

Revisions in Response to Public Comments

June 10, 2026

Robert C. Koons

Overall Reaction

The public comments contained just over twenty specific suggestions, which I have incorporated below in my proposed revisions. The comments also included nearly thirty very inaccurate claims about facts' being omitted or under-emphasized, which I document in a table near the end of this response.

There were a large number of often-repeated, vague, and undocumented claims about bias and imbalance, including some groundless statements about bad-faith actions on the part of the content advisors. As I document below, the repeated claim that the proposed standards violate the First Amendment or unfairly privilege Christianity and the Bible are wholly without merit. Any fair-minded perusal of the standards would quickly dispel the idea that the tragedies that have afflicted minorities in American history and the travails of their efforts to pursue justice are amply represented there.

Separation of Church and State

Teaching about the historical influence of the Bible and the Christian religion on both American and European/Mediterranean history is absolutely not in the violation of the 'no establishment' clause of the First Amendment. The US Supreme has consistently held that objective and academic instruction in the nature and impact of religion is not prohibited by the Constitution. Consider the landmark decision on the use of Bible in schools, *Abington Township v. Schempp* (1963):

It is true that religion has been closely identified with our history and government. As we said in *Engel v. Vitale*, 370 U. S. 421, 370 U. S. 434 (1962), "The history of man is inseparable from the history of religion. And since the beginning of that history, many people have devoutly believed that 'More things are wrought by

prayer than this world dreams of.” In *Zorach v. Clauson*, 343 U. S. 306, 343 U. S. 313 (1952), we gave specific recognition to the proposition that “[w]e are a religious people whose institutions presuppose a Supreme Being.” The fact that the Founding Fathers believed devotedly that there was a God and that the unalienable rights of man were rooted in Him is clearly evidenced in their writings, from the Mayflower Compact to the Constitution itself. This background is evidenced today in our public life through the continuance in our oaths of office from the Presidency to the Alderman of the final supplication, “So help me God.” Likewise, each House of the Congress provides through its Chaplain an opening prayer, and the sessions of this Court are declared open by the crier in a short ceremony, the final phrase of which invokes the grace of God.

In addition, it might well be said that one's education is not complete without a study of comparative religion or the history of religion and its relationship to the advancement of civilization. It certainly may be said that the Bible is worthy of study for its literary and historic qualities. Nothing we have said here indicates that such study of the Bible or of religion, when presented objectively as part of a secular program of education, may not be effected consistently with the First Amendment.

The ACLU, in its Statement on the Bible in the Public Schools

(<https://www.aclu.org/documents/statement-bible-public-schools-first-amendment-guide>)

writes, “Some who promote religion and Bible courses in public schools wish to help students better understand the world in which they live and of the role that religion plays in peoples' lives. This can be done in accordance with sound constitutional values.”

Too Much Christianity?

No one is advocating that we teach theology as true. Instead, we must present an accurate picture of US and world history. You cannot understanding the motives and relevant beliefs of the people involved. That the founding generations and Civil-War era Americans believed in the Bible and the central tenets of Christianity is an undeniable historical fact, and to airbrush this out of our history, is to distort and misrepresent history. As John Adams famously said, “Facts are stubborn things; and whatever may be our wishes, our inclinations, or the dictates of our passion, they cannot alter the state of facts and evidence.” To air-brush the influence of

Christianity from American and world history is to engage in a falsification of history on an Orwellian scale.

Some commenters point out that many Texas nowadays do not belong to Christian churches or Jewish synagogues. This is in fact a strong reason to include instruction in the basic tropes of the Bible and Christian thought. In generations past, we could take for granted that nearly all students would have received a grounding in Biblical history and though church and synagogue. This can no longer be assumed, and by deleting all reference to the Bible and theology from our standards, we would be placing our non-Christian students at a profound academic disadvantage, depriving them of the same ability to understand important historical texts and events possessed by their Christian and Jewish classmates.

Here are three examples of such texts (chosen from literally hundreds):

Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on Virginia*, Query XVIII

And can the liberties of a nation be thought secure when we have removed their only firm basis, a conviction in the minds of the people that these liberties are of the gift of God? That they are not to be violated but with His wrath? Indeed I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and His justice cannot sleep forever.

Without an understanding of the concepts of divine justice and our creation in the image of God, this statement would be unintelligible.

Abraham Lincoln, Second Inaugural Address

If we shall suppose that American Slavery is one of those things which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him?

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive to finish the work we are in.

To grasp what Lincoln is saying, an elementary understanding of God, His attributes, His justice, and His providence (as professed by Christians in Lincoln's time) is essential.

James Madison, *Memorial and Remonstrance against Religious Assessments* (1785). This document contains the argument which led Congress to pass the First Amendment. Note that Madison's argument is a specifically theological and biblical one:

Because we hold it for a fundamental and undeniable truth, "that Religion or the duty which we owe to our Creator and the manner of discharging it, can be directed only by reason and conviction, not by force or violence." The Religion then of every man must be left to the conviction and conscience of every man; and it is the right of every man to exercise it as these may dictate. This right is in its nature an unalienable right. It is unalienable, because... what is here a right towards men, is a duty towards the Creator. It is the duty of every man to render to the Creator such homage and such only as he believes to be acceptable to Him. This duty is precedent, both in the order of time and in degree of obligation to the claims of Civil Society. Before any man can be considered as a member of Civil Society, he must be considered as a subject of the Governor of the Universe.

