

## Feedback on the Proposed Revisions to the TEKS for High School Social Studies Courses

submitted by

Jeff Lash

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## Executive Summary

My review of the proposed revisions to the TEKS for high school social studies courses is limited by the fact that as of 30 June 2022, the proposed revisions to the K-8 social studies TEKS are not available for review. Without knowledge of how the K-8 social studies TEKS are being revised, it is difficult to evaluate the merits of revisions to the high school TEKS. The completeness and logical development of the high school courses depends on knowledge and skills developed in grades K-8.

Therefore, **I recommend that the TEKS for high school social studies courses not be reviewed in isolation from the K-8 social studies TEKS.**

At this point in the revision process, I recommend that the State Board of Education (SBOE) direct the TEA to instruct K-12 social studies TEKS working groups to

- **Organize the TEKS using four content strands: Economics, Government/Civics, Geography and History.**
- **Include General Inquiry, Geography, and History skills expectations.**
- **Vertically align and spiral the curriculum.**
- **Enhance the TEKS without radically reimagining them.**

I believe that accepting these recommendations will result in revised TEKS that not only provide a world-class social studies education, but also provide a roadmap for practical implementation.

## Recommendation 1

I recommend that the TEKS for high school social studies courses not be reviewed in isolation from the K-8 social studies TEKS.

Why?

As of 30 June 2022, the proposed revisions to the K-8 social studies TEKS are not available for review. Without knowledge of how the K-8 social studies TEKS are being revised, it is difficult to evaluate the merits of revisions to the high school TEKS. The completeness and logical development of the high school courses depends on knowledge and skills developed in grades K-8.

Throughout the revised high school TEKS, work group notes indicate that numerous student expectations have been “moved to middle school.” Other notes recommend moving student expectations to the TEKS Guide. How is a student expectation marked for the TEKS Guide? How is the TEKS Guide being constructed? Furthermore, there is little consistency in the use of verbs in student expectations. How have the middle school work groups handled these notes and inconsistencies? Until these questions are answered, I believe it is premature to evaluate the revised high school course TEKS.

## Recommendation 2

I recommend that the SBOE direct the TEA to instruct K-12 social studies TEKS work groups to organize the K-12 social studies TEKS using four content strands: Economics, Government/Civics, Geography and History.

Why?

As drafted, the revised high school course TEKS use strands inconsistently. Culture and Citizenship remain as strands in World History. In US History the strands are coded (i.e. Economics-E, Civics/Government-CG, Geography-G, and History-H) and appended to or missing from individual student expectations. Geography uses four content strands - Economics, Government/Civics, Geography and History, which is what I recommend.

