



**TEACHERS' GUIDE TO
STATEWIDE ASSESSMENT**

Grades 4, 8, and 11

Social Studies



Louisiana Department of Education
Cecil J. Picard, Superintendent

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For further information, contact:

Claudia Davis
Division of Student Standards and Assessments
(225) 342-3393
e-mail: cdavis@mail.doe.state.la.us

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PREFACE

The *Teachers' Guide to Statewide Assessment in Social Studies* presents the design of the state criterion-referenced tests (CRTs) that measure students' performance at grades 4, 8, and 11. The new tests measure the essential knowledge and skills contained in the new Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards, State Standards for Curriculum Development, adopted by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (SBESE) in May 1997. The *Teachers' Guide* is the product of a statewide committee of approximately thirty educators representing the spectrum of kindergarten through higher education, as well as assessment specialists. Many members of the Assessment Development Committee also served on the Content Team that developed the state Social Studies Content Standards.

The Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) for the 21st Century measures student performance through CRTs that are rigorous and challenging. Historically, Louisiana has administered an assessment program based upon what teachers should teach; the LEAP 21 is based upon what students should know and be able to do. The tests demand more of students by requiring higher levels of conceptual understanding and skill in traditional social studies disciplines. All four strands of the social studies framework (Geography, Civics, Economics, and History) are assessed at grades 4, 8, and 11. This guide provides teachers with a description of the overall design of the tests and presents sample test item formats to aid teachers in aligning their instruction with statewide assessment strategies.

Testing legislation passed in the 1997 Regular Session of the Louisiana Legislature called for shifting the designated grades for CRT testing at the elementary and the middle school levels from grades 3, 5, and 7 to grades 4 and 8. Secondary students will continue to be assessed at grades 10 and 11. These grades are consistent with the grades at which Content Standards and Benchmarks are clustered (K–4, 5–8, and 9–12), as well as with grades assessed by the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The CRT in social studies at grades 4 and 8 was first implemented in the year 2000. The new Graduation Exit Examination for the 21st Century (GEE 21) in the subject areas of math and English language arts will be implemented at grade 10 in 2001; the subject areas of science and social studies will be implemented at grade 11 in 2002. The appendices of this document include a schedule showing the timeline for implementation of the CRTs by subject area.

Questions or requests for additional information regarding this Teachers' Guide should be addressed to the Division of Student Standards and Assessments, Louisiana Department of Education at (225) 342-3393.

LOUISIANA EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM
for the 21ST Century (LEAP 21)
TEST DESIGN
Social Studies

INTRODUCTION

This document describes the overall design of the social studies tests for the new state criterion-referenced testing program at grades 4, 8, and 11. The document provides detailed specifications and sample test items for the test at each grade, so that teachers may align classroom assessment practices with state assessment strategies and ensure that students are adequately exposed to testing formats prior to taking the test.

Traditionally, large-scale assessment in social studies has relied exclusively on multiple-choice test items measuring rather narrow learning objectives. The new *Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards* challenge students to expand their thinking across the boundaries of core disciplines in social studies and become accomplished problem solvers and informed decision makers. Accordingly, the state test at each grade level will reflect a broader and more challenging range of test items than ever before, including open-ended questions that require students to demonstrate what they have learned through written expression and other self-generated responses to social studies problems.

OVERVIEW OF THE TESTS

The Social Studies test at grades 4, 8, and 11 consists of two major parts.

Part A consists of 50 multiple-choice test items for grade 4 and 60 multiple-choice items for grades 8 and 11 assessing knowledge, conceptual understanding, and application of skills in all four social studies strands (Geography, Civics, Economics, and History). Each item has four response options (A, B, C, D) to be scored right/wrong. Items in Part A will be intermingled across strands, not arranged into separate sections by strand.