To understand the principle of religion liberty, we must understand what Madison means by 'our duty to God' as 'Governor of the Universe,' and why he believes that this duty can only be satisfied by reason and conviction, and not by force or violence.

A number of commenters repeated the talking point that America was founded on "Enlightenment principles," rather than on the Bible or Christian theology. This claim is based on a false dichotomy, failing to recognize that the Enlightenment itself drew heavily on Christian ideas and principles. This is especially true of the branch of the Enlightenment (located in Britain, Holland, and Switzerland) that had the most influence on the American founding, including such figures as John Locke, Thomas Reid, Pufendorf, Grotius, and Jean-Jacques Burlamaqui. Locke himself wrote a book entitled *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, and in the Second Treatise, Locke gives an explicitly theological and biblical basis for our inherent rights to

“life, liberty, and property.” The Deistic Enlightenment of France (Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot) had very little influence. Tom Paine was shunned by Americans after revealing his Deist-inspired rejection of Christianity in *The Age of Reason*, dying in obscurity and poverty.

A perusal of the proposed TEKS reveals a decided under-emphasis on the role of Christianity and the Bible, not the over-emphasis claimed by so many (uninformed) commenters.

K-5

Jesus 1
Moses 2
Bible 2
God 2
Greek polytheism 1
American Indian origin stories 1
Great Awakening 1
Christianity 8
Jews 2

Middle School

Jesus 0
Bible 0
Christianity 0
Exodus & Harriet Tubman 1
Moses 0
Jews 1

High School

Jesus 0
Bible 2
God 3
New Testament 0
Christianity 4
Second Great Awakening 1
Islam 3
Buddhism 3
Jews, Judaism 4
Hinduism 3
Sikhism 1
Confucianism 4
Daoism 1

Consider in particular the extreme imbalance in grades 3 and 4 between Christianity and pre-Columbian Indian culture:

Grade 3. Pre-Columbian America (46 lessons, 23 hours), as compared with ancient Israel (11 lessons, 5.5 hours), and early Christianity (8 lessons, 6 hours)..

Grade 4. Pre=Columbian America (45 lessons, 22.5 hours), as compared with European Middle Ages (25 lessons, 12.5 hours, 17 hours) and Renaissance (14 lessons, 7 hours, 6).

Proposed Revisions

Grade 1

2B. Replace “seeking freedom to worship God and advance the Christian faith” with “seeking the freedom to worship God in the way that they believed to be correct, and to found ideal Christian communities.”

Grade 2

1E. Add “and Muslim scholars in Persia” after “monks”.

5G. Replace with “Explain that many pastors preached about freedom, inspired America’s independence, and served in the Continental Army.”

8B Delete “and were enslaved for not worshipping the Emperor.”

Grade 3

Delete 2 C, D, E—too advanced for third grade.

Delete 2F, G- Poverty Point civilization is of marginal importance.

Delete 4 F and G. Too advanced for third grade.

5E. Replace with “Identify Abraham as a traditional figure whose story is important in different ways for Jews, Christians, and Muslims.”

5F. Replace with “Describe religious traditions that identify Moses as the recipient of divinely revealed law, including the Ten Commandments.”

7A. Add “at its greatest extent (under Trajan)”

8F. Replace with: “explain how Jewish revolts against the Romans led to the further dispersal of Jews outside of their ancestral homeland.”

Grade 4

1A. Replace with “locate on a map the Alps and Pyrenees mountains, the North Sea, the Iberian Peninsula, the Frankish Kingdom, (later the Holy Roman Empire), and the region of the Holy Land, and England as they were understood during the Early Middle Ages.”

1C. add “and describe how the Crusades resulted in mutual contact and even respect between Christians and Muslims.”

3B. Change “raids” to “enslaving of many Europeans”

Delete 4 B, G Too advanced for 4th grade

Delete 5 N, O. Marginal, and too advanced for 4th grade.

7B. Replace “that closed off Europe from the Silk Road and trade with Asia” with “that disrupted established European trade routes and increased the cost of Asian goods, intensifying European interest in finding alternative sea routes to the profitable spice trade” [Moved to 4A]

Grade 5

1C. Replace with: “Explain how the printing press (invented by Gutenberg in 1440) helped spread Reformation ideas quickly, including wider access to the Bible, and compare how this innovation also helped spread ideas when American founders shared arguments for independence 300 years later.”

5I. Replace with “Describe how religious traditions (as displayed in John Winthrop’s “City on a Hill” imagery) inspired American’s sense of purpose and community.”

8F. Add “the contributions of Mercy Otis Warren, whose political writings supported the Patriot cause; and the roles of women as spies, nurses, seamstresses, and fundraisers during the Revolutionary War.”

