Assignment # 2 Comparative Analysis

Amy Verrelli

SST – 625

American History II

Nova Southeastern University

March 2011

In 1996 the Florida State Board of Education adopted the Sunshine State Standards to demonstrate the expectations that the state of Florida had for its students. Naturally over time the original standards that were passed in 1996 were given specific grade level expectations by the state of Florida. The Sunshine State Standards are needed as the fundamental building blocks for a successful social studies learning experience. The social studies standards were originally published in 1994 and are based around the ten social studies themes. The social studies standards are needed because they provide a foundation for assessment, learning, and teaching. Overall, the social studies standards provide a basis “for education for citizenship in a democracy, and provide students with the democratic dispositions, values, and attitudes needed for civic engagement.” (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994).

There are many similarities between the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the social studies standards. First, both sets of standards were adopted as a means of improving student achievement by providing a foundation of expectations. Both have divided their strands by grade level so that each grade level receives the appropriate strands based on their individual academic expectations. For instance, first-grade students are not given the same strands and high expectations as eleventh-grade students because eleventh-grade students are clearly older and more experienced than first-grade students.

Second, the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the social studies standards have both been revised in order to meet the changing curriculum and expectations of students so that they may be challenged academically. Educational requirements are constantly changing as the years go by so it is only natural that the Florida State Standards and the social studies standards would need to be revised to keep up with all of the changes.

Another similarity is that both institutions incorporate similar strands. For example, the strands: (1) Civic Ideals and Practices, (2) Power, Authority, and Governance, (3) People, Places, and Environments, and (4) Production, Distribution, and Consumption of the National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies are just a few strands that are similar to the (1) Economics, (2) Geography, (3) Civics and Government, and (4) World History strands of the Florida Sunshine State Standards. These strands between the two institutions are similar because both are concerned with: government, the responsibility that goes along with being a citizen, knowing where a place is located and why, and the basic fundamentals of an economy.

There are also many differences between the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the social studies standards. First, social studies standards focus on the design of the curriculum and the comprehensive student learning expectations. (National Council for the Social Studies, 1994). While on the other hand, the Florida Sunshine State Standards provides a variety of content that is specifically designed to accomplish the learning expectations of students. For example, the social studies standards may be used to teach students about World War II whereas the Sunshine State Standards may be used to point out the content that is specifically related to World War II.

Although the Sunshine State Standards and the social studies standards were both revised, they were revised for different reasons. The Florida Legislature decided in 2006 that the Sunshine State Standards were to demonstrate, “logical student progression, and the integration of reading, writing, and mathematics across all subject areas.” (Smith, 2009). On the other hand, the social studies standards were revised in order to focus on purposes and questions that need to be explored further as well as what students need to be able to learn and understand what students are capable of doing, and how students will be able to show that they understand what they were just taught.

Another difference is that the National Council for the Social Studies and the Florida Sunshine State Standards incorporate standards that are different from the other. For instance, the Sunshine State Standards focus on humanities and American history, whereas the National Council for the Social Studies does not focus so much on the humanities or American history.

Most issues also bring cause for speculation and the Florida Sunshine State Standards and the social studies standards are no exception. One issue is if the Florida Sunshine State Standards are even helping students make academic improvements. For example, the FCAT explorer uses the Florida Sunshine State Standards yet many schools in the state of Florida receive the grade score of an ‘F.’ The argument is that even though, “achievement is a legal mandate and the state (Florida) makes sure that all students meet challenging academic standards,” the Sunshine State Standards are either too challenging or not challenging enough based on the evidence of FCAT scores. (Randall, 2008).

Another issue that exists is that teachers are having a difficult time in providing an adequate curriculum for students because they do not know exactly what they are supposed to be teaching their students. While secondary schools are able to provide textbooks and supplements for their teachers, many secondary schools are not providing teachers with any diction as to what they should be teaching. In the state of Florida many teachers are having difficulty because although Florida teachers are provided with the Florida Sunshine State Standards, these standards only, “dictate skills to be taught, they do not specify content.” (Petkus, 2008). Teachers that have just begun teaching find it especially difficult to select the proper content in order to plan an adequate and challenging curriculum for their students.

Overall, while the National Council for the Social Studies and the Florida Sunshine State Standards may have many similarities, differences, and causes for concern. However, the most important thing that these two institutions have in common is that their best interest is always invested in the academic success of students. These students are the future of our society and in order for the United States to keep striving the way that it has, children must be given the opportunity to receive a proper formal education by governments and instructions that truly care.

References

National Council for the Social Studies. (1994). *What is the purpose of the National Curriculum Standards?* Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/introduction>

National Council for the Social Studies. (1994). *National Council for the Social Studies: Executive summary.* Retrieved from <http://www.socialstudies.org/standards/execsummary>

Smith, E. (2009). *A commitment to excellence.* Retrieved from [http://www.floridastandards.org/Uploads/docs/FrontMatter/2008\_SocialStudies\_Overvi w.pdf](http://www.floridastandards.org/Uploads/docs/FrontMatter/2008_SocialStudies_Overvie%09w.pdf)

Randall, E. (2008). *How do state and national standards affect Florida?* Retrieved from <http://www.suite101.com/content/education-outcomes-in-florida-a60253>

Petkus, T. (2008). *Creating a coherent curriculum: Problems involved with making curricular decisions in high school*. Retrieved from [http://www.suite101.com/content/creating-a- coherent-curriculum-a56999](http://www.suite101.com/content/creating-a-%09coherent-curriculum-a56999)