Part B consists of four open-ended questions (tasks) calling for a constructed response and requiring higher-order thinking in a social studies context (e.g., grasp of a concept, analysis of information, evaluation of a principle, or application of a skill). Students may be required to construct or interpret a chart, graph, map, timeline, or other graphic representation; to supply a short written answer; or to produce a longer piece of writing in response to a social studies issue or problem. Each task in Part B will be scored on a 0–4 point qualitative scale.

STRANDS AND STANDARDS ASSESSED

In the *Louisiana Social Studies Content Standards*, each of four social studies strands names a traditional field of scholarly study, accompanied by a brief phrase describing the strand. Each strand is also associated with a single standard describing what students should know and be able to do as a result of study of that strand. Practically speaking, the *strand* name serves as a label referring to the full text of its associated *standard*. For ease of reference, the complete text of strands and standards is presented below.

Strand G: **GEOGRAPHY: Physical and Cultural Systems**
Standard: Students develop a spatial understanding of Earth’s surface and the processes that shape it, the connections between people and places, and the relationship between man and his environment.

Strand C: **CIVICS: Citizenship and Government**
Standard: Students develop an understanding of the structure and purposes of government, the foundations of the American democratic system, and the role of the United States in the world, while learning about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Strand E: **ECONOMICS: Interdependence and Decision Making**
Standard: Students develop an understanding of fundamental economic concepts as they apply to the interdependence and decision making of individuals, households, businesses, and governments in the United States and the world.

Strand H: **HISTORY: Time, Continuity, and Change**
Standard: Students develop a sense of historical time and historical perspective as they study the history of their community, state, nation, and world.

Each of the above strands/standards is characterized by respective benchmarks which describe expected educational outcomes in greater detail. For organizational purposes, the benchmarks are organized into three or four “thematic categories” within each strand. These categories provide further content definition by highlighting the underlying themes within the domain of each strand.

The state test will cover all four social studies strands, with varying emphasis per strand at each grade level. See below (“Test Design for Part A” and “Test Design for Part B”) for information on the relative weight to be given to each strand at each grade.

TEST DESIGN FOR PART A

Part A of the test will consist solely of multiple-choice questions. Notably, only Part A will require students to demonstrate social studies *knowledge*. Although many items in Part A will focus on concepts, principles, and skills, some will demand factual recall. Therefore, students must come to the test prepared to demonstrate that they have acquired a solid base of social studies knowledge.

Careful attention will be given to the selection of factual content for the state test. The universe of social studies facts is so broad that some variation in student preparation is to be expected. Nonetheless, state test items calling for factual knowledge must concentrate on information which all students will have had an opportunity to learn. Therefore, factual questions will draw on a domain of knowledge reasonably viewed as fundamental to social studies “literacy” and competent citizenship in the world of the 21st century.

Composition of Part A: All benchmarks in all strands will be eligible for assessment on Part A unless otherwise noted in the grade-level Assessment Frameworks. In general, as long as the benchmark lends itself to measurement in multiple-choice format, it may be reflected in Part A. A single benchmark may be represented in both Part A and Part B of the same test, but not at the expense of over-emphasis on any single aspect of the social studies framework.

Every thematic category in all strands will be represented by one or more test items in Part A, with the possible exception of “Historical Thinking Skills” (H-1A at all grades) which may not be *directly* assessed on Part A. Although these skills may be needed to answer a Part A History item, typically the item will be keyed to a benchmark in one of the other History categories.

Note: Other special content constraints apply to testing U.S. History and World History on the state test at Grades 8 and 11, and to World Geography at Grade 11. A general explanation of these limitations appears later in this section. More detailed explanations are presented in the Assessment Frameworks for Grade 8 and Grade 11, respectively.

The chart below shows the *approximate* weight of each strand on Part A of the test.

Strand	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
Geography	35%	25%	15%
Civics	20%	20%	25%
Economics	15%	15%	20%
History	30%	40%	40%

Below is a sample “test blueprint” which provides an *estimate* of the number of test items per strand and thematic category for Part A of the test. The blueprint reflects a total of 50 multiple-choice items on Part A of the test at grade 4 and 60 items at grades 8 and 11.

