

## Tom Horne Reports

### Stiffening Social Studies' Academic Requirements

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Despite the passage of 23 centuries, we do not know substantially more about political systems than was known by Aristotle. Aristotle wrote that "virtue and goodness in the state are not a matter of chance but the result of knowledge and purpose." If we expect virtue and goodness in our government in the future, we must educate students with the deadly serious purpose of achieving that result. That means allocating a high priority to the teaching of social studies.

Until this year, only 1 unit of social studies were required for graduation: 1 year of American history, and 1/2 year of American government. The state requirement for 1 year of Arizona history and government was met by the inclusion of that subject in other courses, including American history. The state requirement of 1/2 year of free enterprise was listed as a social studies requirement, but it could be met by a number of courses, including a course called "teen consumer." If the governing board had permitted this situation to continue, it would have failed in its duty to the students, and to our society.

We have now doubled the requirement, from 1 1/2 units to 3 units. To graduate from high school a student will now have to have completed 1 year of world history, 1 year of American history, 1/2 year of United States government, and 1/2 year of Arizona government and history. The free enterprise requirement will be in addition, and will be fulfilled by an economics course in either the social studies or the business department.

In making this decision, the Governing Board was forced to reject the recommendation of a curriculum committee of administrators and teachers from various departments. The recommendation was that we make no change at this time, or in the alternative, add 1/2 year of world history and 1/2 year of geography, rather than 1 year of world history. We try to follow committee recommendations whenever possible, and rejected this one with great reluctance. Our reasons were as follows.

To study current problems, without a thorough understanding of history would be like studying trees in biology without ever mentioning roots. Current problems are in part the product of tradition of inherited ideas.

American history, and ideas, are largely a product of European history and ideas. Some people add that we need to learn more about Asia and the third world as well. They have a point. But as a primary matter, to understand their own institutions, students must understand European history.

Half of a year is inadequate for the subject of world history. The curriculum committee had proposed that students choose between ancient history and modern history. That would mean that 1/2 of the students would graduate ignorant of ancient history, and 1/2 would graduate ignorant of modern history. That is unacceptable. We are requiring a full year of world history, with more emphasis on geography in the lower grades, and as part of the study of history.

The curriculum committee, including teachers from various fields, had some fear that increasing requirements would decrease the ability of students to take electives. However, we are making it possible for the first time for all students to take six subjects a year, if they wish. In the past, many students were restricted to five subjects. This will increase the ability of students to take electives.

A question has also been raised as to the requirements for students who are not college bound. Since we are dealing here with educating students for citizenship, the importance of social studies is even greater for students who will have no additional formal schooling.

By doubling the requirement from 1 1/2 units to 3 units of social studies, we have taken an important step in the direction of preparing students for citizenship, and promoting "virtue and goodness in the state."