

Comments on the K-12 Social Studies TEKS

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1. How can we improve Texas's Social Studies standards?

- Make the language, organization, and presentation of the TEKS clearer and more user friendly.
- Choose the Texas examples more intentionally.
- Correct the omission of Texas's first inhabitants, including the Lipan and Mescalero Apaches, Atakpans, Caddos, Coahuiltecan, Comanches, Karakawas, Kiowas, Jumanos, Tonkawas, Patarabueyes, Tawakonis, Tonkawas, Wacos, and Wichitas, and today's Texas Indian peoples, the Alabama-Coushattas, Kickapoos, and Tiguas.
- Reduce redundancy by making sure that the TEKS proceed sequentially and progressively, with each grade's learning objectives and skills building upon the previous grade's.
- Make the TEKS more readable by rethinking the strands in ways that reduce redundancy without omitting essential content.

2. How can we better align the TEKS with postsecondary expectations?

My UT Austin colleagues and I have the privilege of teaching many of the state's highest performing high school graduates. Yet we do believe that many of our incoming first-year undergraduates need to be better prepared in a number of areas:

- **Cultural literacy:** familiarity with essential dates (December 7, 1941, September 11, 2001), common references (D-Day, Gettysburg, Pearl Harbor, Valley Forge), the names of key authors (Faulkner, Hawthorne, Hemingway, Melville, Morrison); key thinkers (Addams, DuBois, Emerson, Keller, Madison, Paine, Thoreau), historical figures (Cesar Chavez, Frederick Douglass, U.S. Grant, Meriwether Lewis, Susan B. Anthony, Sitting Bull, John D. Rockefeller, Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Malcolm X, Harriet Tubman), historical and social science concepts (anti-trust, sharecropping), and historical references (American dream, Cold War, economic royalists, malefactors of great wealth, Soviet Union).
- **Economic literacy:** familiarity with key economic terms and concepts including business cycle, capitalism, consumer price index, elasticity, GNP, incentives, inflation, liquidity, the market and a market economy, and supply and demand.
- **Geographical literacy:** the ability to locate major events on a map.
- **College level Vocabulary:** familiarity with essential terms that are widely used in college (bursar's office, credits, critical thinking, dean, GPA, graduation requirements, liberal arts, major, minor, Pell Grants, placement tests, seminar, syllabus, transcript), a college level

vocabulary (knowing the meaning of such words as ambiguous, anomaly, articulate, bias, brevity, consensus, contradict, collaborate, corroborate, deference, doctrine, empirical, enumerate, fiscal, objectivity, pragmatic, qualitative, and secular; and words associated with Bloom's typology, such as apply, analyze, cite, critique, defend, describe, enumerate, evaluate, generalize, justify, and summarize.

- **Time management and study skills:** students need to be able to undertake self-directed learning.
- **Writing skills:** the ability to write evidence-based argumentative essays; to write with a more formal tone; and to distinguish between opinion and argument.

3. Begin with a statement of the TEKS's overarching learning objectives:

Here is a sample statement:

To ensure that all public school students in Texas become informed and responsible citizens who achieve an appropriate level of understanding of economics, geography, government, and history that we expect of a high school graduate, the Social Studies TEKS spell out the learning objectives and standards that have been adopted by the Texas legislature and the Texas Education Agency.

These include ensuring that all K-12 students graduate with competence in all of the following areas:

Civics and Government

The knowledge, skills, and dispositions that every citizen ought to acquire, including an understanding of the state's and the country's system of government, including their foundational principles, Constitutional rights and responsibilities, the electoral process, and government's actual functioning, as well as the values and forms of conduct that make democratic government possible, including tolerance, civility, respect for nuance, complexity, and perspective, and a willingness to engage in respectful dialogue. Students should be familiar with the nation's symbols and holidays and exposed to the essential civics documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Texas Constitution.

History

An understanding of the essential facts and chronology of Texas, U.S., and modern world history; knowledge about how social and political institutions, cultures, the economy, and science and technology have evolved over time; becoming familiar with significant historical controversies and their conflicting interpretations; and being able to analyze the connections between past and present in a nuanced, balanced manner.

