

SOUTH CAROLINA REPORT CARD

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

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

ENGLISH—B

- *South Carolina English Language Arts Curriculum Standards 2002 ELA Blueprint for PACT*
- *Measuring Student Performance through the Creation of Scoring Guides*

The Palmetto State is making positive strides and its standards-based education reforms are beginning to turn heads in other state capitals. One of the biggest components of such reform is crafting good state standards and, while South Carolina's English standards could be better, they certainly don't disappoint. The standards quite satisfactorily address almost all areas of the English language arts and reading. The standards for listening and speaking are excellent. Students are expected to acquire beginning reading skills, set forth in a strand on phonics and word study. Vocabulary instruction is strong and the level of literary analysis demanded of students is very high. But South Carolina falls prey to the temptation to not provide a recommended reading list of top works and authors. Literary traditions and genres are also absent. While the state demands students engage in difficult analysis, it never points out those works youngsters should be analyzing in their classrooms. This is a mistake. We're sure South Carolina will, in its next edition of English standards, make the necessary corrections. At that time, it will be our honor to bestow an A upon the worthy state.

MATHEMATICS—D

- *Outlines of High School Mathematics Courses*
- *Mathematics Course Standards, 2000*
- *South Carolina Mathematics Curriculum Standards, 2000*

South Carolina opens its discussion of Geometry with the absurd statement, "The use of Geometry software ... is essential to the instruction and assessment of Geometry," which, if true, would mean that the past 2000 years of instruction in Geometry was a waste. Unfortunately, this statement is indicative of the state's entire approach, which emphasizes technology at all levels, for all grades, as if math simply cannot be done without technological aids. Standards are often vague or inflated, such as the directive to connect Geometry "to the world outside the classroom," which sounds much better than what it means. Still, the high school standards manage to be fairly solid, and the elementary standards ask for memorization of the basic number facts, a positive feature. Overall, these could be a decent set of standards if the state would allow its students to actually perform calculations.

*SCIENCE—A

- *South Carolina Science Curriculum Standards, 2000*

South Carolina draws from the National Science Education Standards for its document. It has added to them, however, and the standards are bursting with content ripe for students' picking. Physical science is organized and error-free. The treatment is similar for the life sciences, and evolution is handled in an exemplary manner. One finds little tiresome, platitudinous language. Content is king in this document, as it should be.

*U.S. HISTORY—C

- *South Carolina Social Studies Curriculum Standards, 2000, South Carolina Department of Education (Since these standards were reviewed, South Carolina has issued a revised copy.)*

South Carolina's standards remain at a "dare to be great" moment. They contain good overarching organization, but the coverage of events is sporadic and, far too frequently, anonymous. To wit, the standards do a praiseworthy job reviewing how South Carolina and other colonies became dependent on slavery, but it never mentions tenant farming, the KKK, or Jim Crow. This document is cumulatively developed, but it often sheds facts for cutesy, air-brushed themes. Diversity, for example, gets much play. Since our last review of its U.S. history standards, the Palmetto State has revised them. Let's hope the new documents contain more specifics and less overt generality.

WORLD HISTORY—A

- *South Carolina Social Studies Curriculum Standards, 2005*

Who would've guessed that some of the nation's best world history standards would've emerged from the Low Country. But that is indeed the case, for South Carolina puts forth a document that is specific and organized, not by themes, but chronologically. World history is covered in sixth grade, seventh grade, and high school. All deserve praise. The sixth grade standards ask students to "summarize the significant features of the classical Indian civilization, including the caste system." A challenging task, indeed. They are also asked to "compare the features and major contributions of the African civilizations of Ghana, Mali, and Songhai, including the ... impact of Islam and Christianity on their cultures." Seventh graders discuss the works of Locke, Rousseau, and Montesquieu. High school is similarly demanding, although the state could do a better job with modern events. Overall, though, South Carolina's students should consider themselves lucky.