

2017 SC PASS Data Review Report

Social Studies Grades 4-8

On November 28-29, 2017, the South Carolina Department of Education convened a panel of experts to review item data on the South Carolina Palmetto Assessment of State Standards for Social Studies for grades 4-8. The panel looked at items with a high percentage of students answering correctly and items with a low percentage of students answering correctly. The discussions of that panel yielded the following recommendations.

The panel recognizes the hard work of SC educators and offers the following as suggestions for ways to improve student success.

General Recommendations

- Students at all levels may need assistance in reaching conclusions about the “big ideas.” The panel recommends that during instruction, teachers pay close attention to the intent of the standard and its enduring understandings.
- Instruction should focus on building students’ literacy skills while concurrently teaching content. (See Appendix A of the *South Carolina Social Studies Academic Standards*) Appendix A represents “a continuum of tools, strategies, and perspectives that are necessary for the student’s understanding of the social studies material taught at each of the four grade levels” and “contains statements that do not appear in the bulleted lists in the main text” of the standards document.
- Students at all levels should receive regular instructional opportunities to use stimuli, such as maps and graphic organizers to stimulate a deeper understanding that comes from integrating background knowledge, making connections, and asking, “why?” Regular work using stimuli will improve students’ abilities to summarize and infer.
- Instruction should provide students more opportunities to focus on cause and effect. Students should understand the concept of multiple causation, but be able to see that some factors may be of equal or greater importance than others. Students should be able to evaluate using terms such as most, best, or main.
- Students need to practice close reading of each question in its entirety, carefully utilizing context clues including time period and vocabulary. For this type of untimed test, students should be attentive to reading more than key words as a test taking strategy.
- Through their own assessments, teachers should encourage students to read the stem and all options thoroughly to determine what the question is asking, including what the directions instruct the student to do. Classroom assessments should also provide practice in determining the main idea, eliminating false statements, and answering multi-select questions. (The stem indicates how many options are required. This item type is excellent to assess relationships between multiple causes and effects.)
- Instruction should provide students more opportunities to practice careful reading of primary sources. This includes drawings, political cartoons, historical photographs, and other visuals. Students need practice evaluating smaller aspects of visuals, as well as evaluating the entire visual. Instruction should provide students opportunities to “look for sourcing and other clues.”

- Practice with timelines should be constant, especially when looking across the course to facilitate the “big picture.”
- Students should be familiar with the concept behind the term. For example, does a student understand what a Progressive is? What is a turning point? Students should look at the origins of descriptive terms like “colonial period,” “pre-war,” or “post-war” to assist in mastering meaning. While concepts like “the 3 g’s” (gold, God, and glory) are helpful ways to remember, students must be able to explain the role of the 3 g’s in exploration.
- Students should be able to describe, evaluate, and compare multiple characteristics, and perspectives of groups, places, and events. These comparisons “should include both likenesses and differences” and instruction should include “multiple ways of doing things.”
- Instruction of events such as battles and wars should go beyond the fact that they occurred, and focus on the significance and reason for their occurrence.
- The instruction of standards should go beyond creating a “checklist” of instruction, and focus on the intent and demand of each standard.

Areas of Strength (Continued Focus)

Grade 4

Students showed strength in their

- use of social studies vocabulary (standard 1)
- understanding of the environment and its impact across the U.S. (standard 2)
- comprehension of the American Revolutionary period and in evaluating quotations from this time period (standard 3)

Grade 5

Students showed strength in their

- understanding of subversive (terrorist) groups during the Reconstruction period (standard 1)
- understanding of components of industrialization and the transcontinental railroad (standard 2)
- understanding of the concepts of monopolies and moral motivations of reformers (standard 3)

Grade 6

Students showed strength in their

- analysis of relationships between humans and the environment (standard 1)
- understanding the impact of social hierarchies to developing civilizations (standard 1)
- understanding of the social, political, and economic contributions of the Greeks and Romans (standard 2)
- comparisons between cultures and religions (standard 2)
- mastery of the causes of the Crusades and efforts to preserve knowledge through monastic life (standard 3)
- understanding of the caste system as well as the contributions of Indian culture (standard 3)

Grade 7

Students showed strength in their

- understanding of changing technology (standard 1)
- understanding of government and the connections to the present (standard 2)
- understanding of imperialism and industrialization (standard 3)
- understanding of the results of the Cold War (standard 5)

