

Guidelines for Content Advisor Feedback on the Social Studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills

Recommendations by M. Pinar Emiralioglu

Below, please find my answers to the guiding questions. I tried to answer all of them as best as I can. Please note that as per my expertise on World History, I tried to focus on the World History coverage as well as the history coverage of the TEKS.

Looking forward to our meeting on December 8th and 9th.

Sincerely,
Pinar Emiralioglu, PhD

Please review the current Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for kindergarten–grade 12 (K-12) social studies and use the following questions to develop feedback for the State Board of Education regarding revisions to the standards.

There is no specific format required for your feedback. When referencing specific portions of the TEKS, please indicate the grade level and/or course and the specific letter/number of the standard to which you are referring, as appropriate, e.g., 2.4.A (Grade 2, knowledge and skills statement (2), student expectation (A)).

GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. The current TEKS are organized in eight strands: history; geography; economics; government; citizenship; culture; science, technology, and society; and social studies skills. Is the current strand framework for the K-12 social studies TEKS appropriate? If not, what recommendations do you have for organizing or structuring the TEKS?

In my opinion, the eight strands cover important aspects and disciplines of social studies. They are appropriate. However, the coverage under each strand clutters the curriculum and repetitive in many cases. I recommend streamlining the number of strands so that there are less strands across the curriculum. For examples, instead of eight separate strands, I recommend grouping them into three strands:

1. History & Geography (these two strands are very closely related and therefore can be grouped into a single strand)
2. Society (this strand can cover the themes of culture, economics, science, and technology)
3. Civics (this strand can cover the themes of both Government and Citizenship)

The coverage under each of these three stands can change from one grade to the other.

2. Are common social studies themes (e.g., geography, civics, history, etc.) adequately addressed across the K–12 TEKS? If not, what recommendations do you have for revising?

Recommendations for World History coverage:

As per my expertise, I reviewed the coverage of World History across the K-12 TEKS more closely.

In my opinion, the coverage of World History before High School is inadequate. World History course in High School is introduced in a vacuum without providing much prior related historical knowledge to the student. A comparative approach to teaching US and Texas history to other parts

of the world would provide an important global perspective to the student and further emphasize the significant developments in Texas and US history. The high school World History course tries to cover too much all at once. I have two recommendations:

- a. Introducing the students to some World Historical themes, chronology, and topics starting in grade 5. Examples of such themes are: Rise of first empires (1250–325BCE); Rise of universal religions (300–600AD); Commercial and Cultural exchange across Afro-Eurasia (600–1000); Expansion of Global Trade and Exchanges (1000–1300); Contact Commerce and Colonization (1450–1600); Worlds Entangled (1600–1750); Reordering the World (1750–1800); Nations and Empires (1850–1914); The Three World Order (1940–1975); Globalization (1970–2000); 2001–Present.
- b. Introducing a general overview of World History in grade 6
- c. Dividing the World History course into two halves: World History to 1500 and World History since 1500.

I will further develop these recommendations in my answers to 3, 4, and 7.

3. Does each grade level and/or course follow a complete and logical development of social studies concepts presented within the grade level/course? If not, what improvements are needed?

They do not. In terms of the history coverage, the themes covered are fragmented and does not follow chronology. There is no explanation as to why certain events or individuals should be covered in certain grades. I recommend a chronological approach to covering US/Texas and World History simultaneously. For example, at the elementary level, the students learn about the Thanksgiving Holiday. This would give the teachers an opportunity to talk about who lived in this continent before the arrival of Columbus, where is the European continent, who lived in Europe, and why did people leave Europe, etc. Columbus would be the historical figure to study.

In the next grade, the historical coverage can build on this knowledge moving chronologically.

The historical coverage of the TEKS should move chronologically from one grade to the other. Students should see the linear progression of historical events instead of learning bits and pieces of fragmented historical events. Students even at the college level can not make sense of these historical events if they are taught in this fragmented way.

4. Are the TEKS vertically aligned so that concepts are introduced, elaborated on, and refined across multiple grade levels and students will possess the necessary knowledge and skills to be successful in later grades? If not, what improvements are needed?

No they are not. Please see my recommendation for #3.

Here, I also recommend changes to how World History is introduced. In the current curriculum, the Texas state specifies two full courses in U.S. History: an introductory overview in grade 5 and a two-part survey across grade 8 and high school. And from grade 4 onwards, U.S. History sequence and scope are clear, with the subject-focus of each grade plainly identified in its introductory material, as well as the content outlines themselves.

I recommend adopting a similar structure for World History: an introductory overview for World History in grade 6 and two part survey across high school. And, from grade 5 onwards, a clearer scope and sequence for World History topics listed above (#2).

5. A. Do the high school courses sufficiently prepare students for postsecondary success? If not, what recommendations do you have for revising?

No, they do not. Please see my answer above for my recommendation (#3 and 4).

B. Do the elementary and middle school TEKS adequately prepare students for social studies content at the high school level? If not, what recommendations do you have for revising?

No, they do not. Please see my answer above for my recommendation (#3 and 4).

6. Are there topics that should be eliminated or revised because they are not essential or no longer reflect current research or practices within the field? If so, please identify by grade level or course and student expectation number.

7. Are the student expectations clear and specific? If not, please give examples of how the language might be improved.

Specific examples should be provided (as per recommendation of Fordham review) for primary and secondary sources for all grades. The list for primary sources, when listed, exclusively refers to modern primary sources. More examples for primary sources of pre-modern history should be included.

Examples: archeological findings, numismatics, etc.

Through out TEKS, there is vagueness in the description of skills and knowledge. For example, Grade 6, b (Knowledge and skills for history): this section is very vague. The passage here refers to “various individuals” or “various societies” without providing specific examples. This is one of the areas Fordham reviewers also referred to in their reports on Texas TEKS.

8. Do you have any recommendations or feedback based on the Fordham report? If so, please explain. The Fordham review refers to the historical figures covered in each grade as arbitrary. The names listed also do not have much historical relation to each other and the topics that will be covered in that grade. (Kindergarden, b, 2; Grade 1, b, 2 A; Grade 2, b 2 A; Grade 3, b 1 B, 11A, B) Here, please see my recommendation for #3.

Furthermore, as also referred by the Fordham review frequently, there is a need for clearer distinction between the coverages for Civics, Economics (and other strands) and History. The overlaps especially between these two strands result in unnecessary confusion and omissions of coverage. Here, please see my recommendation for #1.

From the perspective of World History coverage, introduction of World History earlier will not only prepare the students for college better, it will also strengthen the US History and Texas History coverage. World History themes will complement and contextualize the US/Texas History better for the students and allow them to make comparisons.

9. What other suggestions do you have for ways in which the social studies TEKS can be improved?

Instead of rothating the US and Texas history coverage, they should be taught simultanelously and in chronological order along with World History.