E Pluribus Unum

An understanding of the rich diversity of Texas's peoples, including where their ancestors came from and how they arrived in Texas, as well as an understanding of the traditions and customs that unite us as a people.

Cultural, Scientific, and Technological Literacy

A familiarity with key works of art, literature, music that every high school graduate should know as well as with the explorers, leaders, visionaries, reformers, inventors, and scientists whose innovations, discoveries, and other contributions have contributed to society's knowledge, freedom, and ways of life.

Economics

An understanding of basic economic concepts and principles, the functioning of the Texas and national economies, and the ability to make informed, responsible decisions about earnings, savings, and spending.

Geography

An understanding of the location of important cities, regions, and countries and the physical properties and natural resources of particular environments; as well as familiarity with map conventions (including scale, longitude, and latitude) and various kinds of maps (such as topographical and political), and the ability to interpret and analyze maps.

Social Studies Skills

These include the ability to conduct research, evaluate evidence, understand bias, perspective, and context, and make fact- and evidence-based arguments.

4. Include a list of important figures in the history of Texas that students should be introduced to over the course of their K-12 education.

Explorers

Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca
Estevanico
Francisco Vázquez de Coronado
Juan de Oñate
René Robert Cavelier

Spanish Settlement

Alonso de León
Father Damián Massanet
Fray Antonio de San Buenaventura y Olivares
Diego Ramón
Father Francisco Hidalgo
José de Escandón
Tomás Sánchez
Antonio Gil Ybarbo
José de Gálvez
Bernardo Gálvez

Tejas and the Mexican War for Independence

José Bernardo Gutiérrez de Lara
Augustus W. Magee
Joaquín de Arredondo

Anglo Settlement

Moses Austin
Stephen F. Austin
Green DeWitt
Martín de León

The Battle of the Alamo

Juana Gertrudis Navarro Alsbury
James Bowie
David Crockett
Susana Dickinson
Enrique Esparza
Juan Nepomuceno Seguin
William B. Travis

Texas Revolution

Plácido Benavides
Sam Houston
Lorenzo de Zavala
Thomas Jefferson Rusk
Juan Seguín
José Antonio Navarro
Mirabeau B. Lamar
Anson Jones
Francisco Ruiz

Black Senators of the Texas Republic

George Ruby
Matt Gaines
William Burton

Late 19th and Early 20th Century

Clara Driskoll
James Hogg
Quanah Parker
John Reagan
Adina De Zavala

Business and Invention

Red Adair
Mary Kay Ash
Ninnie Baird
Gale Borden, Jr.
Sarah Horton Cockrell
Michael Dell
Joseph Glidden
Charles Goodnight

Howard Hughes
Lizzie Johnson
Richard King
Elon Musk
Ross Perot
T. Boone Pickens

20th Century Politics

George H.W. Bush
George W. Bush
Miriam A. Ferguson
Oveta Culp Hobby
Jesse Jones
Lyndon B. Johnson
Barbara Jordan
Sam Rayburn
Ann Richards

Other Key Figures in 20th Century Texas History

Claire Lee Chennault
Caro Crawford Brown
Bessie Coleman
Walter Cronkite
Michael DeBakey
Pattillo Higgins
Ima Hogg
Jack Johnson
“Lady Bird” Johnson
Scott Joplin
Audie Murphy
Cleto Rodríguez
Emma Tenayuca
Babe Didrikson Zaharias

5. Clearly specify the learning objectives for each grade and (where appropriate) course.

Kindergarten

Kindergartners should be introduced to:

- ***Civic symbols***, including the national and state flags, the bald eagle, the Statue of Liberty, the Texas State Capitol, the Alamo, the San Jacinto Monument, and the Spanish Missions of Texas.
- ***Civic holidays*** important to Texans including Thanksgiving, Texas Independence Day, and Juneteenth.
- ***Key historical figures*** in Texas and U.S. history, including George Washington, Moses and Stephen Austin, and Sam Houston, and the U.S. Presidents from Texas.

