

### K-8 History TEKS Comments and Recommendations

Overall, I think these draft standards are fairly sound. Laying history out chronology through rising grade levels does of course mean that ancient history, no less conceptually challenging than modern, gets studied by students who are less intellectually mature. I can only note this basic problem. Addressing it would require an extensive restructuring of the K-8 curriculum, which is beyond a content-advisors' charge. More specific comments and recommendations follow below.

Kindergarten: (3) (L) "Independence Day" should be added to the holidays initially mentioned. It's the most important of our civic observances.

First Grade: (a) (4) Students "should understand America as a multicultural nation". This, and similar references, should be somewhat revised. The U.S. has a core culture based on its American, British, and more generally Western inheritances strongly reflected in its language, political institutions, literary history, predominantly Christian religious and holiday traditions, major sports, and legacy values such as individualism and a belief in God given rights. A better statement would thus be that "the United States has a culture principally derived from Britain and Europe which has subsequently been reshaped and enriched by people of many diverse backgrounds." Our national motto is "E Pluribus Unum", and it is precisely through entering into a common core culture, albeit one with many rich local and ethnic variations, that we become a single united nation. The standards shouldn't obscure or impede this.

Second Grade: (1) (E) The standard asks students to explain "why the United States is called a nation of immigrants". This is a figure of speech not a literal fact and not everyone, for a variety of reasons, would regard it as a good characterization even metaphorically. I would thus recommend modifying the phrasing to "why the United States is called **by some** "a nation of immigrants'", the phrase itself in quotation marks.

(3) (M) It should be emphasized here that the conflicts over territory were many sided, not only pitting indigenous groups against Mexicans and Americans, but various indigenous peoples against one another with cross-cutting alliances.

(4) (G) The industrial revolution not only aided "faster" transportation of goods, but also the "faster and cheaper production" of goods. Enhanced productivity was at bottom what the industrial revolution was all about. The sentence should therefore be extended.

(4) (L) The passage about Bantu migration into to central and southern Africa should go on to note that in the process the Bantus displaced the already settled San and Khoikhoi peoples. Students should be aware that this sort of displacement has been a recurrent, though tragic feature of human history everywhere in the world. The Bantus being agriculturalists were more numerous than the hunting (San) and herding (Khoikhoi) peoples to their south, and also possessed iron weapons, which the San and Khoikhoi lacked. The situation thus contained many illuminating parallels to what later happened in the Americas.

Fourth Grade: (5) (c) I'm not sure why the draft standards say it is the impact of learning and education that should be emphasized with respect to the Academy (Plato's school) and the Lyceum (Aristotle's) in classical Athens, rather than these philosopher's ideas. Were it not for the ideas, we wouldn't care much about the schools! Obviously in the fourth grade there is only so much that can be said about the ideas

in any detail, but some sense of them should nonetheless be conveyed. I'd therefore remove that advisement.

(7) (c) It should be noted here that Roman republican government in many ways provided the pattern for the U.S. Constitution, for example by having many elected offices, a Senate coupled with more democratically composed assemblies, checks and balances and extensible citizenship.

(12) (B) It should be noted here that the meritocratic Chinese civil service exam system provided the pattern - though not the content - for those later employed by European and American civil services. Having been admired by many of the eighteenth century's philosophes, a form of the Chinese system was adopted in the mid-nineteenth century by the civil service of the British East India Company, which was then heavily involved in the China trade. It was then introduced into the British civil service system and later copied by American federal and state governments, many European governments and finally those of much of rest of the world. It therefore represents a key, but little recognized, contribution made by imperial China – and in relatively recent times - to the development of the modern world governance.

Grade 5: 7 (A) Feudalism didn't develop *"under"* Charlemagne, he was a centralizer, it developed *"after"* Charlemagne.

(11) (B) *"Mongolian"* should be *"Mongolia"*.

(11) (E) Gun powder weapons didn't originate under the Mongols but as far as can be determined, during the preceding Sung dynasty. This error should be corrected.

Grade 6: (1) (A) The idea that the Iroquois Confederation (the term the founders would have used for it) was an important influence on American federalism is contested. The founders certainly knew of Iroquois Confederacy, and we have the famous though not altogether complimentary Franklin quote about it. But there were plenty of other more salient federal examples - whose details were far better known to the founders - for them to draw upon, for instance the ancient leagues of Greek cities, the Swiss Confederacy, and the United Provinces of the Netherlands, whose name alone is suggestive of its influence.

