

Content Advisor David Barton
Work Group B Review
March 24, 2026

As we approach the finish line and are nearing the final document, I offer my personal review of the current product to date.

I agree strongly with the consensus document reflecting specific modifications recommended by the Content Advisors in their review of the product of Work Group B. I believe with the incorporation of the suggestions made by the Content Advisors that the result will be a stellar and balanced presentation of the various curricular subjects under the umbrella of Social Studies.

Particularly valuable was the calculation done by staff and the work group to determine the number of predicted hours necessary to cover the proposed TEKS in each course. This greatly aided the Content Advisors in prioritizing, paring, and selecting what was most important to retain and present to students. Teachers can be confident that the content within the TEKS can indeed be covered in the designated semester(s).

Having served on review panels in multiple states, I think this current product is the best in the nation and will be sought by other states once it is published. It is thorough, balanced, and factual, free of discernable bias. The nine Content Advisors, from varied backgrounds, viewpoints, and academic training, all had a common goal: produce the best possible product so Texas students can excel. The cooperation and collaboration among the Advisors was excellent.

As we approach the finish line, of the dozens of areas in the final product, there are four in which I personally would have preferred to see something different in the final product.

First is the recovery of many genuine early black heroes that have steadily been removed or ignored for political or philosophical causes. I specifically point to Woodrow Wilson's highly acclaimed 5-volume *History of the American People* that largely launched him into the presidency of Princeton University, and then into the US presidency. It is undisputed that he was an open and unabashed racist. In those five volumes, he removed every positive acknowledgment of any black American, including both Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, who were already legendary in his generation. The absence of black heroes that pervaded his books infected the students taught in that generation, who then taught the next generation what they knew, and so forth. As a result, today's Black History Month posters are heavily populated with 20th century heroes, with an occasional head-nod to George Washington Carver, Frederick Douglass, or Booker Washington. Because this generation does not know America's early black heroes, it assumes they don't exist, making it extremely difficult to persuade teachers to introduce genuine former heroes back into the new books.

Significantly, that is changing—elsewhere, but not yet in Texas. Currently, the White House is erecting a dozen marble statues of black military heroes from the American Revolution in a new park in Washington DC, across from the Lincoln Memorial. Restored will be names such as Wentworth Cheswill, Lemuel Haynes, James Armistead, Jack Sisson, Salem Poor, Billy Flora, Jordan Freeman, Prince Whipple, Prince Estabrook, Peter Salem, and the legendary Rhode Island

First. Nearly every one of these names is unknown today, but not in previous generations; and they are worth rediscovering today. The Content Advisors initially included some of these former names in the TEKS, but ultimately, for various reasons, they were removed. So, we are back to the same set of names. Today, students will cover Crispus Attucks, which is fine, but even he was not of the Revolution. Eventually, the others need to be restored. We need to be free from the pedagogy of Woodrow Wilson.

A second area of concern centered on spiraling—an integral part of ELA, math, science, and other disciplines, except history. On multiple occasions, the Content Advisors utilized spiraling—exposing students to something in elementary, strengthening that knowledge and adding facts in middle school, then mastering that concept/incident in high school. Indisputably, repetition helps reinforce, strengthen, and bolster one’s knowledge. Despite specific instructions to work groups to retain the principle of spiraling, on several occasions specific TEKS were rejected by Work Group A simply because that topic had previously been mentioned in an earlier grade, Spiraling needs to be welcomed, not spurned.

A third area of concern was the greater coverage of slavery than anti-slavery and abolition. Both movements occurred in America, but the anti-slavery and abolition forces prevailed. Yet based on the greater amount of TEKS content covering slavery, one could not easily tell which side won if the outcome were not already known. Why should not the winning side receive more coverage than the losing side? There were significant racial equality heroes working in America since the 1600s. In fact, there were more than 1,000 black officials elected to office by 1876; yet Great Britain did not elect their first black officeholder until 1987, Russia until 2010, Italy until 2103, and so forth. Students will not learn many of the positives that occurred in the early civil rights areas, nor the names of many key heroes.

The fourth area is that of the use of biographical history—of telling history through the stories of various heroes and villains. Hollywood has done this for years: the story of the *Amistad* is told through John Quincy Adams and Cinque; the story of the bloody Battle of Okinawa is told through Desmond Doss; and so forth. These stories are highly interesting and engaging and help viewers better understand what occurred. But too often today there is a heavy emphasis on dates, places, and events, with much less on the stories of the heroes and villains themselves. Biographies are always of much greater interest (and even importance) than a sequence of timelines. History was long taught with biographical emphasis and should be again. Sadly, Work Group A eliminated several individual heroes that had been placed throughout the standards by the Content Advisors, and Work Group B eliminated even more. The biographical presentation of history should be reinstated at a greater level.

The Work Groups had difficult tasks before them and are to be applauded for their willingness to give of their time and serve Texas students by helping produce the final product. Though we have not yet crossed the finish line, I still hold that these texts will be the best in the country, and the textbooks produced by Texas will be embraced by several other states.



David Barton