

*The following comments from the NAACP Culpeper regarding the VA combined History and Social Studies Standards of Learning (January 2023 version) will be delivered at the public hearing:*

**7 PM March 15, 2023**

**Piedmont Community College**

**501 College Dr, Charlottesville, VA 22902**

Tonight, I speak on behalf of the Culpeper, Madison, and Rappahannock branch of the NAACP. Several of our members have joined me here tonight. Since 1909, NAACP has fought for the rights of every child in this nation to receive an education that is rigorous and that prepares them to be contributors to our society through work, civic engagement and joyful community and family lives. We work so that all citizens can thrive. The January standards currently under discussion threaten these goals.

The January 2023 SOL's are appalling. Professional organizations, concerned families and citizens, and advocates for public education have spoken out against them: their insistence on rote learning, their lack of focus on building conceptual understanding and the skills of social scientists, and their glaring historical errors. Public comment at the February 2 meeting overwhelmingly supported an alternative set of standards drafted by several professional organizations in December, standards for which we also voiced support through letters to the Virginia Board of Education.

Despite this, however, the board eventually voted, along partisan lines, to advance the highly flawed January draft instead of the collaborative December draft for first review. The Board of Education made the education of our children a partisan issue. The Virginia code clearly states that Standards of Learning should balance content knowledge and skills, that they should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they are rigorous and prepare students for lifelong learning. It is embedded in our state's very CODE that Virginia must have an education system that prepares students to think critically and to apply their knowledge, not just memorize facts that are disconnected and ultimately, once forgotten, meaningless.

We are here because the NAACP advocates for Equity Education, an admittedly charged term in this current political climate. There is an element of Equity Education that is rarely discussed at school board meetings and in general political discourse that is not so controversial. It is enabling all children to have access to opportunities for higher-level thinking and analysis as well as basic skills and accurate content knowledge, such as historical events. The January standards are riddled with errors and lack opportunities for analysis. And I haven't even yet mentioned that the 11th-grade Virginia and United States History course begins with the Age of European Exploration—a shocking flaw in this curriculum. What about the 10,000 years of Indigenous history prior to European settlement and colonization? Shameful.

We realize it is unlikely you will adopt the collaborative standards. Short of this, we urge you to use these collaborative standards to revise the truly terrible ones you have before you.

**For more information:**

General info, including the timeline of the process is on the [VaDOE website](#). The strikethrough document provides the clearest way to see how the standards have changed.

The [collaborative standards](#) drafted in Dec 2022 were recommended by many professional organizations as well as Virginia NAACP. Read these in contrast to the ones accepted in February. [This letter](#) will give you a summary of the criticism.

The American Historical Association outlines their perspective here: <https://www.historians.org/research-and-publications/perspectives-on-history/february-2023/the-uncertain-future-of-social-studies-in-virginia-the-aha-collaborates-on-state-standards-process>