Grade 7: (2) (A) Even if the Iroquois Confederation did have some influence on the founder's thinking, it was not remotely as important as that of Locke and Montesquieu. The implied equation is an enormous stretch and should be removed.

(3) (H) Suggests that principles of individual rights weren't extended to immigrants in the early American republic. How so? Immigrants were admitted and naturalized, and thereafter were eligible to vote and hold any office but president and vice-president. Moreover this sole restriction was waived for the foreign born already in the country at the time of the Constitution's adoption. Immigrant Alexander Hamilton could have become president!

(5) (E) Something should be said in this section on trade during the Napoleonic Wars about the increasingly effective efforts of Britain and the United States, beginning in 1808, to shut down the Atlantic slave trade.

Grade 7: Students are asked “to explain how British industrialism Influenced the emergence of the U.S. factory system”. This would be a good place to also note the influence of the scientific revolution on the factory system, even if most early American mills were water rather than steam powered.

(12) (A) The student is supposed to explain how the Missouri Compromise, the Compromise of 1850, and the Kansas-Nebraska Act “expanded” slavery. This misrepresents the first two laws which simultaneously expanded and restricted slavery, depending on which territories and states were involved.

(13) (A) In mentioning the relationship of slavery to Texas secession, something might also be said about its relationship to the secession of some of the Indian nations just to Texas’s north.

Grade 8: (1) (B) It should also be noted that partisan politics helped bring Reconstruction to an end, particularly the reviving strength of the Democratic Party during the post-Civil War period.

(4) (E) Presidents Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson should be included among the leading progressives mentioned here.

(7) (A) The Immigration Act of 1924 is reduced to one more expression of bigotry, alongside nativism and “the Red Scare”. (Though there were genuine reasons to worry about communist subversion in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution). In retrospect the act created an immigration slow-down that arguably facilitated the assimilation of the large surge of immigrants from eastern and southern Europe that arrived in the U.S. between 1890 and the outbreak of the First World War. Since immigration policies are now being revisited, the standards should try to be more fair-minded about past debates.

(8) (B) The approach taken by the draft standards to the Great Depression and the New Deal’s impact upon it seems to reflect “the Arthur Schlesinger position” once widely held by historians but no longer the consensus view. (There may not be a current consensus view.) Schlesinger’s opinion was that agricultural policies, stock speculation and the 1929 crash made the depression inevitable, with New Deal providing helpful remedies. This has since been vigorously challenged by arguments that ascribe the slow recovery to restrictive federal reserve monetary policies and government over-regulation, in other words to the Fed and the New Deal itself. In addition, most historians believe that high post-World War I tariffs, raised further under President Herbert Hoover, played a destructive role - something the draft standards fails to note as well. The treatment here should better reflect this variety of views.

(11) (A) The discussion of McCarthyism should indicate that Soviet espionage was a real danger and that some probable spies like Alger Hiss and Harry Dexter White were highly placed in the federal government.

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### **Ethnic Studies TEKS Comments and Recommendations**

These four standards manifest problems characteristic of the kinds of courses for which they were designed. They are problems inherent in ethnic studies as now generally pursued at both the high school and collegiate levels. They stem from the primary purpose such courses are formulated to serve, that is praising the achievements, perseverance, and courage of the groups whose narratives they present. As a result they tend to be celebratory rather than analytic and often display an excessively adversarial stance toward the majority and its institutions, treated as an unsympathetic outgroup. Their thematic pivot is frequently “us versus them”.

The truth should be told, and to varying degrees with respect to the groups studied mistreatment and “us versus them” has been a key part of it. But there is much more to say about these group's experiences than that, a great deal of which, like America's status as an immigration magnet, exemplifies our country's outstanding virtues. This too often gets lost in presentations that emphasize victimhood. In the treatment of these group's advances one also frequently gains the impression that they have invariably been wrested from the grip of unrelenting opponents, rather than the result of the opportunities America has abundantly offered to all. The educational outcome, it's reasonable to assume, are students more severed from the larger American community than they would otherwise have been, and whose ethnic pride is heavily tinted with a sense of victimhood and grievance. We certainly want honesty, a national portrait "warts and all", but honesty in American history never reveals just a train of ordeals. Nor should these courses.

In addition, the problems facing these groups are either by assertion or implication almost uniformly ascribed to external forces. This is never true for any group minority or majority. In varying degrees, crime, incarceration, drug and alcohol use, broken families, and many of the other problems that can be found among these groups are due in part to internal cultural factors, though what these are and how best they are to be addressed are matters for debate. Unfortunately, there is virtually no recognition of this universally human fact in the draft standards.