Kindergartners should also investigate:

- What a family is.
- What it means to be an American.
- How people can learn to live and work together.
- How peoples' lives in the past differ from peoples' lives today.
- What their neighborhood is like.

1st Grade

First graders should be introduced to:

- ***The concept of chronology***, the idea that dates and events can be arranged in sequence and their order of occurrence.
- ***The concepts of diversity and commonality***, including the cultural customs and traditions that unite Texans and that distinguish different groups of Texans.
- ***The concept of geographical location***, including how to find their hometown on a map, and of ***spatial terms*** like near, far, left, and right.
- ***The concept of government***, including the notion of elected representatives who establish rules that we must live by.
- ***The concept of economics***, including the notions of jobs, earnings, and spending.

First graders should also investigate:

- **History:** The people who originally lived in Texas and other parts of North America and the later people who explored and settled Texas and other parts of what's now the United States.
- **Geography:** The geographical characteristics of their own community as well as the concept of location as well as the physical characteristics of various environments and the influence of environment upon people's food, clothing, and shelter.
- **Economics:** The variety of jobs and why people have jobs, and the difference between needs and wants.
- **Science and technology:** The technologies that they and their families use for communication, cooking, entertainment and recreation, and transportation and how these technologies have changed over time.

- **Civics and Government:** The concept of democracy and the idea of elected leaders establishing rules, laws, and responsibilities (such as paying taxes).

Social studies skills:

- Students should construct a simple time line.
- Students should use a calendar and measure time in days, weeks, months, and years.

Second Grade

Second graders should be introduced to:

- **The concept of representative government.**
- **The concept of diversity.**
- **The economic concepts of production, distribution, and price.**
- **The concept of geography,** including the location of particular places, as well as geographical tools such as maps and globes.

Second graders should also:

- **Civics and Government:** Investigate the functions of government, the services government provides, and the names and roles of government officials. Identify ways to practice good citizenship, including voting and engaging in community service.
- **History:** Be introduced to key historical figures in the history of their local community and of Texas and the United States; understand the significance of various community, state, and national celebrations and landmarks, monuments, and government buildings.
- **Economics:** How food and other essential items are produced and distributed and sold and introducing students to the notions of pay, spending, saving, consumption, and price.
- **Diversity and Commonality:** Understands the important symbols, customs, and celebrations that represent American beliefs and principles that contribute to our national identity, including the Pledge of Allegiance to the United States Flag and the Pledge to the Texas Flag, and "The Star-Spangled Banner" and "America the Beautiful"; identify symbols such as state and national birds and flowers and Uncle Sam; and understand ethnic and other cultural celebrations.
- **Geography:** How people modify the environment and use and conserve natural resources.

Social studies skills:

Students should be introduced to **the concept of evidence:** art works, documents, interviews, landmarks, monuments, music, and photographs.

Third Grade

Third graders should be introduced to:

- **The concept of Constitutional and representative government.**
- **The concept of leadership.**
- **The concept of courage.**
- **The concepts of invention and inventors.**
- **The concept of free enterprise**, an economic system driven by supply and demand and competition among privately owned businesses.

Third graders should also be introduced to:

Civics and Government

- the basic structures of government at the local, state, and national levels, government officials and how they are chosen, and the services that various levels of government provide.
- the nation’s foundational documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the U.S. Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, and to foundational concepts including “the consent of the governed.”
- the characteristics of good citizenship, including the individuals’ responsibilities (such as obeying laws, voting, serving on juries, and paying taxes), individuals who exemplify good citizenship, and civic organizations that serve the common good.

Diversity and Commonality

Cultural Literacy

- The writers and artists who have contributed to the cultural heritage of Texas and their local and ethnic communities.
- Key inventors and scientists who have produced breakthroughs in scientific and medical knowledge and who created new technologies that have improved human lives.

Social Studies Skills

Students should be introduced to **the concept of research**: How to gather information, including historical and current events and geographic data, about their community using a variety of resources.

