



## ALASKA

### CERTIFICATION

The Teacher Education and Certification Office within the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development regulates the certification of teachers. Alaska statutes and regulations require applicants to have completed an approved teacher education program at an accredited institution in order to be certified and receive a Type A certificate. General requirements for a five-year Type A certificate include

- ❖ completion of an approved teacher education program;
- ❖ bachelor's degree or higher from a regionally accredited institution;
- ❖ recommendation of the preparing institution for endorsements;
- ❖ six semester hours or nine quarter hours of credit taken within the five years immediately prior to the application date; and
- ❖ three semester hours of approved Alaska studies and three semester hours of approved multicultural education/cross-cultural communications.

Temporary certificates, valid for one year, can be issued to applicants who do not meet the requirement of six semester credit hours earned in the previous five years. Applicants who do not have the three semester hours of Alaska credit or three hours of multicultural education or cross-cultural education credit may apply for a provisional certificate. Individuals certified in another state may obtain a preliminary certificate upon approval of their program. Limited certificates are available for applicants who can demonstrate expertise in subject matter and teaching competency but do not have a bachelor's degree due to limited availability of programs. These certificates are available in the following specialty areas: Alaska Native language or culture, military science, vocational, or technical course.

## **Elementary Certification**

No specific credit hour information related to social studies at the elementary level has been located.

## **Middle-Level Certification**

See the secondary level requirements.

## **Secondary Certification**

To be certified at the secondary level in Alaska, history teachers must have a post-ed major or minor. The minor must consist of a minimum of 18 semester hours or the completion of an approved endorsement program in history. If specific requirements other than these exist for broad field social studies certification, they have not yet been located.

## **STANDARDS**

### **Standards for Teachers**

There are eight standards for teachers in Alaska. These standards define the skills and abilities teachers need to demonstrate in order to prepare Alaska's students. Content standards have not as of yet been located.

### **Standards for Students**

The state of Alaska has developed content standards in 10 core subjects: English/language arts, mathematics, science, history, geography, government and citizenship, skills for a healthy life, arts, world languages, and technology. These standards serve as voluntary guidelines for the schools. Performance standards exist for students at four benchmark levels: ages 5–7, 8–10, 11–14, and 15–18. According to the web site, these performance standards have only been created for reading, writing, and math. However, they are posted in the social studies framework.

There are four content standards in history. Under each standard there is a description of what a student who meets the content standard should be able to do.

- ❖ A student should understand that history is a record of human experiences that links the past to the present and the future (The Character of History).
- ❖ A student should understand historical themes through factual knowledge of time, places, ideas, institutions, cultures, people, and events (The Content of History).
- ❖ A student should develop the skills and processes of historical inquiry (The Skills and Processes of Historical Study).
- ❖ A student should be able to integrate historical knowledge with historical skill to effectively participate as a citizen and as a lifelong learner (Application of History).

The standards are not organized by grade level, but rather they are presented

in a general fashion. They do not outline specific content to be covered. Instead, the expected student outcomes listed below the standards refer to historical concepts, themes, and the use of history.

The state of Alaska has developed a social studies framework. This social studies framework is designed to provide assistance in the application of the Alaska standards for history, geography, and government/citizenship in effective instruction and assessment. It contains an Introduction, a Common Section, a chapter on Content, a chapter on Instruction, and chapters on Assessment, the District Curriculum Development Process, and Resources. It is in the framework that the purposes of the standards become clear. The framework emphasizes the use of primary sources in the study of history and criticizes the sole use of textbooks in historical study. In a section entitled a “thumbnail sketch of the Alaska standards for history” the authors provide a rationale for each of the four history standards. The state provides activities appropriate for four levels of student development that coincide with the expectations under each of the four standards. It is noted that the activities are just suggestions and are not meant to serve as state requirements or performance objectives. Rather, each district is expected to develop its own benchmarks.

## **HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION/EXIT EXAM**

Alaska students are required to earn a minimum of 21 credits in order to graduate from high school. The State Board of Education and Early Development requires that students complete three credits in social studies, four in language arts, two in math, two in science, and one in health/physical education. Local school boards then set the remaining nine (or more) credits for their students. According to the state, many students earn more than the minimum amount of required credits.

### **Exit Exam**

The High School Graduation Qualifying Exam in Alaska consists of tests in reading, writing, and mathematics. No history or social studies component exists.

## **ASSESSMENT**

It appears that assessment in social studies does not take place on a statewide level in Alaska. Alaska’s Comprehensive System of Student Assessments tracks students’ progress from kindergarten through grade 12. Benchmark assessments are given to students in reading, writing, and mathematics in grades 3, 6, and 8. Students in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9 take a norm-referenced test, *Terra Nova, The Second Edition*©, to measure their performance in reading, writing, and math.