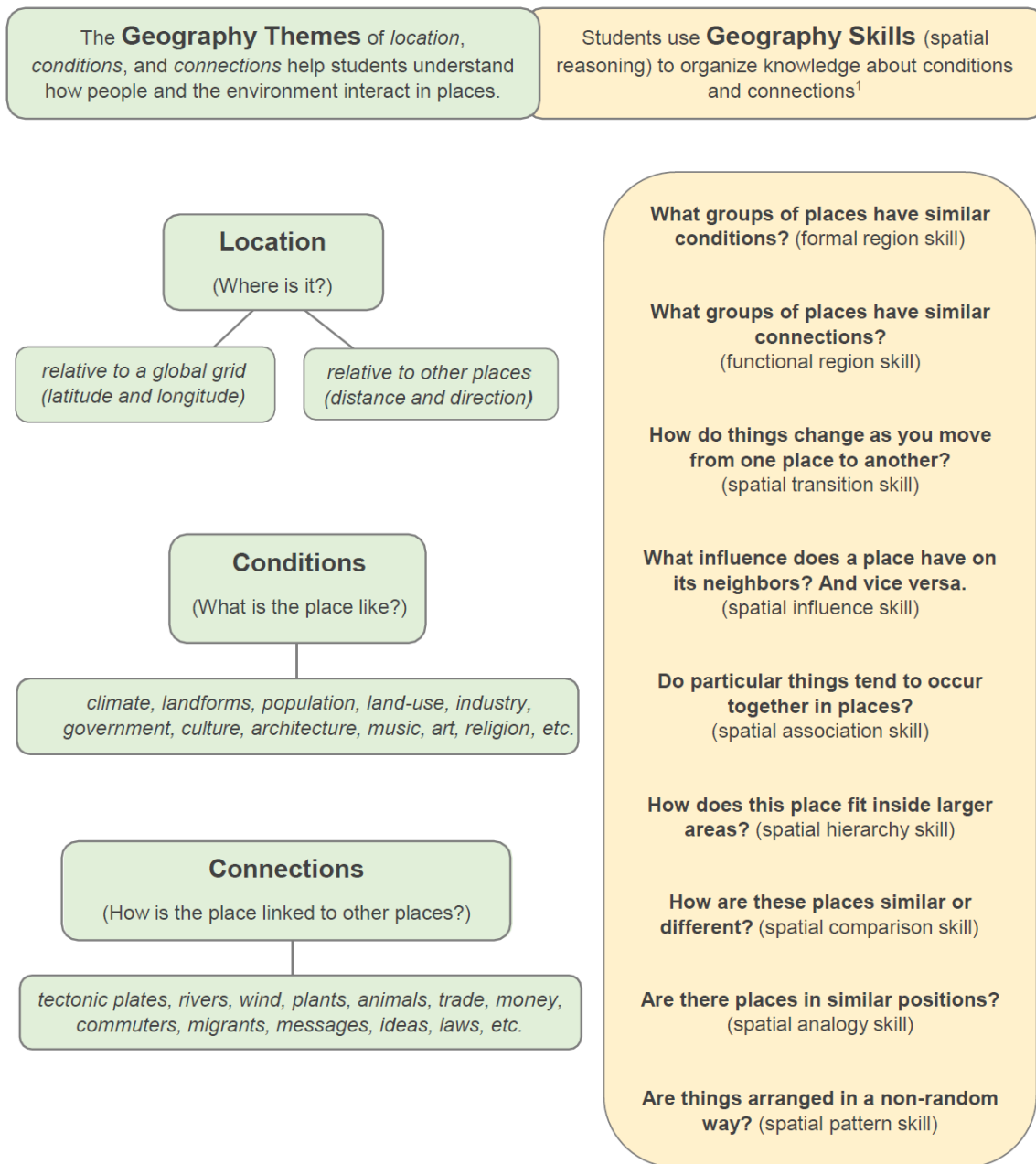
## Recommendation 3

I recommend that the SBOE direct the TEA to instruct K-12 social studies TEKS work groups to include General Inquiry, Geography, and History skills expectations.

Why?

The issue of how to incorporate social studies skills into the revised TEKS has obviously not been settled. In the case of World History, the presentation of skills is both partially incorporated into individual student expectations and grouped under a largely unchanged social studies skills strand. Skills expectations in US History are missing. In World Geography, skills are presented as a stand-alone strand, despite a TEA note that states that a separate work group will address the issue of skills. These inconsistencies must be resolved before a meaningful review of student expectations can take place.

Geography (see Figure 1. Geography Strand and Skills) and History have well-established disciplinary inquiry skills that translate well into social studies TEKS. In concert with general inquiry skills (e.g. the ability to evaluate sources, communicate findings, etc.) geography and history skills provide the tools social studies students need to understand our complex world.



**Figure 1.** Geography Strand Themes and Skills  
Graphic adapted by Jeff Lash from *Teaching Geography* by Phil Gersmehl.

## Recommendation 4

I recommend that the SBOE direct the TEA to instruct K-12 social studies TEKS work groups to vertically align and spiral the social studies curriculum.

Why?

An effective social studies curriculum clearly articulates the how, and the when, of what to teach. This is accomplished through the vertical alignment of student expectations. Also, in an effective social studies curriculum, ideas and concepts are revisited, with the level and complexity deepening each time. In other words, the social studies curriculum spirals through knowledge and skills.

## Recommendation 5

I recommend that the SBOE direct the TEA to instruct K-12 social studies TEKS work groups to enhance the existing social studies TEKS, rather than reimagine them.

Why?

At the SBOE June meeting, members heard public comment on a proposed “3+6” K-8 Social Studies Framework. The proposed framework is a radical departure from the current framework. It would require an expensive, multiple year, phased implementation with no research to suggest that it will be any more successful than the existing framework.

At the same meeting, members discussed an “Enhanced” K-8 Social Studies TEKS Proposal (see Appendix A). The Enhanced TEKS Proposal includes significant, yet practical, revisions to the K-8 TEKS that would provide a solid foundation for high school social studies.