Students should also be introduced to **critical thinking skills**: How to interpret oral, visual, and print material by sequencing, categorizing, identifying the main idea, distinguishing between fact and opinion, identifying cause and effect, and comparing and contrasting.

In addition, students should also be introduced to *presentation skills*: How to create visuals, including graphs, charts, tables, timelines, illustrations, and maps.

Fourth Grade

Fourth graders should be introduced to:

The history of Texas. Topics to be addressed should include:

- The physical regions of Texas (Mountains and Basins, Great Plains, North Central Plains, Coastal Plains), including their characteristics such as landforms, climate, vegetation, and economic activities.
- The history of Texas's first inhabitants, a subject not adequately spelled out in the current standards.
- European exploration and colonization of Texas, including the motives for exploration and colonization and the establishment of the Spanish missions.
- Patterns of settlement and economic activities in early Texas, including the location of early towns and cities, and how Texans adapted to and modified their environment in Texas, past and present, such as timber clearing, agricultural production, trading, hunting, wetlands drainage, energy production, and construction of dams, and the positive and negative consequences of modifying the environments of Texas.
- Texas' role in the Mexican War of Independence and the war's impact on Texas's development.
- Anglo settlement in Texas, including the role of empresarios, including Stephen F. Austin and Martín de León.
- The causes, major events, and effects of the Texas Revolution, including the Battle of the Alamo, the Texas Declaration of Independence, the Runaway Scrape, and the Battle of San Jacinto.
- The contributions of individuals including Plácido Benavides, David Crockett, Sam Houston, , José Francisco Ruiz, Juan N. Seguín, and William B. Travis to Texas independence.
- The leaders important to the founding of Texas as a republic and state, including José Antonio Navarro, Sam Houston, Mirabeau Lamar, and Anson Jones.
- describe the successes, problems, and organizations of the Republic of Texas such as the establishment of a constitution, economic struggles, relations with American Indians, and the Texas Rangers.

- The events that led to the annexation of Texas to the United States.
- The impact of the U.S.-Mexican War on Texas.
- The Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas.
- The development of the cattle, railroad, and oil industries in Texas, including the story of Spindletop.
- The effects of exploration, immigration, migration, and limited resources on the economic development and growth of Texas.
- The effects on American Indian life brought about by the Red River War, building of U.S. forts and railroads, and loss of buffalo.
- The impact of the major events and developments of the twentieth century on life in Texas including the Great Depression, the Dust Bowl, and World War II, the growth of the oil and gas industry, industrialization, and urbanization.
- The contributions of key individuals such as Charles Goodnight, Richard King, Lizzie Johnson, and Pattillo Higgins to Texas's economic growth.

In addition, fourth graders should:

- Understand the important ideas in the historical documents of Texas, including the purposes and explain the importance of the Texas Declaration of Independence and the Texas Constitution.
- Be able to:
 - explain the basic functions of the three branches of government according to the Texas Constitution;
 - explain the meaning of various patriotic symbols and landmarks of Texas, including the six flags that flew over Texas, the Alamo, and the San Jacinto Monument;
 - sing or recite "Texas, Our Texas," recite and explain the meaning of the Pledge to the Texas Flag; and
 - describe the origins and significance of state celebrations such as Texas Independence Day and Juneteenth.
- Further develop their social studies skills, including:
 - Locate and interpret primary and secondary sources, including oral, textual, and visual sources, identifying their main ideas and conclusions, and evaluating these sources for bias and accuracy.

Identify different points of view about important issues, topics, historical events, or current events.

Organize and interpret information in outlines, reports, databases, and visuals, including graphs, charts, timelines, and maps (including apply mapping elements, including grid systems, legends, symbols, scales, and compass roses) , to create and interpret maps; and interpret geographic data, population distribution, and natural resources into a variety of formats such as graphs and maps.

Grade 5

Fifth graders should be introduced to:

- The history of the United States from 1565 to the present. Essential topics include:

European colonization, peopling, and settlement of North America, including the motives for colonization and relations between the colonizers and the indigenous population.

Differences in the demography, economies, religions, and settlement patterns in the New England, Middle, and Southern colonies.

