



TEXAS ESSENTIAL KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES

The Texas State Teachers Association offers the following comments to the State Board of Education regarding agenda item #1: Proposed New 19 TAC Chapter 113, Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies, Subchapter A, Elementary, Subchapter B, Middle School, Subchapter C, High School, and Subchapter D, Other Social Studies Courses.

The Texas State Teachers Association (TSTA) applauds the efforts of the Board, content advisors, and workgroups in the important work of reviewing and revising the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) for social studies. We appreciate the many positive changes, including the proposed new framework that will introduce social studies topics in earlier grades and permit educators to go deeper, especially at the high school level. We have some minor recommended additions to ensure that Texas public school students are exposed to the truth of our history and that the standards recognize the diversity of Texas. By and large, however, we believe the proposed draft is reflective of a thoughtful and unbiased process, one informed by experts, and we encourage the SBOE look to the expertise of the content advisors and workgroups and not make damaging amendments that push a political agenda ahead of the truth.

19 TAC Chapter 113, Subchapters A, Elementary, Subchapter B, Middle School, and C High School

We support the proposed new framework as a structure that provides an opportunity for more depth and less breadth in social studies topics, especially at the high school level. We also agree with Chair Ellis that the new framework will put significantly more focus on Texas history. Current TEKS isolate Texas history topics in stand-alone survey courses in 4th and 8th grade, while the reimagined framework will spiral these knowledge and skills in age- and grade-appropriate ways K-8. The proposed new framework is also a more coherent approach consistent with research on memory formation. The revisions will present students with more content knowledge in the lower grades and will coherently cover key topics in a manner that will more fully establish the ability of students to remember major people, places and events across approximately 7,000 years of world, US and Texas history.

In order to support deeper understanding of the multiple identities, ethnicities and histories of all Texans – to the benefit of students from all backgrounds – TSTA offers the following recommended additions:

- That Japanese American incarceration during WWII be included in US History 1877 to Present and 8th Grade Social Studies. The language of “incarceration” aligns with National Park Service, the Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center, and other organizations who adopt language informed by historians
- That the contributions of Asian Americans during the civil rights movement be added to both US History 1877 to Present and 8th Grade Social Studies. Omission of leaders and organizations such as the Asian American Political Alliance neglects the important contributions of Asian American contributions to civil rights
- That representative Chinese American histories, including Pershing Chinese, be included in 8th Grade Social Studies

- That accurate Chinese American histories be presented. Current proposed language in 8th Grade Social Studies suggests a false causal relationship between Chinese labor migration and the Chinese Exclusion Act
- That a new student expectation be included in the US History 1877 to Present TEKS that will acknowledge the enduring impact of the Patriot Act and associated War on Terror rhetoric on Arab and South Asian Americans, particularly of Muslim and Sikh backgrounds

Additionally:

- To prepare students for the future, we must prioritize the need for students to learn and talk about the history and cultures of Indigenous communities, people of color, LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other marginalized communities.
- It is critical that students learn about the profound influence religion has had on our history and society, and standards can do this by detailing how our nation's founders protected religious freedom for all by barring the government from favoring or disfavoring any one particular religion, Separation of church and state is a key Constitutional principle that protects religious freedom, and the Texas social studies standards should be clear about this.
- Texas continues to pass legislation that increases barriers to voter registration and participation. The social studies standards should be written in such a manner so as to help public schools encourage students to exercise their right to vote.

19 TAC Chapter 113, Subchapter D, Other Social Studies Courses

TSTA supports the proposed framework and TEKS for the new and revised ethnic studies classes and request that the State Board of Education pass them as proposed. We believe, as drafted, the TEKS allow for a deeper understanding of unique identities and varying histories. Ethnic studies course offerings are important to a well-rounded social studies education and expose students to rich materials that can tell a more accurate story of diverse experiences that help all students feel seen and included in their learning. However, because ethnic studies courses are not graduation requirements in Texas, we emphasize that the core courses also include fair representation of marginalized communities and do not whitewash our history.

TSTA acknowledges the work of the board in its revision efforts of the social studies standards and applauds its increasing willingness to center truth in the teaching of history. Previous standards downplayed negative aspects of US history like slavery, discrimination and segregation and did too little to address the experiences and contributions of Indigenous peoples and other marginalized communities. Improvements continue to be made, and TSTA encourages you to use this review and revision process to continue to move in a direction that teaches the truth and honors the histories of all Texans.