STRAND/Thematic Category	NUMBER OF TEST ITEMS ON PART A		
	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
GEOGRAPHY	18	15	9
A. The World in Spatial Terms	6	3	2
B. Places and Regions	5	3	2
C. Physical and Human Systems	4	6	3
D. Environment and Society	3	3	2
CIVICS	10	12	15
A. Structure and Purposes of Government	3	4	5
B. Foundations of the American Political System	2	4	5
C. International Relationships	1	1	2
D. Roles of the Citizen	4	3	3
ECONOMICS	7	9	12
A. Fundamental Economic Concepts	5	4	4
B. Individuals, Households, Businesses, and Government	2	3	4
C. The Economy as a Whole	---	2	4
HISTORY			
Grade 4*	15	---	---
B. Families and Communities	4	---	---
C. Louisiana and U.S. History	9	---	---
D. World History	2	---	---
Grade 8 and Grade 11*	---	24	24
B. United States History	---	11	18
C. World History	---	8	6
D. Louisiana History	---	5	---
TOTAL:	50	60	60

* See earlier discussion regarding treatment of “Historical Thinking Skills” (History, Thematic Category “A”) on Part A of the test at all grades.

Stimulus material for Part A: To the extent possible, test items in Part A will be “clustered” into sets of 2-5 items based on a common stimulus (e.g., a map, timeline, or written passage). At each grade level, the test will incorporate at least one of each of the following types of stimulus material:

- A map or illustration of a globe showing political divisions (e.g., states, countries), geographical features (e.g., topography, bodies of water), or variations in climate, vegetation, population density, etc.
- A table or graph presenting numerical data to be read or interpreted (e.g., a pictograph or a pie or bar graph showing the breakdown of natural resources in a region, or a time-series line graph showing rates of per-capita income growth)
- A timeline, chart, illustration, or graphic organizer (e.g., a flow chart showing how a bill becomes law, a diagram showing the structure of a government, or a chart outlining checks and balances in a political system)
- An excerpt or article from a newspaper or magazine, such as “Scholastic News,” “Weekly Reader,” “Kids Discover,” “Time Magazine” or “Time Magazine for Kids,” “U.S. News & World Report,” “Newsweek,” “National Geographic” or “National Geographic World” (or a similar piece written expressly for the test)
- An excerpt from a primary source document, such as the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, Bill of Rights and other amendments to the Constitution, the Emancipation Proclamation, the Monroe Doctrine, the Gettysburg Address, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights, Washington’s Farewell Address, Kennedy’s Inaugural Address, Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, the Magna Carta, the Code of Hammurabi, Locke’s Social Contract, Smith’s “Wealth of Nations”
- An excerpt from such secondary sources as reference books, encyclopedias, and nonfiction books on cultural, geographical, historical, political, or economic themes

In addition to clustered items, “stand-alone” items also will appear on Part A of the test. Some “stand-alone” items may include a stimulus unique to the question (e.g., a brief scenario or illustration to be analyzed or interpreted). Other “stand-alone” items may be traditional short questions requiring students to supply a fact or idea from memory (e.g., a key historical figure or event, the name of a major land form or body of water, a capital city, a political principle, a governmental function, a feature of an economic system, etc.).

ALERT:
UNITED STATES AND WORLD HISTORY
AND WORLD GEOGRAPHY

The Grade 8 and Grade 11 Assessment Frameworks specify special content limits for the History and Geography strands. A summary of these restrictions is provided below.

For Grade 8: Part A test items requiring *knowledge* of U.S. and World History will be restricted to Eras 1-5 (i.e., those eras targeted for “mastery” by Grade 8). Eras 6-9 (i.e., eras targeted for instructional “survey” only) may be reflected on either Part A or Part B of the test, but only as context or the subject of stimulus material for questions assessing conceptual understanding or application of skills.

