on politics in nations around the world.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.09 Identify and understand the causes and consequences of the Mexican Revolution of 1911-1917.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.10 Identify and understand the causes of WWI and the reasons why the United States entered this war.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.11 Understand the character of the war on the western and eastern fronts in World War I, and how new military technology contributed to the scale and duration of the war.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.12 Understand how the terms of the Versailles Treaty and the social and economic challenges of the postwar decade set the stage for World War II.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.13 Understand how the United States and other nations responded to aggression in Europe and Asia during the first half of the 20th century.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.14 Understand isolationism and the military and economic mobilization of the United States prior to and during World War II, and its impact on American society.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.15 Understand the character of the war in Europe and the Pacific, and the role of inventions and new technology on the course of the war.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.16 Understand the systematic campaign of terror and persecution in Nazi Germany.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.17 Understand the response of the world community to the Nazis and to the Holocaust.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.18 Identify and understand the causes and consequences of the resistance movement in India.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.19 Understand the division of Europe after WWII leading to the Cold War.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.20 Understand the impact of the Cold War on individuals, groups, and nations.*

*SS.HS.HS.05.21 Understand the causes and impact of the Korean and Vietnam Wars.*

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

Understand and interpret events, issues, and developments within and across eras of U.S. history.

*SS.HS.HS.06 Understand how individuals, issues, and events changed or significantly influenced the course of U.S. history after 1900.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.01 Identify and understand the effects of 19th century reform movements on American life in the early 20th century.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.02 Understand the concerns, successes, and limitations of Progressivism.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.03 Understand how new inventions, new methods of production, and new sources of power transformed work, production, and labor in the early 20th century.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.04 Understand the changes in society and culture in the early 20th century.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.05 Understand the causes of the Great Depression and the effect of the Great Depression on the American family.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.06 Understand how the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration and the New Deal addressed the Great Depression, redefined the role of government, and had a profound impact on American life.*

*SS.HS.HS.06.07 Understand the changes that created the economic boom after World War II.*

### **State & Local History**

Understand and interpret the history of the state of Oregon.

*SS.HS.HS.07 Understand the causes, characteristics, and impact of political, economic, and social developments in Oregon state history.*

*SS.HS.HS.07.01 Identify and understand significant events, developments, groups, and people in the history of Oregon after 1900.*

*SS.HS.HS.07.02 Understand the interactions and contributions of the various people and cultures that have lived in or migrated to the area that is now Oregon after 1900.*

*SS.HS.HS.07.03 Consider and analyze different interpretations of key events and/or issues in history from the perspective of Oregon.*

State & Local History: Understand and interpret events, issues, and developments in the history of one's family, local community, and culture.

*SS.HS.HS.08 Understand the causes, characteristics and impact, and lasting influence of political, economic, and social developments in local history.*

**Social Science Analysis**

Define and clarify an issue so that its dimensions are well understood.

SS.HS.SA.01 Define, research, and explain an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon and its significance to society.

Acquire and organize materials from primary and secondary sources.

SS.HS.SA.02 Gather, analyze, use, and document information from various sources, distinguishing facts, opinions, inferences, biases, stereotypes, and persuasive appeals.

SS.HS.SA.03 Understand what it means to be a critical consumer of information.

Explain various perspectives on an event or issue and the reasoning behind them.

SS.HS.SA.04 Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon from varied or opposed perspectives or points of view.

Identify and analyze an issue.

SS.HS.SA.05 Analyze an event, issue, problem, or phenomenon, identifying characteristics, influences, causes, and both short- and long-term effects.

Select a course of action to resolve an issue.

SS.HS.SA.06 Propose, compare, and judge multiple responses, alternatives, or solutions; then reach a defensible, supported conclusion.