

## 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,

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.

### **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

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

**20<sup>th</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> 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:

, 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.

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.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Grade

First graders should be introduced to:

\_\_\_\_\_ , the idea that dates and events can be arranged in sequence and their order of occurrence.

\_\_\_\_\_ , including the cultural customs and traditions that unite Texans and that distinguish different groups of Texans.

\_\_\_\_\_ , including how to find their hometown on a map, and of like near, far, left, and right.

\_\_\_\_\_ , including the notion of elected representatives who establish rules that we must live by.

\_\_\_\_\_ , 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Civics and Government: The





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

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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

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

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:

m Students should be able to demonstrate mastery of the basic chr.6 (T)-190.7 (p)5h-6 (i2 0 Tdt)7.9 (h)-0.6 (r.6 1g

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 -0.001 T4 (e)-6 (c)-4.9Jtoac4h.513-Td[Texa)2.7 (s-13 0 Td[a(e)7.9 ( )10.6Jt)3 (o)d7()2.2 are)-3

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 se(ite)-3 (h)48 0 Td( )TJEMC P (o)-6.6 (n)2.2.2 ( an)2.2 (d7(o)-6.6 (n)2.2](u)2.2 (m)4.5 (e)-3 (n)2.3





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