

**Remarks on Proposed Certification Regulations  
ACES, Hamden, Connecticut  
April 29, 2010**

Two written statements have also been submitted. The first notes several specific problems with the draft of Proposed Certification Regulations as approved by the State Board of Education on February 3. For example, page 5 lists as “secondary academic subjects” and thus an area of endorsement as “history and mathematics.” The second written statement elaborates upon the points that I wish to address here.

The current regulations provide for an endorsement in “History and Social Studies.” The revised regulations have eliminated history and include only a social studies endorsement with “a major in political science, economics, geography, anthropology, or sociology.” History, if acceptable for the endorsement, would have to be included as “a closely related major.” While the regulations would mandate “18 semester hours of credit in history including United States history and world history,” this is clearly inadequate.

First, since the majority of 6-12 social studies instruction in Connecticut is in history, the proposed regulations would not insure that prospective teachers have adequate content knowledge.

Second, effective history instruction requires attention to both historical content and to historical thinking. Only in a history major with its advanced courses and seminars would prospective teachers encounter the kind of historical thinking that is essential for effective pedagogy. Research has demonstrated that success at memorizing facts does not translate into the ability to think historically.

Third, by identifying the various social sciences as preferred background for social studies instruction, the proposed standards conflate what are two different and often antithetical

ways of understanding. While history and courses such as civics or sociology are both important and may be in the same department in almost all of Connecticut's school systems, this does not mean they are interchangeable.

Fourth and finally, the concerns which the revised regulations are designed to address – literacy, critical thinking, and the needs of students with wide ranging backgrounds and abilities -- are challenges that need to be addressed. Improving reading and writing abilities, to say nothing of critical thinking, are not simply the responsibility of language arts departments and reading specialists. Good history pedagogy demands high levels of reading, writing, and thinking. Raising standards for prospective teachers in the area of History and Social Studies, not lowering them, seems to be what is demanded.

Dr. Robert J. Imholt  
Professor and Chair  
Department of History and Political Science  
Albertus Magnus College

Past President, New England Historical Association

**COMMENTS ON SPECIFIC CLAUSES IN THE  
PROPOSED CERTIFICATION REGULATIONS  
ACES, Hamden, Connecticut  
April 29, 2010**

- p. 5    **Section 10-145d-806-53**
- p. 42    **Section 10-145d-835-e**
- p. 54    **Section 10-145d-847**

In defining the terms used in the Proposed Certification Regulations, this section states:

“Secondary academic subjects” means the following subjects taught at the secondary level: business, English, history and mathematics, social studies, biology, chemistry, earth science, physics, and general science.

The linkage of history and mathematics is curious. Was the intent to continue linking history with social studies and to place mathematics in the sequence before biology?

When this language is repeated on page 42 (Sec. 10-145d-835-e) regarding cross-endorsement, the word the word “history” is dropped. Does this mean that there will be no cross-endorsement in history? Nor is history included in the list of secondary academic subjects on page 54.

- p. 48    **Section 10-145d-835-b-2-B**
- p. 51    **Section 10-145d-844-a-3**
- p. 52    **Section 10-145d-844b-3-B**

The requirements for certification in early childhood (Section 10-145d-835-b-2-B) include:

A 39-semester-hours-credit interdisciplinary major consisting of coursework in 9 credits in reading and language arts, 9 semester hours of credit in math, 9 semester hours of credit in science, and 6 semester hours of social studies **including the above identified course in U.S. History**, which may be sequenced and integrated with coursework in content pedagogy.

There is no previously “identified course in U.S. History in the Proposed Certification Regulations.”

The requirements for Elementary Education K-6 endorsement (Section 10-145d-844-a-3) do include “a course in U. S. History.” The section regarding major requirements (Section 10-145d-844b-3-B) has wording consistent with the major requirement for certification in early childhood (Section 10-145d-835-b-2-B) quoted above.

With regard to endorsement for secondary education subjects the list of course requirements including a course in U.S. history that also includes preparation in reading and writing in reading deficits, methods of teaching English language learners has been deleted. (See page 48, Section 10-145d-844)

Was the deletion of this section intentional? It would seem that secondary teachers as well as those at the elementary level need to address reading and writing in the content area, writing and literacy assessment, instructional intervention for students with reading deficits, methods of teaching English language learners.

p. 42 Section 10-145d-835-e-5-D

p. 55 Section 10-145d-849-b-2-A; Sec. 10-145d-849-b-2-B-iv

The proposed regulations require that individuals seeking cross endorsement in social studies “include a course in United States history, non-western history, and western civilization” among the 18 semester hours in the subject area.

The proposed regulations for initial educator certificate for secondary academic subjects require “at least 18 semester hours of credit in history including United States history and world history.”

