

The pondering thought that continues to guide my thinking around reviewing the standards includes:

1. What do students need to learn and understand about Social Studies?
2. Why do they need to master this information?
3. How will we know they have learned it and understand why they have learned it?

I answered these questions for myself at a 20,000-foot view to ensure I knew what my role would be as we work to improve the learning and understanding of Social Studies.

1. Learners need to learn and understand why and how people interact with the earth and each other to not only survive, but thrive as human beings of a community, city, state, nation, and world today and tomorrow.
2. Learners need to master this information because our very existence and sustainability as mankind is dependent upon it. There are fundamental principles that guide the way in which humans interact with each other, understanding that maintaining the habitat in which we dwell, and our way of life is essential to not exhausting the fundamental principles.
3. We will know learners have learned and understand when their behaviors communicate civic understanding.

Therefore, in my opinion, civic understanding is most important as we embark upon this TEKS Review Process. Civics will connect the essential Social Studies standards to the “why” in the learning process for our stakeholders and students. Civics encompasses the experiment of democracy and experience of citizens. In addition, preserving our union expresses a need for citizens to understand the fundamental moral, political, entrepreneurial, and intellectual foundations of the American experiment in self-government.

This does not exclude the need to incorporate the invisible or counter narrative throughout history to avoid a vague incomplete single story. It does however put history, geography, and economics into an appropriate context for what and why students are learning Social Studies in our Texas schools.

Finally, I do think we have great standards that may need a few tweaks. I will concentrate my focus on the structure and clarity to ensure students can answer number three, “how will I know I’ve learned it?”

Optional Layouts for Social Studies Curriculum in the State of Texas

Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
K-3 - foundational and aligned with developing narratives that increases understanding of local, state, national, and world history.	Use lead4ward approach to bundle knowledge and skill standards by topics sample, include skills in each topic to support the structure of the course through the 8 strands	Shift from 8 strands to 4. Under the 4 strands expand the thinking to include how history and civic understanding influenced modern day United States
4 th grade – Humanities - Texas History		Understanding Historical Concepts through the study of:
5 th grade – Humanities - Origin of the United States Beginning – Writing of the Constitution		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Politics • Economics • Geography • Civics
6 th grade – Humanities – Origin of the World – Early Civilization through 1750		
7 th grade - Humanities – The United States through the story of Texas		
8 th grade – U.S. Studies – Beginning - 1877		
High School return to a 4 x 4 with options of 3 courses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • World History, 1750 to present • World Geography, conceptual or regional • Government/Economics • Financial Literacy • One Ethnic Studies Course 		
Required Course - U.S. History – Reconstruction to Present		