



The University of Oklahoma®
Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability

February 15, 2025

Ryan Walters
State Superintendent
Oklahoma State Board of Education

Dear Superintendent Walters and the State Board of Education:

I am writing this letter to you in support of the revised Oklahoma Geography common education standards. As a professor in the Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability at the University of Oklahoma, and in my role as coordinator of the Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic Education (OKAGE), and as past-president of the OKAGE board of directors, I have spent the last thirty years working towards improving geographic literacy in Oklahoma. OKAGE is a statewide partnership consisting of collegiate, pre-kindergarten - 12th grade teachers of geography and social studies and business and agency professionals and advances geographic literacy in our state through providing educators with professional development opportunities, academic networking, innovative teaching strategies, classroom materials, and model geography education programs.

What I have learned in my time working at OU and with OKAGE is that one key to producing a literate citizenry is through the use of state standards which serve as both guideposts and benchmarks for teachers. These standards are especially important for Geography, which is an often-misunderstood discipline. The perception of Geography for many is that it is simply knowing where places are and the locations of landmarks such as capitals and rivers. These items are important in understanding the world, but, more importantly, Geography is the study of places on Earth and their interrelationships as well as our relationships as humans with these locations and the world around them. Geography provides students with a conceptual framework for linking events they experience at home and school with the world beyond their doorstep. Geography also teaches core concepts that are at the heart of the Oklahoma Standard and promote Oklahoma values. Geography does more than help students understand the world; it makes them become better citizens. They are able to learn about and locate important events, whether they are local, regional, national, or international. Ultimately this produces citizens who have the ability to use geographical knowledge to make informed decisions. Ultimately therefore, Geographically informed students will be effective leaders for our country.

In short, we cannot educate our students to be informed citizens without Geography. This is especially true at the younger grades when students are just beginning to develop an understanding of the world around them. Teachers and educators that work with our children need the necessary tools to be able to teach these

students. OKAGE has worked hard toward this end through workshops, lesson plan development, and a wide range of professional development and outreach programs, but we would be unable to aid in the development of the necessary curriculum and products without the state standards to serve as a framework for the key aspects of geographic knowledge. The state standards allow teachers to focus their teaching on relevant topics that have been identified and vetted by the standards committees and the Geographic education community overall across the state. Our ability as educators to educate an informed citizenry depends on our collective ability to identify the critical and necessary core concepts to be taught to the students. The state geography standards allow us to do this. As Geography is a broad and synthesizing discipline, geographic knowledge expands when the key principles are taught as part of a consistent year-to-year strand throughout common education. Thus, it is crucial to have standards that clearly identify and articulate this strand throughout all of the elementary grades. The critical 6th and 7th grade Geography classes can, with the right design of the standards and with properly trained teachers and with the support of groups like OKAGE, serve as a capstone and as an integrative summary which will develop in the students the necessary synthesis to advance their knowledge of their surroundings and their place in the world, and position students to succeed in high school and beyond. Thus, OKAGE and myself strongly support the ongoing efforts to advance and improve our state and our childrens' education through the state geography standards. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or if there is anything else with which I can help.

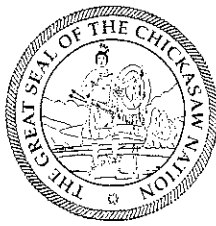
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Scott Greene".

J. Scott Greene, Ph.D.

Professor

Department of Geography and Environmental Sustainability, University of Oklahoma
Coordinator, and past president, Board of Directors, Oklahoma Alliance for Geographic
Education



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

The Chickasaw Nation
Post Office Box 1548 • Ada, Oklahoma 74821
(580) 436-2603 • Fax (580) 436-4287
<http://www.chickasaw.net>

BILL ANOATUBBY
GOVERNOR

January 27, 2025

Ms. Brenda Beymer-Chapman, Project Manager
Office of American Indian Education
2500 North Lincoln Boulevard, #114
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Dear Ms. Beymer-Chapman:

The Chickasaw Nation supports the newly revised Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies. These revisions provide more emphasis on the importance of Tribal sovereignty and Tribal contributions to Indian Territory and Oklahoma. In doing so, it creates greater opportunities for Tribal perspectives, histories, and stories to be incorporated into classroom curricula to help support and enrich ones' understanding of Oklahoma's great history.

While these revised standards demonstrate collaborative effort from educators, community leaders, and 23 tribal citizens from 11 different tribal nations, there remains opportunities to create and implement more tribally specific standards. Currently, we create elementary and secondary curricula and resources for teachers, educators, and parents to use at their discretion. These materials and resources are aligned with one or more Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies. We welcome the opportunity to share these resources with your office to further the discussion on ways Tribal input, knowledge, and resources can supplement the Oklahoma Academic Standards for Social Studies.

We support the Oklahoma State Department of Education's revised standards and its effort to foster understanding, pride, and recognition among Native students and all learners across Oklahoma. If you have any questions, please contact Ms. Lisa John, Secretary of Culture and Humanities, at (580) 436-7282 or by email at Lisa.John@Chickasaw.net.