Grade 11 U.S. History: Part A items requiring *knowledge* of U.S History will be limited to Eras 6-9 so as not to repeat Grade 8 test content. Any of the nine eras may be reflected in questions assessing concepts or skills in Part A or Part B. Even for concepts/skills assessment, however, the large majority of questions will relate to Eras 6-9 in keeping with instructional emphasis at the high school level.

Grade 11 World History: World History is an elective course—one of three options (along with World Geography and Western Civilization) for fulfilling current high school graduation requirements. To ensure that all students have been exposed to relevant content, World History *knowledge* will be required on Part A of the test only in regard to Eras 8 and 9. Benchmarks for these eras are the ones most easily integrated into U.S. History which all students are required to take. Note, however, that some revision to high school American History courses may be necessary to ensure that all students are properly prepared for the state test.

In World History, only Eras 6-9 are eligible to serve as context or the subject of stimulus material for questions assessing conceptual understanding or skills application in Part A and Part B of the Grade 11 test.

Grade 11 World Geography: For similar reasons, World Geography will be limited to *concepts/skills* assessment on both parts of the Grade 11 test. That is, no test question will require students to recall facts or details about the geography of any area outside the United States. This restriction is compatible with the nature of Grade 11 benchmarks in the Geography strand.

TEST DESIGN FOR PART B

Part B of the test will consist of four tasks in constructed-response format. The tasks will require application of social studies skills and a grasp of major social studies concepts and principles (e.g., in Civics—democratic principles; in Geography—settlement patterns; in Economics—scarcity; in History—exploration).

Part B will not require recall of highly specific factual details from memory—such as specific dates of historical events, names of people or places, etc. Generally, detailed information specific to a place, time, person, or event will be provided in stimulus material. Nevertheless, some outside knowledge related to major events, concepts and principles may be necessary to complete a task. More so than Part A, Part B will incorporate the “Foundation Skills” and “Information Literacy Model for Lifelong Learning” from the *Social Studies Content Standards*. Students will be expected to comprehend material provided, categorize, analyze, compare/contrast, or evaluate information, and apply social studies concepts, principles, and skills to construct their responses. With its greater focus on critical and integrative thinking and its demand for conceptual understanding and related knowledge, Part B will represent a higher level of social studies literacy and performance compared to items in Part A. Accordingly, many Part B tasks will have no single “correct answer” and allow students considerable latitude in framing their responses.

Composition of Part B: Taken together, the four tasks on a given test form will be cross-disciplinary to highlight the integrated nature of social studies inquiry. That is, each of the four tasks will represent a different social studies strand such that all strands will be represented on each form. Thus, Part B will be designed for breadth and variety, rather than for in-depth assessment of a single discipline. This design is well suited to the challenge of equating test forms to ensure valid year-to-year comparisons of performance on Part B as a whole. In effect, the tasks appearing on a given test will reinforce the idea that each social studies strand offers a distinct perspective for examining the world.

An overriding consideration in designing Part B will be the relevance of tasks to the context of students’ lives. At all grades, the tasks will be ones which can show students to be competent, independent users of information and able citizens. At Grade 11 in particular, the tasks also may reflect students’ impending entry into the workforce, with associated demands for information processing, problem solving, and decision making.

Note: Special constraints apply to state-level testing of U.S. and World History at Grades 8 and 11 and to World Geography at Grade 11. (See the “Alert” on page 6.)

Each task will be an independent, separately scored exercise matched to a particular benchmark. The product of each task may be a short written answer, a more extended piece of writing, or a chart, graph, map, timeline, graphic organizer, or other pictorial representation. The product of each task will be scored on a qualitative scale designed to characterize its overall quality, including appropriateness, completeness, and level of proficiency evidenced in the response as a whole.

