

**William A. Starna, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology, State University of New York College at Oneonta**

Although the focus of the Common Core Learning Standards is on English language arts/literacy and mathematics, NYSED's Social Studies Framework and the Social Studies Resource Toolkit deserve equal attention. Of particular interest is the quality of the guidance NYSED provides districts and teachers in the Social Studies, which, in turn, has more than a peripheral impact on teacher and student performance and evaluation.

In December 2014, after noting errors of interpretation and fact on colonial and American Indian history in the Social Studies Framework, I initiated an email correspondence with NYSED. The following February I met with a staff member in Albany where my concerns were discussed. To date I have exchanged numerous emails with NYSED about the Framework and how the errors discovered might be amended. In July this exchange expanded to include a member of the project management team for the Social Studies Resource Toolkit. Several of the inquiries examined in the Toolkit contained wrong or dated information in addition to poorly selected website resources that required correction.

It is unfortunate that while initially there seemed to be a willingness on the part of NYSED to correct errors in the Framework and inquiries, the effort became an inconvenience for reasons apparently unrelated to developing quality curricula for teachers and students. Moreover, there were indications that political considerations had been at play. Also, while email exchanges between NYSED and myself on the Framework have been ongoing for months, and on the inquiries since mid-July, staff have been resistant to act and implement the corrections identified. Instead, suggestions for improvement were ignored, or in one case, the text of an inquiry was modified in an intellectually dishonest manner.

A posted description of the Toolkit Development Project states that the inquiries were reviewed by academics and content experts from colleges and universities. Assessments and modifications of the Framework have been the responsibility of the Content Advisory Committee. Yet there is no evidence that scholars with expertise in history or anthropology (ethnology) vetted either the Framework or five of the relevant Toolkit inquiries I examined. It is undoubtedly the case that none of the remaining 79 Toolkit inquiries were similarly vetted. Thus, posted on the EngageNY website are inquiries that contain indisputable errors and gaffes. Most troubling, these materials will be used as curricular guidance and to provide subject matter content and resources for the state's social studies teachers who will, in turn, convey these errors to their students.

Neither the state's teachers nor its students are well served by such an inattentive approach to education, Common Core Standards notwithstanding.