



Response to: “[Youngkin-appointed Board of Ed member calls racism, servitude, and imperialism 'questionable concepts'”](#)”

Founded in 1921, [National Council for the Social Studies](#) is the largest professional association in the country devoted solely to social studies education. NCSS engages and supports educators in strengthening and advocating social studies. With members in all the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and 35 countries, NCSS serves as an umbrella organization for elementary, secondary, and college teachers of history, civics, geography, economics, political science, sociology, psychology, anthropology, and law-related education. The NCSS membership represents K-12 classroom teachers, college and university faculty members, curriculum designers and specialists, social studies supervisors, and leaders in the various disciplines that constitute the social studies.

While NCSS does not advocate for a one-size-fits-all approach to the adoption of state social studies standards, we do believe that standards should be research-informed and follow best practices. We invite the newly-appointed members of the Virginia Board of Education to review our full [Statement on the Development of Social Studies Standards](#) released earlier this month (September 2022).

Curriculum should not be solely through the lens of those who created and continue to benefit from American cultural institutions. We should teach about complex history including the untold history of Black Americans, Indigenous Peoples, Asian Americans, women, LGBT+, and others whose voices and stories need to be expanded and heard. That is why we authored the referenced statement, [Contextualizing LGBT+ History within the Social Studies Curriculum](#) (September 2019). This statement submits that including LGBT+ history within the story of America provides a more complete and honest approach to history. This should not be a partisan issue, rather a human issue. Teachers do not bring personal political affiliations or ideologies into their classroom, so politicians should not bring theirs into curricular decisions either. Students should have access to the *entire* story of us.

Inquiry in the social studies classroom is not a new approach. Inquiry is in fact the bedrock upon which any historical analysis rests. Teachers base lessons on essential questions and understandings, and students generate questions guided by course requirements as well as individual curiosities. It is through inquiry that students learn to think critically, form their own questions, compile research, and act on their new found knowledge. Inquiry is the transferable skill that prepares students for college, career, and civic life. For further explanation regarding the benefits of inquiry in the social studies classroom, please reference [Questions, Tasks, Sources: Focusing on the Essence of Inquiry](#).

We must also address the environment of distrust educators are experiencing in areas across our country, including in parts of Virginia. Due to recent banning of books and other means of classroom censorship, and in support of both professional deference and the First Amendment, we co-authored the other referenced statement, [The Freedom to Teach](#) (March 2022), along with the three other professional organizations for teachers (National Council of Teachers of English, National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, and National Science Teaching Association) and the National Coalition Against Censorship. Again, censorship brings politics

into the classroom, and puts limits on the knowledge we provide our students. Not providing students with the entire story is malpractice.

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