

ARIZONA REPORT CARD

SUBJECT	2000	2006
English	B	B
History*	A	A
Geography**	B	B
Math	B	C
Science	A	B
OVERALL GRADE	B+	B

*U.S. History for 2006 **World History for 2006

*ENGLISH—B

- *Standards-based Teaching and Learning: Language Arts Standards*
- *Reading Standards Articulated by Grade Level, K-12, August 2003*

The Grand Canyon State's English standards are, overall, quite good. Except for the strategies and processes objectives, which are vague, reviewers found that the standards are "clear and measurable and show increasing intellectual demand over the grades." Especially on target are Arizona's "Historical and Cultural Aspects of Literature" guidelines, which focus on the texts and not on their contexts. Several areas could use some tinkering, though. For one, standards for the history of the English language do not "provide titles or authors as examples that would illustrate the growth that should be expected through the elementary and secondary grades." However, Arizona is on the verge of attaining truly formidable English guidelines. A few additions and more specificity will bring them thus.

MATHEMATICS —C

- *Arizona Academic Content Standards, March 2003*

Arizona is on the right track with its Academic Content Standards, the report's author writes, "but there are shortcomings in content coverage and logical development that drag down its grade." Many standards included in the state's "Concepts" section are repetitive and do not focus on content. Pupils from Kindergarten to fifth grade are asked to color maps and pictures; time that could be better spent on other things. Certain concepts and tasks (e.g., finding maxima and minima of func-

tions) are introduced before students have been taught the prerequisite knowledge. Likewise, decimal arithmetic is introduced before fractions, increasing the likelihood that students "will utilize rote procedures without understanding" their meaning. Many standards in the "Structure and Logic" section are overbroad.

SCIENCE—B

- *Arizona Science Standard Articulated by Grade Level, Updated March 10, 2005*

Overall, these grade-level standards are clear and cover substantial content. Among the drawbacks: chemistry content is sparse at the K-8 level and, for high school, some important material—which could easily fill two or more chapters in a textbook—is lumped together. The documents occasionally put the cart before the horse, as when they present "Concept 3, Energy and Magnetism," without ever defining "energy." Nonetheless, these standards remain more than adequate.

U.S. HISTORY—A

- *Arizona Standards: Social Studies Standards, 2000, Arizona Department of Education*

These standards begin solidly, providing youngsters with a good foundation on which to build a study of history. They stress Western ideas and culture as the basis for U.S. history, but also note the country's diversity and the importance of contributions from other civilizations and nations. They include classroom activities, such as using artifacts to identify the similarities and differences of life in the past. By fifth grade, students are given an overview of American history from Discovery to the Revolution, and between sixth and eighth grades they focus more closely on the events between the Revolution and Reconstruction. When these standards suffer, it is from lack of content. They omit important events such as the temperance movement, the New South, the rise of the Know Nothings, and the public schools reform movement. But overall, Arizona does a marvelous job with sequential development from Kindergarten to twelfth grade, presenting history without political bias and, despite its standards' content omissions, presenting a good overview of the historical events that shaped the United States.

WORLD HISTORY—B

- *Arizona Standards: Social Studies Standards, 2000, Arizona Department of Education*

Arizona recognizes that most U.S. institutions have their origins in Europe, so the state makes Western civilization a central feature of its world history standards. And it does so very well. Students begin their global trek in the sixth grade, where they study Greece and Rome, as well as key figures such as Socrates and Julius Caesar. In high school, post-Renaissance history is covered with sufficient depth and rigor, as is the industrial revolution, to provide students with more than a timeline appreciation of the past. The standards don't limit themselves to the West, however, as Latin America and each of the world's major religious traditions receive in-depth attention. The only flaws—minor in an otherwise first-rate document—are the standards' failure to adequately cover the rise of Islam and the Middle Ages.