

It is obvious the Social Studies TEKS revision committee worked hard and conscientiously on this first draft. The draft reflects increased rigor in the student expectations (SE) and more guidance for the social studies instructors. The draft also seems to me to address most of the various concerns raised by the "expert reviewers (ER)," and links College Readiness standards created by the Social Studies Vertical Team. Having explanations for changes connected to the individual TEKS helped me understand why those changes were suggested by the revision committee.

I'm also glad that the committee clearly stated the difference between individuals who are required to be mentioned in the curriculum, and those who are just examples from whom a teacher may choose. Many of the concerns I have read have focused on individuals connected to a TEK as possible examples, not on the actual TEK itself. Perhaps this explanation will allay those citizens' concerns.

Finally, the well explained inclusion of Constitution Day in every grade is bound to help each Texas public school student recognize the central role of that document; as he or she matures, and studies its interpretations in greater depth, the Constitution's significance in the public and private life of Americans will be clearer. This inclusion satisfies a national requirement, almost all ERs' recommendations, and the recommendations of the College Readiness team.

1) Do the TEKS ensure that SS concepts are presented in an accurate and factual manner? Do the standards promote ideological neutrality...?

Overall, I think the TEKS in the draft are presented in a factual, accurate manner. "Ideological neutrality" is evident in almost all TEKS. A good example of this is seen in Government 16-A: "Analyze different points of view of political parties and interest groups on important contemporary issues."

However one glaring exception is in the 11th grade U.S. History section. The SE of TEK 10-B expect that a student "identify significant conservative advocacy organizations and individuals," and list examples of people and groups. This is definitely not "ideologically neutral." I strongly recommend that the word "conservative" be removed from that student expectation. I agree that young people need to realize the influence, even power, that advocacy organizations can have in a democracy. However, as helping students develop critical thinking skills is a major expectation of both the SS TEKS and the College Readiness Social Studies (CR) standards, why not merely introduce "advocacy organizations and individuals," and offer a variety of groups and persons from across the political spectrum as examples? If these are presented factually and well, teenagers will certainly be able to discern which and who are "conservative" and which and who are not. There is no reason for one particular political viewpoint, certainly not only one political viewpoint, and only its groups and spokespersons, to be singled out for study.

I also suggest that TEK 9:B (US-II) be changed. Saying "describe Ronald Reagan's role in restoring national confidence" is a loaded statement. It implies, even assumes, that "national confidence" was broken and that Mr. Reagan had a significant place in fixing it. It is unlike the student expectation in the same section, "describe Richard Nixon's role in the normalization of relations with China." That statement can be supported with factual, historical evidence.

However, something as tenuous and subjective as "restoring national confidence" is inherently subjective. The State Board of Education (SBOE) specifically instructed that information in the revised TEKS be presented in a manner that "reduce[d] subjectivity." Why not just look at Reagan's presidency, which would include his personal popularity and his rousing speeches? If his presidency is presented well, and examined carefully, students will determine the matter for themselves.

I'm not really sure this goes here, but I suggest changing the wording on "World History Studies" 6th grade, I-F, that addresses "the decline of the Roman Catholic Church and the rise of the protestant faith." I am certain what is meant here is the decline of the Roman Church in political power and social influence during the Reformation. Because Catholics are still the largest Christian denomination in the world, "decline" without any contextual explanation seems inappropriate. Likewise, because the "faith" is Christianity, I also suggest changing that phrase to "Protestant denominations."

2) Is a complete and logical development of SS concepts followed for each grade level or course?

I still think it's a huge, even unrealistic, jump from 13 year olds studying early U.S. history, to 17 year olds studying it since Reconstruction. But I know modifying this gap is beyond the Revision Committee's scope or responsibility. Having said that, the Social Studies concepts seem linked together in a reasonable and logical flow. As I wrote in my earlier critique, I think these threads are easiest to see, and best connected, in the elementary grades.

3) Are historically significant events and people included...?

I believe that historically significant people and events are addressed well in this revision. One of the SBOE's goals is "Understanding the demographics of the state of Texas now and whom we are educating." Accordingly, the suggestions of many of the ERs, and the CR standards, to mention examples of prominent Hispanics, as well as men and women from other minority groups, have been added.

One minor comment involves Benjamin Banneker (Grade 3, 2-B). I have no objection at all with introducing Banneker for symbolic reasons; he was a talented, respected African-American who was given an opportunity few black people were afforded in the earliest period of our nation. I introduce him in my own freshman classes. However, all evidence from the period indicates he had spent two or three months in helping survey Federal City, but was long gone months before L'Enfant surrendered his post. Andrew and Benjamin Ellicott, Banneker's supporters and friends, completed the planning of the city. Banneker himself had nothing further to do with it.

I have to admit I'm embarrassed that I didn't suggest adding John Adams, one of my favorite Founding Fathers, to several of the TEKS. I'm glad other ERs were more observant, and that the Revision Committee has included Adams in those appropriate places.

4) Have the correct vocabulary and terminology been used?

With few exceptions. I thought the original TEKS list used the "correct vocabulary and terminology." This draft indicates the Committee's concern for some grade appropriate verbs/phrases I would not have recognized.