Stimulus material for Part B: Generally, tasks in Part B of the test will be presented with stimulus material for students' use in completing the task. Stimulus material will be unique to a single task and may include any of the following:

- Excerpts from primary source documents (see examples listed for Part A)
- Excerpts from reference books, encyclopedias, essays, or nonfiction books on a cultural, geographical, historical, political, or economic theme
- Magazine or newspaper articles on a current event, issue, or problem in U.S. or world government, politics, or economics, or any social studies topic (e.g., a cultural tradition)—or a similar piece written for the test
- Excerpts from historical fiction or scenarios written for the test
- Maps, map outlines, graphs, charts, diagrams, pictures, or illustrations (or political cartoons at Grades 8 and 11 only)

Response formats for Part B: Teachers should anticipate considerable variety in the set of Part B tasks for a given grade level. All tasks will be paper-based, but response formats will range from short written answers to well-developed paragraphs to various forms of hand-drawn responses. For example, students may be expected to:

- Draw a map or add detail to a given map outline, using information in stimulus material (e.g., show the location of cities; draw boundaries; label land forms, bodies of water, places, or areas)
- Write a statement representing an analysis, interpretation, or extrapolation from data in a given map, chart, or graph (e.g., describe a pattern or trend; state a possible cause or implication; make a prediction)
- Produce a timeline reflecting information gleaned from stimulus material
- Draw a graphic organizer (e.g., to show the relationship between ideas, concepts, or facts presented in stimulus material)
- Construct a chart using information in stimulus material (e.g., to compare/ contrast features of places, events, cultures, systems, etc.) or construct a graph to display data, patterns, or trends described in stimulus material
- Respond in writing to an extended-answer question (e.g., define a concept; state a principle; give a reason or example; list the factors involved)
- Write a well-developed paragraph(s) in response to stimulus material (e.g., explain a given event, issue, or concept; argue for or against a given policy or opinion; take a position or point of view on a given issue and provide supporting reasons; give facts or details to develop and support a given thesis).

The Written Response: One task on Part B of the test at all grades will always require a written response to a social studies issue or problem. The writing assignment will be designed to be completed within 15 minutes (although some students may spend 30 minutes or more on their response). At Grade 4, students will be expected to write the equivalent of at least one paragraph. At Grades 8 and 11, they will be expected to write a well-developed paragraph(s). Expository or persuasive writing may be required at any grade.

The task will represent extended “writing in the content area,” demanding application of social studies skills and understanding of major social studies concepts and principles. Although some outside knowledge associated with these concepts and principles may be required, any highly detailed factual information that should appear in the paragraph(s) will be provided in stimulus material. Students’ paragraph(s) will be scored for *content* only. As long as the writing task is readable, students will not be penalized for incomplete control of the mechanics of writing (i.e., spelling, punctuation, capitalization, grammar, or usage).

Key Benchmarks for Part B: Although most benchmarks may be assessed in Part B, some stand out as especially appropriate for writing or other forms of constructed response. To help teachers prepare students for the test, we present below a list of key benchmarks for Part B. The list is by no means exhaustive. It merely highlights certain benchmarks at each grade that are particularly suited to constructed-response questions.

<u>STRAND</u>	<u>GRADE 4</u>	<u>GRADE 8</u>	<u>GRADE 11</u>
GEOGRAPHY	G-1A-E3 G-1B-E1, E2 G-1D-E1, E2	G-1A-M2 G-1B-M1 G-1B-M3, M4 G-1C-M3–M7 G-1D-M2	G-1A-H1 G-1B-H1, H2 G-1C-H2–H5 G-1D-H2–H5
CIVICS	C-1A-E7 C-1D-E4 C-1D-E5	C-1A-M7 C-1B-M4–M6 C-1D-M2–M4	C-1A-H5 C-1B-H2–H5
ECONOMICS	E-1A-E1 E-1A-E3, E4 E-1B-E3	E-1A-M1–M3 E-1A-M5 E-1B-M4 E-1B-M7 E-1C-M2	E-1A-H2, H3 E-1A-H7, H8 E-1B-H3–H6 E-1C-H3, H4
HISTORY	H-1A-E1-E3 H-1B-E1, E2 H-1C-E1, E2	H-1A-M1–M5 H-1B-M8 H-1D-M1 H-1D-M4	H-1A-H1–H4 H-1A-H6 H-1B-H2, H3 H-1B-H17