The growth of a distinctive American identity during the eighteenth century, including the perception of the colonies as a Republican society.

The causes, key events, outcome, and consequences of the American Revolution, including the Declaration of Independence.

The drafting and ratification of the U.S. Constitution, including the reasons the Framers drafted a new framework of government, the document's foundational principles (including federalism, separation of powers, checks and balances, and rule of law), how the Constitution differed from the original Articles of Confederation, the debates over slavery at the Constitutional Convention, and reasons for the adoption of the Bill of Rights and the rights these amendments protect.

The precedents established during the early Republic, including the development of the cabinet, the birth of political parties, and establishment of the principles of judicial review and federal supremacy.

The causes of the War of 1812, including the impressment of sailors and hunger for expansion, and the conflict's consequences, including the acquisition of the Gulf Coast (and subsequently Florida), the demise of the Federalist party, and the growth of industry in New England.

The country's geographic expansion as a result of purchase, diplomacy, and war and the political controversies expansion engendered, including the Missouri Crisis, the Nullification Crisis, and the crisis that resulted in the Compromise of 1850.

The causes of the American Civil War, including the Fugitive Slave Law, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, the Dred Scott Decision, John Brown's Raid on Harpers Ferry, Virginia, and the presidential election of 1860, the reasons why the Confederate states seceded and why President Lincoln and Congress refused to accept secession, and how the Confederate Constitution differed from the U.S. Constitution.

Why the Union prevailed in the Civil War; topics include the opposing sides' military and diplomatic strategies, the conflict's major battles, the Emancipation Proclamation and the shift of a war for Union to a war for emancipation, the Gettysburg Address and its significance, and the assassination of President Lincoln. Also, major policies adopted during the conflict, including construction of a transcontinental railroad, enactment of the Homestead Act, land grants for colleges, and establishment of a uniform national currency.

The successes and failures of Reconstruction; topics include the Freedman's Bureau, the civil rights act, the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments to the Constitution and their significance, the rise of sharecropping, and the reasons that Reconstruction ended.

The post-Civil War growth of industry, cities, and immigration.

The rise of the Populist and labor movements.

The growth of segregation, disfranchisement, and lynching during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The emergence of the United States as a world power, including the acquisition of Alaska and Hawaii, the Spanish American war, the Roosevelt Corollary to the Monroe Doctrine, and U.S. interventions in the Caribbean and Central America.

Municipal, state, and federal reforms of the Progressive era, including efforts to regulate industry and working conditions, institute a graduated income tax (through the 16th amendment, prohibit the manufacture and sale of alcoholic beverages (the 18th amendment), and advance democracy (including through the 17th and 19th amendments).

The causes and significance of World War I, the reasons for U.S. involvement in the conflict, the impact of U.S. intervention, and the post-war Red Scare.

Cultural conflicts of the 1920s over immigration, evolution, women's rights, and race.

The Great Depression, including its causes, impact on specific groups of Americans, and the governmental response, the New Deal.

The causes of World War II; the war on the battlefield and home front; the Holocaust; the internment of Japanese Americans; and the war's social consequences, including the growth of the Sunbelt.

The Cold War, its origins and development; the Second Red Scare; détente; and the reasons for the Soviet Union's collapse.

The post-World War II Civil Rights movement and its leaders.

The Great Society of the 1960s and its achievements, including the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, Medicare, Medicaid, and aid to education.

The significance of the war in Vietnam.

The significant events of the presidencies of Richard Nixon, including the Watergate Affair, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, George H.W. Bush, Bill Clinton, George W. Bush, including U.S. interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, Barack Obama, Donald J. Trump, and Joe Biden.

Students should also be able to:

Geography:

Describe regions in the United States based on physical characteristics such as landform, climate, and vegetation;

Locate on a map important political features such as the five largest cities by population in the United States and the 50 states as WELL AS THE SITES OF MAJOR OVERSEAS EVENTS THAT HAD A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON U.S. history.