There are also some important conceptual problems revolving around the definition of the groups studied. This is particularly true with respect to the concept of "Asian-American" itself, and to a lesser but still significant extent, "American Indian/Native American". The major Asian groups, for example, Chinese and subcontinental Indians, have in terms of ancestral culture little or nothing in common. Indeed they are not really closer to each other than they are to Europeans. Furthermore, the United States that most South Asian immigrants entered after the 1970s was very different in its attitudes toward “people of color” than it had been in earlier times. The “push and pull” factors that drove the immigration of various Asian groups also differed greatly. Nineteenth century Chinese came to America in large part to escape the disorder and grinding poverty of a disintegrating Manchu empire. By contrast, many subcontinental Indians, already educated and middle class, came for the opportunities late twentieth century America provided for skilled people of all backgrounds. Finally, it's not clear to me why West Asians, such as Arab Americans, Turkish Americans and Iranian Americans are omitted from the Asian American category, as just about all other Asian groups are included.

The same is true, though to a somewhat lesser extent, of American Indians/Native Americans. They do of course have in common the fact of being ancestrally in America prior to the arrival of Europeans and

experiencing violent displacement at the hands of ancestral Europeans. But they differ greatly in ways of life - some farmers, some hunters, some fisherfolk - in language and customs, and even their attitudes toward European culture (the Cherokees for instance developing an alphabet and written constitution early on). Moreover, like different peoples everywhere they were immersed in conflict with their neighbors, often in alliance with various Europeans. Almost none of this comes through in the draft standards, which often seems to present American Indians/Native Americans as a homogeneous whole.

While African American Americans and Mexican Americans are relatively more homogeneous, they are far from being entirely so, also having different subgroups, some based on time of arrival, place of origin, or experience in the United States. Many African Americans are voluntary immigrants or descendants of voluntary immigrants from the Caribbean or Africa. Mexican Americans also differ in time of entry. Indeed, in some cases the United States came to them rather than the other way around. In still others they entered generations ago. And, of course, some are very recent arrivals. Many are of mixed ancestry and have differing degrees of Mexican American identity. These distinctions are little dwelt upon.

The SEB only this year authorized the Asian American and American Indian ethnic studies standards. There are now four such courses that it has approved. It should therefore ask itself how far down this road it wishes to go? Will every ethnic and identity group eventually get a course? In principle they can serve valid educational goals, as a matter of fact they often descend into cheerleading or “us versus them” oppositions that would be considered inappropriate if they characterized courses about the country as a whole. Ethnic studies courses are best justified when they are conceptually coherent, when they deal with groups that have played major and distinctive roles in American history (or in this case, Texas history), where they are not cast as “us versus them”, where they contain balanced appraisals of genuinely complex matters, and where they would be as inviting and interesting to students not members of the group concerned as to those who are. These courses should all be carefully examined with those factors in mind.

More specific comments:

#### **African American Studies**

(b) (1) The word “achievements” should be restored so that the sentence reads “knowledge of past **achievements**, struggles, sacrifice and perseverance”.

(6) (B) In addition to African-American leaders during Reconstruction some attention should be given to white leaders who championed the freedmen such as Thaddeus Stevens and President Ulysses Grant. Some attention should also be given to periodic efforts by Republicans to pass voting rights bills (Enforcement or “Force” bills as they were called) in Congress after Reconstruction ended.

(13) (B) Ralph Ellison and Richard Wright should be mentioned among prominent African American authors. James Earl Jones should be listed under actors. “The Autobiography of Clarence Thomas” should be listed under books.

(15) (A-D) In the modern America section mention should be made of the very substantial changes that have occurred with respect to White attitudes about race and toward African Americans.

Terms of political rhetoric like “School-to-Prison-Pipeline” should at least be put quotes. Their validity is contested.

### **Asian American Studies**

The conceptual coherency problem is particularly acute here as already observed. As also previously noted, if almost all other Asian groups are included, why are Arab Americans, Turkish Americans and Iranian Americans excluded?

(c) (1) (A) Students are asked to evaluate the effects of Asian imperialism between 1500 and 1870 on Asian migration to the United States. Asian-on-Asian imperialism however also played a "push" role, most notably in helping trigger the Taiping Rebellion against China's foreign Manchu rulers in the nineteenth century.