SOCIAL STUDIES VOCABULARY

The readability level of test questions and stimulus materials on the state test will be controlled to the extent possible, so that deficiencies in reading ability will not obscure students' knowledge or competence in social studies. Nevertheless, the state test will contain grade-appropriate social studies vocabulary and terminology which students will be expected to read and comprehend. Teachers should prepare students accordingly.

GRADE-LEVEL ASSESSMENT FRAMEWORKS

The core of this guide comprises an Assessment Framework for Grades 4, 8, and 11, respectively. Each Assessment Framework presents a set of specifications for the design and content of the respective grade-level test.

Each grade-level Assessment Framework is divided into four parts corresponding to the four strands. Within each part, the strand's thematic categories are used to organize information about the test. For example, under the Geography strand for a given grade, test specifications are subdivided according to the four thematic categories in the strand (A. The World in Spatial Terms; B. Places and Regions; C. Physical and Human Systems; and D. Environment and Society).

In view of the interrelationships among benchmarks in the same category and to avoid redundancy, the specifications address each thematic category as a whole rather than each individual benchmark. The following information is presented for each thematic category:

Benchmarks Assessed: benchmarks eligible for state-level testing

Key Concepts: important concepts illustrating potential test content

Content Limits:

- any benchmarks which, for practical or philosophical reasons, are excluded from state-level testing and flagged for assessment at the local level only
- any special restrictions on test content and any content barred from testing of an assessed benchmark
- any content emphasis envisioned for assessment of the thematic category

Description of Test Questions:

- examples of what students should know or be able to do in response to questions assessing benchmarks in the category
- allocation of assessed benchmarks to Part A and/or Part B of the test
- types of stimulus material eligible for test items in the thematic category

Each grade-level Assessment Framework concludes with a set of sample test questions for Part A and Part B of the test.

PURPOSE AND USE OF SAMPLE TEST QUESTIONS

The sample test questions provided with the Assessment Framework for each grade are designed to give teachers a concrete idea of the types of items that may appear on the state test.

Due to the integrated nature of the new social studies curriculum standards, any given test question may be seen as drawing on more than one standard or benchmark. Nevertheless, for assessment purposes, each multiple-choice test item in Part A and each task in Part B will be keyed to a single benchmark reflecting the question's *primary* focus. For example, a question may be keyed to a benchmark under Historical Thinking Skills (H-1A) *or* to a benchmark in another History category, but not both. Keying at the benchmark level will permit maximum flexibility in design of the scoring system for the test (e.g., to generate a score for each strand in addition to a total test score).

The benchmark assessed by a sample test question is indicated by the benchmark code (e.g., G-1A-E1). The structure of the codes is explained in the box below.

Structure of Social Studies Benchmarks Codes

The first letter (G, C, E, or H) refers to the strand

- Geography, Civics, Economics, or History

The second term consists of a number and letter (1A, 1B, 1C, or 1D)

- The "1" denotes the standard within the strand; it is constant for all social studies benchmarks because there is only one standard per strand
- The letter denotes the thematic category (A, B, C, or D)

The third term consists of a letter and a number (e.g., E-4, M-3, H-2)

- The letter refers to the grade level (Elementary, Middle, High School)
- The number denotes the benchmark within the thematic category.

At a given grade, the easiest way to interpret the codes is to focus on three elements: the first letter indicating the strand, the middle letter indicating the thematic category, and the final number indicating the particular benchmark within that thematic category. The other elements in the code will be constant across all benchmarks at a given grade level.