I am happy to see the inclusion throughout the draft of the term "capitalism." Even if it needs to be included with the somewhat cumbersome use of parentheses, it should be used in these TEKS. This is the term students will hear most often for the American economic system, and it certainly will be part of their college vocabulary, I hope the Committee's inclusion of it will remain in the final document.

In the 2nd grade citizenship section, 13-B, "WASP" is followed by the word "pilots." Since the P in WASP is for pilots, identifying the group with that term is redundant. Spelling out the whole name would be better. (Because my university has all the WASP records and memorabilia—even their parachutes—I'm especially pleased that you've included these women!)

And thanks for clarifying for me what is meant by "human processes!" (3rd grade 4-D)

5) Are there specific areas that need to be updated?

The primary areas where updating needed to occur have been addressed. The most evident examples of this are in the high school courses, such as in World History, 12D: "describe the roles of Ronald Reagan, Mikhail Gorbachev, Lech Walesa and Pope John Paul II in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union," and U.S. History (11th grade) 23-D: "analyze the global diffusion of American culture through the entertainment industry via the internet."

The revised TEKS also include examples from many more non-European nations than did the earlier version. Although most American political traditions, as well as most American people, are linked to Europe, and studying Western Civilization has a key place in education, today's children and young people need to explore nations and cultures other than those with whom most of us identify. The changes and additions made in the TEKS do that. For example, in World Societies (6th grade) I-A: "South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America" have been substituted for "Russia and Northern Ireland" as examples of regions from which students are to trace characteristics that resulted from historical events or factors. Under World History (11th grade), SE 13-A examines the rise of Islamic fundamentalism and 13-B looks at the origins and global impact of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Both of these are important for today's young people to understand the world in which they will live.

6) Are the SS concepts/content statements grade-level appropriate?

Nothing has changed since the first comments; I just don't know enough about this to answer responsibly. I am pleased that a few SE have been cut in 5th grade, but over 80 remain. I appreciate that "describe the causes and effects of the Civil War," has been reworked into

"identify the causes of the Civil War, including sectionalism, states' rights and slavery, and the effects of the Civil War, including Reconstruction, and the 13th, 14th and 15th amendments to the U.S. Constitution." However, although it is more obvious and specific what a student is to learn, it still seems a huge task for a 10 year old child, especially one who still has many more social studies SE to master.

7) Are the SE clear and specific? Do they focus on academic content?

The Revision Committee has obviously worked on making the SE easier to understand and better "spelled out" for students and teachers. For example, World History's (11th grade) TEK 7 states: "The student understand the causes and the global impact of the industrial revolution and European imperialism from 1750-1914." That is much clearer than the previous vague and too comprehensive "The student understands the impact of political and economic imperialism throughout history."

That has helped diminish my concern over the number of SE that just seem unrealistic in their scope and content.

Another example of a student expectation that seemed to me much too unrealistic in the old TEKS version was WH (11th) 6-C: "summarize the major political, economic, and cultural developments of civilizations in China, India, and Japan." It's now been broken down into reasonable parts, one of which is the new 4-E, "explain how the Silk Road and the African gold-salt trade facilitated the spread of ideas and trade." That's a more manageable expectation.

I still think some TEKS are just too comprehensive. For example, the 5th grade 5-A expects a student to "analyze various issues and events of the 20th century," and lists as examples, "industrialization, urbanization, increased use of oil and gas, the Great Depression, world wars, the civil rights movement, and military actions." One alone of those seems like a major academic task for a 10 year old. However, I assume the actual practitioners on the Revision Committee know better than I what kids that age can do!

8) Are the SS skills statements...handled appropriately?

As before, I genuinely like the skills section of the TEKS. The various expectations seem grade level appropriate and build into key competencies that will definitely help young people in high school and beyond.

The revisited skills, even more than the previous ones I thought were good, stress many of the things the SBOE's broad strokes, and the CR team's standards, require. For example, World History's TEK 27 has several SE that have been revised to stress historiography, sequencing, and the use of historical evidence. Those are on top of expectations, already in that same TEK, to identify bias, examine primary and secondary sources, and analyze information.

A strong section of the TEKS has been made even better!

9) Do the standards promote an appreciation of the basic values of our state and nation...?

Yes. At all grade levels, the TEKS emphasize our generally accepted heritage and values.

One comment I have is about a student expectation in World History. 21-D states a student is expected to “assess the degree to which American ideals have advanced human rights and democratic ideas throughout the world.” Can that always be determined? Perhaps it can in nations such as Japan or the Philippines, but other free nations have also influenced human rights and democratic ideas in other areas. The largest democracy in the world today was, like us, heavily influenced by British ideals and traditions. We are, thankfully, not the planet’s only free and democratic nation.

Perhaps I am reading too much into this, but I think the wording of this student expectation is too narrow in focus and will be difficult to prove.

10) Do the standards promote citizenship, patriotism...free enterprise?

Yes. They emphasize the positive qualities of each of these.

Several suggestions made by other ERs about the responsibilities of good citizenship have been included in the revisions. These have strengthened this section.

11) Do you have any suggestions...?

Nothing other those I’ve already mentioned.

I am pleased to see the changes made in the sociology and psychology courses. Both have been heavily revised and read much more like standard college courses now. The specifics of individual SE within each should make it easier for teachers to teach the subject, and students to learn it.

12) Is the subject area aligned horizontally and vertically?

As I understand the terms, yes.

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