Create a map of important physical features such as the Appalachian Mountains, Great Lakes, Mississippi River, Great Plains, and Rocky Mountains

Civics and Government:

Describe the fundamental rights of American citizens guaranteed in the Bill of Rights, including freedom of religion, speech, and press; the right to assemble and petition the government; the right to keep and bear arms; the right to trial by jury; and the right to an attorney.

Science and Technology:

Describe the scientific discoveries and technological innovations that had a major impact on American history and be able to identify their inventors.

Social Studies Skills:

Students should be able to demonstrate **mastery of the basic chronology of U.S. history.**

Students should be able to **discuss the causes** of key historical events and developments in a nuanced and balanced way.

Students should also be able to **describe the impact and consequences** of major scientific discoveries and technological innovations.

Grade 6

Sixth graders should be introduced to:

The peoples, places, and societies of the contemporary world.

As the Fordham report observes, this is the only required course of study with an international focus, and rather than examining the history and cultures of major regions of the world, it instead focuses on the different ways that these societies organize their economic and political systems and on the freedoms that people in those societies have or lack.

This focus made much more sense during the Cold War than it does today.

If it were up to me, I'd redesign this into a course around the idea of world history and culture. At a minimum, I think it would make sense to look at the ancestral cultures of many Texans, above all, Sub-Saharan Africa, Mexico and Central America, India, and China.

Such a course would then focus on these geographical regions' religions, languages, geography, cultural achievements, and history. Such a course would provide an opportunity to celebrate today's Texas's rich diversity and ensure that students see their ancestral culture represented in the curriculum.

I do not mean to exclude differences in these societies' political and economic systems, but in theory (if not in practice) these societies claim to be democratic and market oriented.

Grade 7

Seventh graders are re-introduced to the history of Texas from early times to the present.

Rather than simply regurgitating content treated during the fourth grade, this course might offer a perfect opportunity to ask students to utilize their social studies research, close reading, analytic and interpretive, and presentation skills.

This course might provide a chance not only to reinforce the understanding of Texas's rich history instilled in fourth grade, but a chance to go into greater depth on key topics:

- Texas's Indian policies.
- The causes of the Texas Revolution.
- Tejanos attitudes toward the Texas Revolution and their fate in the Revolution's aftermath.
- Slavery in Texas before the Revolution, during the Texas Republic, and after statehood.

- The politics surrounding Texas annexation.
- The Civil War and Reconstruction in Texas.

- The evolution of the Texas economy.

- The civil rights struggles of Blacks, Tejanos, and Asian Americans in Texas.

- The peopling of Texas and the growth of Texas's cities.

Students could research these topics drawing upon primary and secondary sources and develop written, oral, and visual presentations based on their research.

Other topics addressed in the grade 7 TEKS are:

- The regions of Texas.

- The peopling of Texas.

- The factors that contributed to the urbanization of Texas.

- The development of Texas's major industries, including oil and gas, aerospace, medical, and computer technologies.

- Texas's diversity within unity.

- Texas's contributions to the arts by Texans by such figures as Roy Bedichek, Diane Gonzales Bertrand, J. Frank Dobie, Scott Joplin, Elisabet Ney, Amado Peña Jr., Walter Prescott Webb, and Horton Foote, and to the sciences and technology by such innovators as Walter Cunningham, Michael DeBakey, Denton Cooley, Benjy Brooks, Michael Dell, and Howard Hughes Sr.

What's striking to me are the omissions: Texans' contributions to sports, the exploration of outer space (apart from Walter Cunningham), and, apart from Scott Joplin, to music.

Grade 8

Eight graders are re-introduced to the history of the United States from the early colonial period through Reconstruction.

Although this history is more detailed than in fifth grade, it is somewhat repetitious. In my view, it needs to build upon the foundation laid in the earlier classes.

The solution, I think, is to make greater use of primary sources, both textual and audio and visual. I'd pay particular attention to:

- The growth of a distinctive American identity during the colonial era.

