

Making The Framework FAIR

California History-Social Science Framework Proposed LGBT Revisions Related to the FAIR Education Act

INTRODUCTION

The incorporation of LGBT history into these standards cannot be merely additive, just another thread in the tapestry of U.S. history that leaves the rest of the historical record unaltered. Rather, bringing sexuality and gender-based analyses to bear upon U.S. history transforms the way the past is understood as surely as have the inclusion of people of color, women, people with disabilities, and others.

Just consider gender diversity among Native American peoples; nineteenth-century homosocial worlds where romantic friendships flourished; urban working-class culture, immigration, and the emergence and policing of new sexual systems; the elaboration and dismantling of the concept of homosexuality as a mental illness; sexual and gender diversity in artistic communities, including the Harlem Renaissance; World War II mobilization and containment of gay and lesbian communities; the Red Scare's more entrenched and long-lasting antigay cousin, the Lavender Scare; homophile and gay liberation movements as part of the civil rights struggle; and conceptions of citizenship, including issues of immigration, marriage, and a right to free expression and self-determination.

This small sampling of subjects that have been researched, analyzed, and written about by professional historians of the LGBT past reveal an American history that cannot be comprehended without understanding changing concepts of sexuality and gender, in conjunction with race, ethnicity, class, disability, age, and other categories of difference.

A TRANSFORMATIONAL APPROACH

The FAIR Education Act seeks to correct the almost total absence of LGBT persons in social studies textbooks and instruction. This report certainly identifies important LGBT history makers who should be added to the Framework and, in turn, into curricula. Yet the inclusion of such individuals is only a **first step** towards truly FAIR social studies instruction—and the Framework **revision should go further**. As most historians and history educators recognize, focusing on important individuals is a limiting way of understanding the past. It privileges the individual accomplishments of great heroes, who often do not represent the diversity of California or the United States, at the expense of describing important change produced by collective action or social forces beyond the individual. Additionally, when sexuality is presented as a relevant characteristic only of LGBT people, it limits our understanding of identity and of the ways that sexuality operates at levels from the individual to the transnational.

Focusing on famous individuals offers little opportunity to move beyond the first of what has been identified as a four-level pattern of integrating diversity into frameworks and curricula:

- Starting at level one, the **“contributions”** approach presents an uncritical focus on the heroes and holidays of a particular group of people.
- At level two, the **“additive”** approach, new content and themes are added to curriculum without changing the structure of how history is taught.
- Level three, the **“transformational”** approach, structures curriculum change so students understand concepts and issues from the perspectives of diverse groups of people.
- Finally, at level four, the **“social action”** approach engages students not just to learn about issues but also take action to address them.

The recommendations from this report seek to move FAIR Education Act Framework revision beyond the narrow contributions approach towards the transformational.

A FAIR Framework for Transforming the Social Studies through Disability History

Incorporating Disability History

With the FAIR Education Act in place, historians and advocates are praising the new method of teaching through a lens of disability history. Historic people with disabilities, and laws and movements that paved the way for equal rights will be imbedded into the social studies curriculum. Some examples include:

- Ed Roberts, the father of the Independent Living Movement;
- The Disability Rights Movement and the importance of the passage of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA);
- Judy Heumann, who led the 504 Protest - the longest sit-in of a federal office in U.S. history

The Instructional Approach

Just as the LGBT Framework suggests a four-tiered approach to truly transformative instruction, integrating disability history should be approached in the same way:

- Level 1: The **“contributions”** approach presents an uncritical focus on the heroes and holidays of a particular group of people (i.e. referencing a famous person with a disability)
- Level 2: The **“additive”** approach is one in which new content and themes are added to curriculum without changing the structure of how history is taught (i.e. including an argumentative paper topic like the passing of the ADA).
- Level 3: The **“transformational”** approach, structures curriculum change so students understand concepts and issues from the perspectives of diverse groups of people (i.e. structuring a project in which student groups take on different perspectives to present in a Socratic manner).
- Level 4: The **“social action”** approach engages students not just to learn about issues but also take action to address them (i.e. allowing your students to teach others on campus, host rallies and events, fundraise, spread awareness school, district, or even state wide).

Resources

- The Anti-Defamation League: adl.org
- The Museum of disABILITY History: museumofdisability.org
- YO! Youth Organizing! Disabled and Proud: yodisabledproud.org

