

The Historical Development of the National Historical Standards Project 1987-1996

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Abstract

This paper describes the history of the National Historical Standards Project (NHSP), 1987-1996. It tells the story of the argument over the nature of history education in the United States. In the first four sections the background of this argument is presented: the problem of deciding on a history curriculum, the transition from old to new historiography, and the formulation of the rhetoric of a nation-at-risk. In the next three sections, the writing and rewriting of the NHSP is analyzed in terms of the establishment of the National Center for History in the Schools (NCHS) and the NHSP, and the major quarrels between the Left and the Right are described. The paper concludes by pointing out that the history curriculum remains a contested terrain. Therefore, the writing of a history curriculum must be a very sensitive process.

Key words: history curriculum, National History Standards Project, new historiography, American education