Current regulations require 18 semester hours in history including United States history, western civilization or European history, non-western history.” (1998 Regulations, p. 61, Sec. 10145d-451-c-2-B- iii)

There are clearly inconsistencies within the proposed regulations.

Dr. Robert J. Imholt  
Professor and Chair  
Department of History and Political Science  
Albertus Magnus College

Past President, New England Historical Association

**Written Comments on Proposed Certification Regulations**  
**ACES, Hamden, Connecticut**  
**April 29, 2010**

Current certification regulations provide for an endorsement in "History and Social Studies." The proposed certification regulations include a social studies endorsement with "a major in political science, economics, geography, anthropology, or sociology." History, if acceptable for the endorsement, would have to be included as "a closely related major." While the proposed regulations would mandate "18 semester hours of credit in history including United States history and world history," this is clearly inadequate.

First, since the majority of 6-12 social studies instruction in Connecticut is in history, the proposed regulations would not insure that prospective teachers have adequate content knowledge. The draft Connecticut Social Studies Curriculum Framework includes teaching of early American History in the Grade 5. In Grades 6 and 7, the draft Framework calls for students' "first significant exposure to world history" with coverage of "two selected periods of history" in up to eight different countries. In Grade 8, the focus is on American history from 1789-1900 "with emphasis on local history connections and extensive use of primary materials." At the secondary level, the proposed framework calls for a required course in American history and a course in World History. In order to engage students and respond to student questions, effective teaching in any one of these areas requires a teacher content knowledge base beyond that which would be attained in a random collection of six courses in history.

Second, effective history instruction requires attention to both historical content and to historical thinking. Without historical thinking, history becomes simply a list of

names and dates to be committed to memory and regurgitated, memorable facts that are quickly forgotten. Historical thinking requires that students raise questions and support their answers with evidence from the past. Historical thinking necessitates viewing the documents and artifacts of the past in light of the context in which these records were created. Historical thinking demands confronting problems of causality, contingency, and complexity. And ultimately, good historical thinking demands that the student slough off familiar ways of thinking and see through the eyes of the men and women of the past. It is not innate, but must be nurtured and developed. Good historical thinking includes the ability to remove oneself from the present and assume the perspectives, understandings, and cultural values of men and women in the past, to see the world through their eyes.

A considerable body of research has shown that emphasis on historical thinking has enhanced student capacity to read more critically, to define abstractions more precisely, and to articulate their own positions more precisely.<sup>1</sup> Just as important, historical thinking, as Sam Wineburg of the Stanford University School of Education has shown, teaches us

to go beyond our own image, to go beyond our brief life, and to go beyond the fleeting moment in human history into which we were born. . . . Of all the subjects in the secular curriculum, it does best in teaching us . . . the virtue of

---

<sup>1</sup> Kathryn T. Spoehr and Luther W. Spoehr, "Learning to Think Historically," *Educational Psychologist*, 29 (1994): 71-77.; P. Lee and R. Ashby, "Progression in Historical Understanding among Students Ages 7-14" in Peter N. Stearns et al., eds., *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History: National and International Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), 199-222; L. S. Levstik, "Articulating the Silences: Teachers' and Students' Conceptions of Historical Significance," *Knowing, Teaching, and Learning History*, 284-305; Thomas Andrew and Flannery Burke, "What Does It Mean to Think Historically," *AHA Perspectives* (January 2007); Liliana Maggioni et al., "Walking on the Borders: A Measure of Epistemic Cognition in History," *The Journal of Experimental Education*, 77 (2009) 187-213. For an overview of the research on historical reading, writing, and thinking, see James F. Voss, "Issues in the Learning of History," *Issues in Education: Contributions in Educational Psychology*, vol. 4 (1009) 162-209.

humility in the fact of limits to our knowledge and the virtue of awe in the face of the expanse of human history.”<sup>2</sup>

If the State of Connecticut is to realize the vision set forth in the *2010 Common Core of Teaching: Foundational Skills* to provide “rigorous . . . learning experiences” that “stretch students beyond their ‘comfort zones’” emphasis on historical thinking is essential to meeting that goal.<sup>3</sup>

Only with a history major, with its advanced courses and seminars, would prospective teachers encounter the kind of historical thinking that is essential to effective pedagogy in the classroom. If effective history instruction requires attention to both historical content and historical thinking, teacher preparation in history and social studies must provide for advanced work in History. As Thomas Fallace and Johann Neem noted in 2005, “while survey courses are important, they are geared largely to a general student body and are intended to impart broad knowledge about the past.” With their emphasis on coverage and often taught in classes of fifty or more students, they do not provide opportunities for students to engage in the kinds of historical thinking that should be part of history instruction at all levels. Memorizing facts in basic survey courses does not translate into the ability to think historically.<sup>4</sup>

History major requirements mandate such advanced course work and attention to historiographic concerns. The Bradley Commission on the Teaching of History in the Schools had as one of its major recommendations that all social studies teachers have a

---

<sup>2</sup> Sam Wineburg, “Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts,” *Phi Delta Kappan*, 80 (March 1999): 498. This and other studies of historical thinking are collected in Wineburg, *Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts: Charting the Future of Teaching the Past* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2001).