Grade 8

Students showed strength in their

- conceptual knowledge of human interaction and political foundations (standard 1)
- reading of excerpts (standard 1)
- understanding of the role and events of the American Revolution (standard 2)
- understanding of the Constitution, slave revolts, and the Civil War (standard 4)
- understanding of the economic and political changes after the Civil War (standard 5)
- understanding of the economic and political changes after World War I and the Great Depression (standard 6)
- interpretation of primary sources

Areas of Concern

Grade 4

At this grade level, students struggled with

- the concepts of boycotting and a mother country (standard 1)
- the connections between the environment and economics (standard 2)
- evaluating and comparing the significance of ideas, events and people, and in making inferences from these comparisons (standard 3)
- conceptual knowledge of topics (standard 4)
- distinguishing between the major foundational documents (standard 4)
- comparing the impact of the foundational principles on all groups, especially Native Americans, African-Americans, and women (standard 4)
- differentiating between the methodologies of abolitionists (standard 4)
- utilizing maps with events such as the Mexican War and the movement of groups (Trail of Tears) (standard 5)
- understanding Lincoln's role in an abolitionist party (standard 6)
- the roots of the Gullah language and culture in the US (standard 6)

Grade 5

At this grade level, students struggled with

- economic concepts, such as those related to regions and movements (standards 1 and 2)
- the terms "exoduster" and "progressive" (standards 2 and 3)
- academic vocabulary (standards 2 and 3)
- creating mental maps
- the key amendments over time
- understanding multiple perspectives during the Great Depression
- Utilizing graphic and real-life representations of concepts such as global interdependence

Grade 6

At this grade level, students struggled with

- understanding of concepts relating to Greek philosophy and European exploration (standard 2)
- understanding of African, Asian, and American history and religion (standards 3-4)
- understanding of religious diffusion and the connections between religion and trade
- comparisons between different examples of feudalism (standard 5)
- the essence of the Renaissance and enduring understandings (standard 6)

Grade 7

At this grade level, students struggled with

- concepts concerning European interaction with Asia (standard 1)
- identifying Brazil as a Portuguese colony (standard 1)
- identifying the economic contributions of colonies (standard 1)
- the chronologies of the French Revolution (standard 3)
- Isolationism (standard 4)
- the connection between the Great Depression and the rise of Totalitarianism (standard 4)
- understanding policies and social studies vocabulary (standard 5)
- understanding significant political, economic, scientific, technological, and cultural changes and advancements throughout the world from the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989 to the present day (standard 6)

Grade 8

At this level, students struggled with

- the concepts of South Carolina becoming a royal colony (standard 1)
- the causes of the American Revolution (standard 2)
- John C. Calhoun and Robert Smalls (standard 4)
- the interchangeability of the terms “integration” and “desegregation” (standard 7)
- economic issues, especially with foreign nations (standard 7)
- governmental concepts and the misconception that party swapping was/is only racially motivated in the Vietnam Era and today

General Observations from Committee Members

- “Don’t forget to continue working on the suggestions from last year, too...remember that the tests are different each year.”
- “Focus on having students make inferences and draw conclusions with appropriate knowledge. Having a quote helps but doesn’t necessarily contain the answer. This is depth of understanding.”
- “Continue having students work with stimuli materials.”
- “Teachers should look at DOK levels and the rigor of their teaching.”
- “Rigor should be in literacy skills, not in isolation.”

- “Once again, [students should] carefully read the **entire** question and **all** distractors before answering the question.”
- “The items (questions) were fair, and very aligned [to the Standards and the Support Document].”
- “Continue to use timelines throughout the year for practice. Teach ‘sourcing it’ when using documents.”
- “Look at the overall goal and intended purpose of things-documents, agreements and organizations.”
- “In grade 6, the intent of the standards is to compare civilizations and their characteristics.”
- “Grade 7 is connections, causation, categorizing, chronology, and comparing.”
- “Continue to read charts and graphs...use as bell ringers.”
- “Imbed previous concepts thematically with new ones-like the space race and technology and the environment with industrialization...These are cross-cutting concepts.” Or, said by another: “Embed final parts earlier and use modern applications, if possible...this will help out with ‘standard stamina’ and pacing.”