Grade 6

6A. Add “Mexico’s abolition of slavery in 1829”

Grade 7

3I. Add “Works Progress Administration (responsible for many public buildings in Texas.”

3j. Replace with “Describe how the Great Depression worsened in the 1930s, despite the New Deal.”

7O. Replace with “Explain how traditional European prejudices against Jews, conspiracy theory, and pseudoscientific racism contributed to antisemitism, and how these factors converged in the Holocaust, in which Nazis attempted to exterminate the Jewish people and other targeted groups using systematic mass murder through executions and concentration camps.” [Covered]

Grade 8

6B. Add “Mexico’s abolition of slavery in 1829 (the Guerrero decree).”

High School US History

2B. Replace with “Describe the ways in which the colonies of Rhode Island, Pennsylvania, and Maryland initially allowed greater religious freedom than other colonies did.”

2C. Add “with reference to various English religious traditions, including Puritan, Anglican, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Quaker,”

2E. Replace “Black Robe regiment” with “participation and support by American clergymen”

15F. Replace with “explain how the civil rights movement was a mass movement of ordinary Americans whose organized activism, protests, and demonstrations compelled government action, resulting in landmark legal and legislative victories including Sweatt v. Painter, Brown v. Board of Education, the Civil Rights Act, the Voting Rights Act, and Title IX.” [Covered]

15G. Replace with: “Identify the significance of key leaders as representatives of this broader movement, including Thurgood Marshall, who represented parents of school children in the case Brown v. Board of Education; Texan Barbara Jordan, who was the first African American congresswoman; and Hector P. Garcia, who was involved in the American GI Forum.” [Covered]

15I Add “increased immigration from developing countries (1965 Immigration and Nationality Act), religious fundamentalism, liberal Protestantism, Catholic reforms, and secularization.”

High School US Government

3B. Add “with reference to Washington’s Thanksgiving Day proclamation and the discussion of religion and morals in the Northwest Ordinance.”

Delete 5. Rule of law covered elsewhere

Delete 8C. Duplicates 8B

Delete 13D. Unclear.

Add 13H. Describe the process by which the U S Constitution may be amended, according to Article V.

Delete 16A. Duplicates 16B

High School World History

2A. Replace with “Describe the ancient roots of Judaism and the importance of traditions about enslavement in Egypt and the Exodus story, the Decalogue, and the establishment of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.”

4C. Don’t cut ‘republicanism’ from Roman contributions.

4D. Replace with “Describe how the Roman Empire led to the expansion of the Jewish Diaspora, particularly in the wake of Rome’s destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Temple, and the ensuing forced migration of Jews from their ancestral homeland to areas across the Mediterranean.”

4E. Don’t cut ‘structure of a republican government’

8E. Replace with “Describe how some Moslems interpreted the doctrine of jihad as armed conflict, and how this interpretation led to the expansion of Islam and the conquest of Christian, Zoroastrian, and Indian countries.”

9C. After “the Great Schism of 1054,” add “which introduced the distinction between the Roman Catholic (Western) and Orthodox (Eastern) churches”

27D. Add “and the condemnation of these by moderate Moslem leaders around the world.”

US Government

High School World Geography

Delete 1E Regionalization. Marginal importance

Delete 13D. Duplicates 13C

Delete 30D. Duplicates 30C

High School Sociology

Delete 2A. Duplicates 2B-D

Delete 5F. Duplicates 8D

Appendix: Inaccurate Comments

Inaccurate Charge	Documentation
New Deal downplayed	World History 22B, US History 13F, Grade 7 3K, 4A-C
Japanese internment omitted	US History 14E, World History 24B
Atom bomb not mentioned	US History 14G, World History 24B
Rome a Christian empire>	Clearly stated in grade 3.8 that Christianity arose during the Imperial period
Too much Bible?	Mentioned 3 times in K-5, once in 6-8, twice in HS
Roman republic not mentioned in grade 2	Grade 2 2E
Roman engineering not mentioned	Grade 2 2F
No discussion of Japan in WWII in MS	Grade 7 7A, K, and L
No mention of DuBois in MS	Grade 6 10E
Battle of Gonzalez missing	Grade 6 6A
Tulsa massacre not a “race riot”	Called “massacre” Grade 7 3B
McCarthyism described positively	Called “overreach” US History 5E
Jackson’s displacement of Indians not mentioned	Grade 6 6C, US History 6
Neglects “the Spanish side” of Texas history	Grade 2 8C, Grade 5 1A, B, D, 3J
Communism should not be a dirty word	At least 160 million murders – see The Black Book of Communism
Renaissance downplayed	Grade 4 6, World History 12, 13, and 14
World History omits WWII, Holocaust	World History 24 A, B, C

Frederick Douglass ignored	Mentioned 3 times in US History, and in grades 2 and 6
“Old Testament” a specifically Christian term	Always placed in parentheses after “Hebrew scriptures”
The Magna Carta was about baronial privileges not individual rights	It was both, It established basic principles of criminal justice, including grand juries, jury trials, habeas corpus, among others.
Belief in divine providence not relevant to American Revolution	Opposite is well documented: see John Witherspoon’s The Dominion of Providence (1776)