<sup>3</sup> Connecticut State Department of Education, *2010 Common Core of Teaching: Foundational Skills*, 1, 1n.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas Fallace and Johann N. Neem, “Historiographical Thinking: Towards a New Approach to Preparing History Teachers,” *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 33 (Summer 2005) : 336.

major in history because teaching history “requires prior study of the subject in depth.”<sup>5</sup> To remove history from the list of acceptable majors for certification would leave history instruction at the secondary level in the hands of social science majors who may never have been exposed to the nature of historical thinking. To permit cross-endorsement and ability to teach history in Connecticut schools with only nine semesters in the discipline is unconscionable.

Third, by identifying the various social sciences as preferred background for social studies instruction, the proposed standards conflate what are two different and often antithetical ways of understanding. While history and courses such as civics or sociology are both important and may be in the same department in almost all of Connecticut’s school systems, this does not mean they are interchangeable.

In essence, history is ideographic; the social sciences are nomothetic. In lay terms, history treats each individual human being as worthy of study on his or her own terms. It is interested in his or her ideas, actions, passions, drives, creations, interactions, successes and failures. It seeks to bring to life the men and women who worked, loved, argued, dreamt, and fought. The idea that history is exclusively, or even primarily, the story of presidents, generals, and statesmen, of wars and legislation is false. History seeks to understand not only the world of the rich and the haughty, but also the poor and the lowly, not only the household of the industrialist, but the household of the worker. Indeed, history is everything that goes on in this world. It is the account of civilization. The social sciences generally do not treat persons as individuals. They are reduced to members of groups. They are liberals or conservatives, producers or consumers,

---

<sup>5</sup> P. Gagnon, ed., *Historical Literacy: The Case for History Education* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1989), 24, 46-47.



members of racial or ethnic groups. A common, though simplistic, way of describing the difference is that history is qualitative and social scientists are quantitative. They are distinct ways of viewing the world and both have their place in the schools.<sup>6</sup> And this is a distinction that the current regulations recognize by establishing certification in History and Social Studies.

By eliminating history and establishing the social sciences as the preferred path to endorsement in social studies with minimal course work in history would threaten historical thinking in the classroom. Social scientists explain events by attempting to isolate a single factor in determining cause and effect. Historians recognize the complex nature of the past. For example, a social science approach to the coming of the Civil War would reduce it to slavery or competing economic systems. A trained historian, on the other hand, recognizes that a simple answer is impossible. Slavery was an economic institution, part of a social system, a moral question. Nor can one understand the coming of the Civil War without taking into account the dynamics of the American polity and the evolving regional, national, and even international culture. Dealing with such complexity is the very nature of historical thinking. Recognizing that there are few definitive and timeless answers to such questions is an essential part of good historical thinking and good historical learning.

Fourth, the concerns which the revised regulations are designed to address – literacy, critical thinking, and the needs of students with wide ranging backgrounds and abilities - are challenges that need to be addressed. However, improving reading and writing abilities, to say nothing of critical thinking, are not simply the responsibility of

---

<sup>6</sup> For an excellent overview of this questions, see John Lewis Gaddis, *The Landscape of the Historian: How Historians Map the Past* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 53-70.

language arts departments and reading specialists. While reading and writing should be practiced across all areas of study, the history and social studies classroom is one of only two places in the curriculum where students we can reasonably expect students to encounter texts on a daily basis. Reading complex narratives, close reading of sources, and expository writing should be at the heart of what goes on in the history and social studies classes.

The proposed regulations, however, seem to ignore this fact. For example, while teacher candidates at the elementary level are required to study instructional interventions for students with reading deficits, methods of teaching English language learners, and reading and writing in the content areas, at the secondary level only those seeking endorsement in English as expected to present course teaching developmental reading and a course in teaching the writing process.

In conclusion, I share the goal of the Connecticut Board of Education to insure that all teachers in Connecticut classrooms are prepared to confront the challenges of educating youth in 2010 and beyond. The proposed certification regulations, however, fall short of meeting this goal. Raising standards for prospective teachers in the area of History and Social Studies, not lowering them, seems to be what is demanded. In light of the fact that there are no dearth of prospective teachers in this area, raising standards would go far to improving the quality of history and social studies instruction well into twenty-first century.

Dr. Robert J. Imholt  
Professor and Chair  
Department of History and Political Science  
Albertus Magnus College

Past President, New England Historical Association