(C) Students are asked to evaluate how “Orientalism” informed contacts between Americans and Asians. The concept of “orientalism”, meaning a view of Asians that stigmatizing them as interesting but inferior exotics, is inaccurate as a broad-brush description of how the West saw Asia and its achievements. Most of the scholars who interpreted Asia to Europeans were respectful as were many of the European artists who depicted it. (These are the people whose attitudes Edward Said most particularly sought to describe in his rather polemical work.) Ordinary Americans of course often were prejudiced toward Asians, but this can hardly be described as “Orientalism” in Said’s sense. The Eng brothers (the famous "Siamese twins") mentioned in the draft standards, though living in antebellum North Carolina, both married Euro-American women and have fully assimilated descendants living in the U.S. today.

(10) (D) The term "model minority" as applied to East Asians implicitly denigrates other minorities and hence shouldn’t be used. Still it can hardly be doubted that during the post-World War II era many Asian Americans have achieved immense success materially and socially. To that extent it is questionable to dismiss the term as merely a “myth”. Success, when it happens, should be acknowledged, nor should the tensions that have sometimes arisen between different minorities be ignored, as in the reference to "the myth" of Black-Korean conflict at least suggests they should. (I suppose its use here refers primarily to events during the 1992 Los Angeles riots.)

(12) (A) The idea that there was a great backlash against Moslems in America based on 9/11 is greatly overdrawn. There was indeed some backlash, but given the enormity of the events, relatively little compared to the explosions of ethnic hostility that have occurred over much less in other places, including large-scale rioting, bloodshed and sometimes massacre. From the outset the president and most state authorities made strenuous efforts to dampen inclinations to blame Moslems as a whole for the actions of a few. America should be proud of the overall decency and good sense manifested by its reaction to 9/11.

(13) (A-D) The reference to “Moslem Ban I” and “Moslem Ban II” is a gratuitous, inaccurate, and partisan swipe at President Trump. It shouldn’t be in the standards.

(15) (A) I'm not sure what the distinction between "legal" and "cultural" citizenship is meant to convey. What it will certainly suggest to many however is that while Asian Americans should expect to receive all the rights and protections of American citizenship (which of course they should) their cultural loyalties should lie elsewhere. The standards should promote cultural assimilation and national loyalty. This contrary implication should be removed from them.

### **Mexican American Studies**

(1) (C) It's not clear why there is a mention of "two-spirit" individuals in a discussion of indigenous Meso-American culture. It's a sexual role designation found among some North American Indian tribes. It didn't exist among the Aztecs or their neighbors.

(1) (A-E) There's no discussion of large-scale human sacrifice and ritual cannibalism among the Aztecs. This was a major civilizational feature closely connected not only to their religion but their practice of warfare.

(3) (E) Shouldn't opposition to the authoritarianism of the Mexican government be listed among the causes of Texas secession to be evaluated?

(7) (A) What is "Modern Mexican America"? Aren't we talking about Mexican Americans, which is to say, people of Mexican ancestry living in the United States, as full-fledged American citizens? Where does "Modern Mexican America" exist?

There is a lot of radical postmodern academic terminology on pages 102 through 107 like "intersectionality", "Chicana feminism", "homophobia", "transphobia and heteronormative dominance" that have more to do with the preoccupations of cloistered professors than the lived experience of most Mexican Americans. By contrast the phrase "Catholic Church", or the words Catholicism are absent. In a course about Mexican Americans why is that?

The Mexican American draft standards need further close review.

### **American Indian/Native American Studies**

Approved standards should reflect the best historical and social science scholarship, not group traditions. Why then does the draft's introduction indicate that the recommendations are based on the beliefs of "indigenous elders"? Folklore can be studied, but only with great care can it be used as a historical source.

This pitfall is further emphasized by the statement that course content should reflect "native voices" and be drawn from native approved reading lists. Would we use a single viewpoint standard for discussions of other subjects in American history? Do we want avowedly ethnocentric history?

(a) (4) It's stated that each Indian nation should be treated as if it were sovereign and independent "like a foreign nation". Under American law they are certainly not so. Should the standards be endorsing tribal secession? Is this something ordinary indigenous Americans in fact desire? (A similar statement is repeated on page 123.)

(4) (F) the draft endorses "land acknowledgement statements". These statements strongly suggest that European descendants and their institutions are not in legitimate territorial possession of the United States. Is this a view the standards should be supporting?

(5 & onward) The whole cultural foundations section is filled with comparisons of Indian and established American institutions that in language and tone systematically slight the latter.

These draft standards also need further close review.

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