Sincerely,

Bill Anoatubby
Bill Anoatubby, Governor
The Chickasaw Nation



Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma

PO Box 1210 ♦ Durant, OK 74702-1210 ♦ Phone: 580.924.8280

Gary Batton
Chief

Jack Austin, Jr.
Assistant Chief

January 29, 2025

Office of American Indian Education,
Oklahoma State Department of Education
2500 N Lincoln Blvd. #114
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73105

Submitted via email: oaie@officemgmtentserv.onmicrosoft.com

Re: Support for Newly Revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards

Halito (Hello):

I am writing to express my full support for the newly revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards. It is a privilege to share my thoughts on the important role these updated standards will play in shaping a more inclusive and culturally aware educational landscape for students across Oklahoma.

I would like to acknowledge and commend one of our own tribal members, Amanda Johnson, for her invaluable contribution to this process. As a member of the Oklahoma Advisory Council for Indian Education, Ms. Johnson played a key role in reviewing and offering expert advisement as these standards were updated. Ms. Johnson serves as the Executive Director of Education for the Choctaw Nation and works tirelessly in collaboration with public schools on our reservation. Her leadership, both locally and statewide, has been an asset to the advancement of public education.

As Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, I would like to thank you for providing the opportunity to share my support for these new standards. The updated curriculum offers important benchmarks at multiple grade levels, ensuring that students will develop a deeper understanding of tribal sovereignty and the significant role that tribal nations have played throughout Oklahoma's history—both past and present. These standards will also provide a comprehensive view of the impact tribal nations have had across the United States, helping to share our rich histories and cultures with all students, Native and non-Native alike. This curriculum will equip future leaders in Oklahoma with the knowledge needed to recognize the contributions of tribal nations and encourage the continuation of valuable partnerships, ultimately creating a stronger, more unified state.

Thank you again for the opportunity to express my support and for the collaboration with the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education to enhance and strengthen these social studies standards.

Yakoke (Thank you),

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Gary Batton".

Gary Batton, Chief
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma



Office of American Indian Education,
Oklahoma State Department of Education
2500 N Lincoln Blvd. #114
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, 73105

Submitted via email: oaie@officemgmtentserv.onmicrosoft.com
Re: Support for Newly Revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards

January 29, 2025

Halito:

As a member of the Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education, I am writing to share my support of the revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards.

One of my career highlights was the privilege to be part of this process to review and provide input as these standards were updated. Education has been foundational to my life and to overcome obstacles to be successful. I have a passion to give back to ensure others have those opportunities and more to be successful in life, with a solid path of educational experiences.

As a Choctaw tribal member, it is important to me for students to understand their own culture and history, as well as those of all the Nations that make Oklahoma and Indian Country great. These revised standards lay out benchmarks to do just that. They will make Oklahoma stronger and share more about what makes the past and future of tribal nations successful.

Oklahoma history is Native American history. They work in tandem to tell the story of our great state and of its future. I support these standards and appreciate the honor to be part of the process and future of education in Oklahoma.

Yakoke,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Amanda Johnson".

Amanda Johnson
Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Executive Director of Education
Member, Oklahoma Advisory Council on Indian Education



KNES

KAW NATION EDUCATION SERVICES
LETTER OF SUPPORT

January 27, 2025

Office of American Indian Education
2500 N. Lincoln Blvd. #114
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

RE: Oklahoma Social Studies Standards

Dear Colleagues:

The Kaw Nation Education Services Department submits this letter of support for the key additions and revisions to the Oklahoma Social Studies Standards as requested by educators, community leaders, and tribal citizens.

Kaw Nation is in north central Oklahoma close to the Kansas border. Like other Oklahoma tribes, the Kaw people were relocated from Kansas to Oklahoma in 1872 by the U.S. government. Kaw Nation Education Services serves Native students in Ponca City, Blackwell, Newkirk, and Kildare schools. These schools have a Native student population that includes tribal citizens of the Kaw, Ponca, Cherokee, Citizen Potawatomi, Choctaw, Seminole, Osage, Quapaw, Cheyenne Arapaho, Tulalip, Cherokee, Ioway, Inupiaq, Creek and Caddo Nations. The school districts and Kaw Nation continue to work toward a foundation of understanding for the good of all students and the communities through the sharing of cultural activities and language.

We strongly support the key additions and revisions to the Oklahoma Social Studies Standards because Native American tribes have a unique connection and indigenous history to the United States. Oklahoma is home to 39 federally recognized Indian Nations. It makes sense that Oklahoma schools include curriculum about the distinctive tribal histories, cultures, and languages, not just from a state level but also from a national level. Tribes have retained generations of tribal history, culture and language while adapting to federal government policies. The sharing and acknowledgement of tribal history and the contributions of tribal citizens can inspire Native students, and non-Native peers will have an accurate understanding of indigenous people. Lastly, learning about indigenous people early in life may inspire future leaders of indigenous studies.