- The justifications for waging a revolution against British rule.
- The arguments surrounding the Constitution and evaluating the compromises that were reached.
- Life and labor under slavery, forms of resistance to slavery, and the rich culture that enslaved Black Americans created, with a special focus on slavery in Texas.
- The arguments for and against Texas annexation and war with Mexico.
- Texas's decision to secede from the Union and the Civil War within Texas.
- Reconstruction in Texas, which was particularly violent, and the experiences of Black Texans during and after Reconstruction.
- Indian policy in Texas.

High School

Economics

The course has several objectives:

- To introduce students to the basic principles of economics, but these principles need to be rethought: They should include supply, demand, price elasticity, competition, productivity, externalities, inflation, unemployment, investment, consumption, the business cycle, government monetary and fiscal policy, and government regulation.
- To compare and contrast American capitalism with other economic systems.
- To ensure that students acquire personal financial literacy including an understanding of bank accounts, interest, assets and liabilities, credit reports, loans (including student loans), savings, insurance, and paying for college.

I found the list of suggestions within the TEKS rather arbitrary and confusing. I think these TEKS would be strengthened by explaining the learning objectives more clearly and concisely.

U.S. History Since 1877

This course is somewhat repetitious of material covered in fifth grade. The TEKS for this course struck me as a rather confusing laundry list of topics. I think the learning objectives would be clearer if the material were better organized chronologically and thematically and around a series of guiding questions, including these:

The Gilded Age

- How did the United States succeed in developing the world's strongest economy in the late 19th century? How did the organization of business and the economy shift during the Gilded Age? What was the impact of industrialization upon industrial workers and farmers and how did these groups respond to the changes in the American economy?
- Why did millions of immigrants come to the United States from the late 19th century and what was their experience like after they arrived?

The United States Becomes a World Power

- How and why did the United States become a world power beginning in the 1890s and what principles have guided American foreign policy at different points in time?

The Progressive Era

- How did Progressive Era reformers address the issues of urban political corruption, unsafe working conditions and products, and business consolidation?
- How and why did the power of the federal government and of the presidency grow during the Progressive Era and under the New Deal and the Great Society?

World War I

- Why did the United States intervene in World War I? What was the impact of U.S. participation in the war upon Americans' civil liberties? Why didn't the United States sign the peace treaty ending the conflict? What were the long-term consequences of the First World War?

Women's Suffrage

- How were women able to win the right to vote in 1920?

The 1920s

- During the 1920s, Americans engaged in bitter controversies over immigration, prohibition, evolution, the Ku Klux Klan, and women's rights. What was the outcome of each of these cultural conflicts?

The Great Depression

- What were the causes of the Great Depression? What was the impact of the Depression on various groups of Americans? How did Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal attempt address the economic problems caused by the Depression and how successful were the administration's efforts? Which New Deal programs proved most successful or long-lasting?

World War II

- Why, before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, did most Americans oppose U.S. intervention in World War II? What was the U.S. response to the Holocaust? What

contributions did the U.S. make toward victory in the Second World War? What changes did the war produce on the home front, including in the lives of women, Black Americans, and Hispanic Americans? Why did the United States intern 120,000 Japanese Americans? Why did the United States drop atomic bombs on Japan?

The Cold War

- How and why did the United States engage in a four-decade-long Cold War with the Soviet Union, and how did the Cold War influence U.S. policy in Asia and Latin America?

The Civil Rights Movement

- What forms has the Black Struggle for Full Equality taken from the Gilded Age onward? What were its goals and strategies? How successful was the Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and 1960? How did groups other than Black Americans struggle for full equality?

The Great Society

- How did Lyndon B. Johnson's Great Society change the United States?

The Vietnam War

- Why did the United States intervene militarily in Vietnam? Why weren't U.S. armed forces able to achieve victory in Vietnam? What was the impact of the Vietnam war on American politics, society, presidential power, and foreign policy?

The 1970s through 2000

- How was the United States able to overcome the economic problems of inflation, stagnation, and high interest rates of the 1970s?
- Why did the Cold War end so abruptly in the late 1980s and early 1990s? What foreign challenges has the United States experienced since the end of the Cold War and how successfully has this country addressed those challenges?