

## WASHINGTON REPORT CARD

SUBJECT	2000	2006
English	D	F
History*	F	F
Geography**	F	D
Math	F	F
Science	B	C
<b>OVERALL GRADE</b>	<b>D-</b>	<b>D-</b>

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

### ENGLISH—F

- *4-12 Reading Intervention Materials Review Washington State Evaluation Report, May 2004*
- *Reading Grade Level Expectations, January. 13, 2004*
- *Essential Academic Learning Requirements—Writing, 1998A Framework for Achieving the Essential Academic Learning Requirements in Writing for Washington State, K-10, rRevised July 2001*
- *Essential Academic Learning Requirements—Communication, K-10, Approved February. 26, 1997*
- *Washington Assessment of Student Learning Test Specifications, 4, 7, & 10*

Washington's English standards need some definite reworking. They are difficult to read, suffer from confusing organizational structure, and contain sentiments that can only be described as odd. For example, the document implies that students should read only what is "culturally relevant." In the glossary, culturally relevant literary/narrative text is defined as "reading materials to which the student can identify or relate." This is a dangerous road for Washington to take its students down. Literary study is already plagued by enough bad, relativistic, so-called "cultural" writing; it doesn't need any further difficulty from state K-12 standards. And instead of providing recommendations about which books and authors constitute good literature worthy of in-depth analysis, Washington would rather put forth social and political topics to guide student reading. Thus, we have standards that not only bring nothing of much worth to the table, but we have standards that actually do more harm than good. Washington should return to the drawing board.

### MATHEMATICS—F

- *Mathematics, K-10 Grade Level Expectations: A New Level of Specificity, 2004*

Washington could start to improve its abysmal grade for its math standards by eliminating all but the first of the five strands in its Grade Level Expectations. The other four express possibly laudable, but inherently vague, goals and the standards grouped under them are of such poor quality to be useless. Indeed, an editor is generally required here: standards are poorly written, unclear, and needlessly long, often having little apparent connection to math. ("Explain how money is used to describe the value of purchased items," for example.) Students are expected to memorize basic number facts, which is an excellent start, but student-invented algorithms and calculators are emphasized throughout. Fifth graders are using calculators to multiply decimals before they are even exposed to fraction multiplication, which means they are simply pressing buttons without understanding what's happening. Indeed, the entire section on fractions is misguided in the extreme, promoting several fundamental misunderstandings of the topic of fractions. In the upper grades, Algebra and Geometry are seriously deficient.

### SCIENCE—C

- *Washington Science Grade Level Expectations, 2005*

This document, titled Grade Level Expectations, is not actually divided by grade level. Instead, it breaks out standards by grade span: K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-10. The last two years of high school remain inexplicably unaddressed. Washington seems to view its standards as a vehicle for coaxing students to "c'mon, just give science a try." Also, clichés abound. For example: "Learning in science depends on actively doing science. Active engagement in hands-on, minds-on science learning experiences enables students to make personal sense of the physical world. ..." So wrong, on so many levels. Nonetheless, mixed in between the platitudes and poor writing, one can find some pearls. Life science is one, where the standards offer a sound progression of ideas and skills. Physical science does not continue the positive trend, however, and is harmed by the technical and knowledge shortcomings of its creators. Errors are plentiful here. For its documented mixture of good and bad, Washington takes home the middling C.

## \*U.S. HISTORY—F

- *Washington's Essential Academic Learning Requirements, 1998 (refined April 2002).*
- *Social Studies Frameworks: K-5, 6-8, 9-12, June 2002, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction*

When Washington ambitiously titles its standards “Essential Academic Learning Requirements,” one expects to find in the document’s pages cups of pedagogical nectar from which Evergreen State students drink deeply to slake their rabid intellectual curiosities. Instead, we find a half-empty glass of academic hemlock and standards that are not essential in any way, shape, or form. Fourth grade students are asked to “describe and compare patterns of life over time” and to “Explain how an idea has affected the way people live.” This method continues into high school, when students must “Identify and analyze major concepts, people, and events in the [sic] 20th Century U.S. History.” The Frameworks are no better, suffering as they do from chronological schizophrenia and an unrepentant penchant for inconsistency and vagueness. And, in an example of irony both supremely delicious and depressing, Washington never mentions its namesake in either of its U.S. history standards documents. Surely this state is guilty of “corrupting the youth” and it should be sentenced to imbibe its own wretched poison.

## WORLD HISTORY—D

- *Essential Academic Learning Requirements, 2003*

The world history standards rely on four themes: civic responsibility, historical understanding, geographic understanding, and economic understanding. In K-8, students receive decent world history instruction. Washington does not present only the ancient civilizations of Greece and Rome, as do too many other states, but includes China, too. Such inclusiveness continues in seventh grade when students are presented the Islamic civilization and are asked to “trace the origins of Islam and the life and teaching of Mohammed, including Islamic teachings on the connection with Judaism and Christianity.” Things fall apart, though. The high school world history standards are worth bemoaning. Instead of detail, they require students to perform vague notions such as asking them “to understand the interrelationship between religion and governments.” It’s sad that, in effect, middle schoolers in the Evergreen State are prepared for nothing. They can be sure that their state’s high school standards will add nothing to the quality middle school world history education they already received.