

Response to Work Group B Product  
Robert C Koons  
March 24, 2026

## I. World Geography HS

I support the substantial changes recommended in the Content Advisors' Consensus report. I would like to provide my own rationale for the changes here.

The current design of the Geography course is not well-conceived. The objective should **not be** to produce junior geographers. It should not be to prepare students for careers in geography or to major in geography in college, both of which will be true of only a vanishingly small percentage of students (the BLS states that there are only 1500 professional geographers in the country, and less than 1% of undergraduate students at UT-Austin major in geography). Rather, the proper objective is to provide basic, concrete geographical knowledge of the kind needed for informed citizenship.

The current TEKS are both too vague and unspecific, and too abstract and theoretical. We need TEKS that are concrete, specific, and focused on a broad foundation of simple fact, not theoretical models.

We also need TEKS that are designed to enable students to retain the knowledge they require. The TEKS should present coherent, vivid historical narratives, into which geographical knowledge will find its natural home.

1. The consensus report adds many more specific architectural and archeological sites, to provide students with vivid, visual anchors for their knowledge.
2. The consensus report includes a significant number of historical events and developments, especially related to warfare and the expansion and contraction of civilizations and empires. Besides its pedagogical value, these provide the students with crucial information about the historical factors and developments that have shaped contemporary geographical facts. You cannot understand the present except in terms of the past. For example:
  - Why are there two governments in China (PRC and ROC)?
  - Why is the Indian sub-continent divided into three?
  - Why are the Balkans divided as they are along both linguistic and religious lines?
  - Why did the EU begin in the West and move East?
3. The education of young males has fallen significantly behind that of girls. By including topics (e.g., warfare) that appeals to boys, the Geography course could make a significant contribution to educational equity.
4. Many of the current TEKS (17) wander from the subject of geography into other fields, such as environmental science or international relations. Others (6) are simply so general as to be of little use.

Here are the **TEKS to be cut**:

1E — too general

- 2 C, D, H, I - too general. Include specific topics under each region
- 2 E, F, G - outside scope of geography
- 5A, B, C - outside scope
- 6 A, B - outside scope, too general
- 8 A, B - outside scope
- 11A - outside scope
- 12A — too general
- 15B - outside scope
- 19B -outside scope
- 25D - outside scope
- 30 D - outside scope
- 35B - outside scope
- 39B -outside scope

**II. Balance in Third and Fourth Grades**

The number of TEKS (and corresponding number of projected lessons and instructional time) in the third and fourth grades are badly out of balance. The history of pre-Columbian peoples in the Americas is prioritized over ancient and medieval history pertaining to the Middle East and Europe. Specifically:

**Grade 3**

Pre-Columbian America:	46 lessons,	23 hours
Ancient Israel:	11 lessons,	5.5 hors
Ancient Christianity:	8 lessons,	6 hours

More than twice as much time is spent on pre-Columbian America as is spent on Israel and Christianity combined, despite the fact that the latter have at least 100 times more influence on contemporary American and Texan life and practices. A similar imbalance occurs in 4th grade.

**Grade 4**

Pre-Columbian America:	45 lessons,	22.5 hours,	24 TEKS
European Middle Ages:	25 lessons,	12.5 hours,	17 TEKS
Renaissance:	14 lessons,	7 hours,	6 TEKS

In addition, many of the TEKS relating to pre-Columbian America in both grades involve sophisticated concepts and constructs beyond the ken of 8-10 year olds.

My recommendations are:

In Grade 3, strike 7 TEKS from pre-Columbian America, and shift 8 hours from that caategory to ancient Israel (4 hours) and Christianity (4 hours)

In Grade 4, strike 3 TEKS from pre-Columbian America (topic 4). Move 6 hours from this topic to topics 1, 2, and 5

Specifically, I would **cut the following TEKS:**

Grade 3

2 C, D, E - too sophisticated

2 G, H - Poverty Point civilization marginal

5 F, G - too sophisticated

Grade 4

4B, G, O — too sophisticated

### **III. US History HS**

The current US History TEKS concentrate almost exclusively on politics and economics. I count only five of the 76 TEKS that touch on any subject beyond those two. The current TEKS reflect a “vulgar Marxist” bias in favor of the material “base” over the spiritual and cultural “superstructure.” As a result, the course is monotonous, dreary, and depressing, omitting all dimensions of human life but one.

I would recommend enlivening the course and breaking the monotony with the following changes.

#### **Change the following TEKS:**

2B. Add: English legal traditions: common law, jury trial, Magna Carta

16C. Add: religious fundamentalism, mass evangelism (Billy Graham), liberal Protestantism, Catholic reforms (Vatican II), secularization of institutions (including many colleges). Add culture, including pop music (rock, country, Tejano), literature,

#### **Restore the following topics:**

2C. Describe the English religious traditions conveyed to the New World, including Puritanism, Quakers, Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Presbyterianism

2D. Explain the effects that the specific religious traditions and their plurality had on ideas of self-government, individual rights, religious freedom, and church/state relations.

6G. Describe the formation of American national culture, including shape singing, Stephen Foster, Negro spirituals, the Hudson River school of painting, Washington Irving, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Edgar Allen Poe, Herman Melville, Longfellow, and Emily Dickinson.

11I. Describe Gilded Age culture and religion. Including James Whistler, Mary Cassatt, Mark Twain, Stephen Crane,, Henry James, John Philip Sousa, ragtime, the Social Gospel, and Pentecostalism.

**Remove the following TEKS:**

11(H) - too vague, covered elsewhere

14(A) - beyond scope