

Individual Work Product

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I want to begin by extending my sincere gratitude to everyone who served on Work Group A and Work Group B, as well as everyone who delivered public testimony or submitted public comments throughout this process. Your time, effort, and dedication to the future of social studies education in Texas are deeply appreciated. I want you to know that I read every public comment and listened to every testimony submitted throughout this process, and the perspectives shared by Texas educators, parents, and community members informed my thinking as I developed these recommendations.

While I believe we are making meaningful progress toward where these TEKS need to be, I do have significant remaining concerns about the structure of the standards, particularly in K-2. It is also worth noting that the volume of public comments and testimony received throughout this process reflects that the community has concerns about these standards, and I believe those voices deserve to be acknowledged as the board moves forward. Several standards are not written in the way standards should be written. Specifically, many standards embed the content directly into the expectation rather than defining what students should know and be able to do. I understand the concern that teachers need clear guidance on content, but that guidance belongs in the TEKS guide, instructional materials, and curriculum guides, not in the standards themselves. The TEKS should define the scope of learning, not predetermine the conclusions students reach. Below are a few examples of amendments that address this issue from Second Grade:

- 7(A) explain ~~that how~~ the War of 1812 ~~also known as the Second War for Independence, was fought between America and Great Britain, which~~ strengthened American identity (H, G/Civ, Geo/C, S);
- 7(B) retell the story of Francis Scott Key ~~and his role in writing who wrote~~ the "Star-Spangled Banner" ~~which became the national anthem in 1931~~ (H, G/Civ, Geo/C, S);

There are also several instances where the verb in a standard does not match the cognitive demand of the content. This is most commonly seen in standards that use the construction "explain that..." followed by a complete factual statement. "Explain" as a verb requires students to construct an understanding and articulate reasoning, but when it is followed by "that," the standard supplies the complete answer, reducing the task from explanation to recitation. A student cannot explain something that has already been fully explained to them in the standard itself. The verb signals a cognitive demand that the standard's own construction immediately eliminates. The following examples from Kindergarten illustrate amendments that would correct this issue:

- 5(B)C Identify reasons ~~explain that~~ the Pilgrims ~~were people from left~~ England ~~who and~~ came to America, ~~including~~ seeking religious freedom, ~~political freedom, to advance~~ advancing the Christian faith, and ~~to work together to build~~ building a new community (H, G/Civ, Geo/C, S); and

5(C)D Identify ~~explain that~~ the Mayflower Compact ~~was as~~ an agreement to work together, choose leaders, and follow rules, based on Christian values, for the good of the community (H, G/Civ, Geo/C, ~~S~~).

Additionally, there are several standards across K-2 labeled with an "S" strand code that do not reflect disciplinary thinking skills. Disciplinary thinking skills in social studies are the cognitive practices that scholars in each discipline use to construct knowledge and make meaning from evidence. They are not generic academic skills, they are discipline-specific habits of mind that define how historians, geographers, economists, and civic scholars think within their fields. A standard should earn an "S" code when it requires students to construct meaning using discipline-specific practices, not when it asks students to recite or repeat information. The following examples from First Grade illustrate standards that carry an S code but do not reflect a disciplinary thinking skill:

4(F) recite the phrase "Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness" as an important phrase in American history (H, G/Civ, S)

7(D) identify the Bluebonnet as a symbol of Texas (H, Geo/C, S).

A complete list of my suggested revisions can be found at the following links: [Elementary](#), [Middle School](#), and [High School](#). Because the Government course requires more extensive restructuring than tracked changes can clearly convey, I have also included a clean copy reflecting how I believe that course should be organized at the following link: [Government Clean Copy](#).

I offer these recommendations in my capacity as a curriculum and instruction professional with a Master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction, a Doctorate in Supervision, Curriculum and Instruction, and seven years of experience as a Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator in a Texas public school district.

Given the number of revisions that remain, and in recognition of the concerns expressed by the public throughout this process, it is my formal recommendation that a Work Group C be formed with the specific charge of cleaning up the standards language and ensuring the TEKS are written in a way that is clear, measurable, and consistent with what standards should look like across all grade levels and courses.

It has been an absolute honor to serve as a Content Advisor during this K-12 Social Studies TEKS Revision process. I have genuinely enjoyed working alongside my fellow content advisors and TEA staff, and I am grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this important work.

Sincerely,

Andrea Hutchison