Respectfully submitted,

Karen Howe
Kaw Nation Education Services



January 31, 2025

Office of American Indian Education
2500 N Lincoln Blvd. #114
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

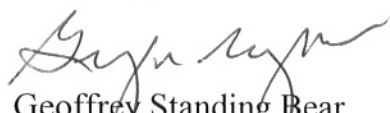
Dear Superintendent Ryan Walters,

The revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards include important additions about tribal sovereignty that will give students a greater understanding of Native culture, history, and government. As the Principal Chief of the Osage Nation, I see this as a tremendous learning opportunity for our students and fully support these standards, as presented. Schoolchildren in Oklahoma need to become familiar with their communities, which include 39 different tribal nations. As they grow up to become future leaders and productive citizens, their knowledge of tribal sovereignty will help them navigate life successfully.

Osage students attend public schools throughout Oklahoma and their parents trust classroom teachers to provide a well-rounded education. I hope their instruction includes discussion and presentations about the tribal nations who contribute to the state in many significant ways. We are fortunate to live in such a vibrant area with a rich history and unique culture.

For these reasons, I encourage you to implement the revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards into current and future classroom curriculum. Contact my office at 918-287-5646 for questions about this issue.

Sincerely,


Geoffrey Standing Bear
Principal Chief, Osage Nation

GMS/aah



Billy Friend
Chief

8 Turtle Drive
Wyandotte, OK 74370

Norman Hildebrand, Jr.
2nd Chief

Phone: 918-678-2297
Fax: 918-676-7022

January 24, 2025

To whom it may concern,

On behalf of the Wyandotte Nation I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the revised Oklahoma Social Studies Standards that now incorporate Tribal sovereignty as a core element from 1st grade through high school. These updates represent a crucial advancement in ensuring that all students in Oklahoma gain a comprehensive and accurate understanding of the rich histories, vibrant cultures, and distinctive governance systems of the Tribal Nations in our state.

These revisions are more than a curriculum update; they are a step toward fostering respect, recognition, and mutual understanding among all communities. By embedding Tribal sovereignty into the standards, Oklahoma is setting an example of how education can be a powerful tool for reconciliation and empowerment.

I am also encouraged by the commitment of the Oklahoma State Department of Education to collaborate with teachers and Tribal educators in developing instructional frameworks, lesson plans, and resources. This collaborative approach will undoubtedly enhance the ability of educators to bring these standards to life in meaningful ways, offering students deeper insights into Native cultures and histories.

Your leadership and guidance are essential in this endeavor, and your continued support will ensure that these standards are implemented successfully. By working together, we can help create an educational system that not only honors the past but also inspires a future grounded in respect, equity, and shared understanding.

Thank you for your dedication to this important work. I look forward to seeing the positive impact these standards will have on students, educators, and communities across Oklahoma.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Billy Friend", is written over the typed name.

Billy Friend
Chief



Ponca Tribe of Oklahoma

101 White Eagle Drive ♦ Ponca City, Oklahoma 74601 ♦ 580-762-8104

January 24, 2025

Office of American Indian Education
2500 N Lincoln Blvd. #114
Oklahoma City, Oklahoma 73105

Dear Ms. White, Ms. Beymer-Chapman, and Members of the Oklahoma State Department of Education,

On behalf of the Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma, I am writing to express our full support for the proposed updates to the Oklahoma Social Studies Standards, which include critical elements of tribal sovereignty and the rich histories, cultures, and governance structures of Native Nations. We deeply appreciate your recognition of the importance of these topics and the inclusion of the landmark *Standing Bear v. Crook* decision in these standards.

The *Standing Bear v. Crook* decision is not only a pivotal moment in the history of the Ponca Tribe but also a defining legal precedent in the fight for Native American rights and humanity. Including this case in the curriculum ensures that students across Oklahoma gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by Native communities and the enduring resilience of our people. This recognition is a profound step toward honoring the contributions of Native Nations to the history of this state and country.

We are also encouraged by the commitment to providing educators with comprehensive frameworks, lesson plans, and resources to implement these standards effectively. The collaboration between the Oklahoma State Department of Education, teachers, and Tribal educators demonstrates a thoughtful and inclusive approach to this vital work.

We urge fellow Tribal leaders, educators, and representatives to join us in supporting these updates and their implementation. By fostering a deeper understanding of tribal sovereignty and Native cultures, we not only honor our shared history but also empower future generations with the knowledge needed to build a more inclusive and informed society.

Please do not hesitate to contact our office if additional input or assistance is needed. You may reach the Education Program Director, Tara Littlecook, at (580) 763-0120, ext. 6636, or by email at highereducation@ponca-nsn.gov.

Thank you for your dedication to advancing education and fostering a richer understanding of Native American history and culture in Oklahoma's classrooms.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Earl Howe, III', written in a cursive style.

Earl Howe, III, Chairman
Ponca Tribe of Indians of Oklahoma