



State Board of Education

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Memorandum

To: All Members of the State Board of Education

From: State Board of Education Chairman

Date: October 10, 2024

Subject: Ad Hoc Committee on Social Studies Standards Framework

Committee Description: The Chairman of the State Board of Education has established an Ad Hoc Committee on Social Studies Standards Framework to evaluate Texas' current social studies learning standards, research best practices in history and civics education, and provide recommendations for developing exemplary state standards, ensuring Texas students receive a high-quality social studies education that prepares them for informed citizenship.

Committee Members and Meetings: The Committee makeup is Aaron Kinsey (Chair), Marisa Perez-Diaz, Julie Pickren, and Audrey Young. The Committee will not vote, but rather provide a report to the State Board of Education.

Goal: Provide clear, actionable recommendations for developing social studies curriculum standards that will position Texas as a national leader in history and civics education. The standards should equip students with essential knowledge of American and Texas history, geography, and civic institutions while fostering the skills and dispositions needed for engaged citizenship in a diverse democratic republic.

Deliverables:

1. Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis

- Conduct a thorough review of Texas' current social studies TEKS framework
- Identify specific strengths to preserve and build upon
- Pinpoint areas of weakness, gaps in content coverage, or structural issues to address
- Compare Texas standards to highly-rated frameworks from other states

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- Provide concrete examples to illustrate strengths and weaknesses
- 2. Research on Effective Practices**
 - Review current research on history and civics education
 - Analyze approaches used by top-performing states and countries
 - Identify innovative models that could inform Texas' standards
 - Summarize key findings on sequencing, skills development, and content prioritization
- 3. Framework Recommendations**
 - **Provide specific recommendations for revising or replacing the current framework, addressing:**
 - **Essential Knowledge**
 - a. Identify core content all students should master in U.S. history, Texas history, world history, geography, and civics
 - b. Recommend grade-appropriate sequencing of content from elementary through high school
 - **Historical Thinking and Civic Skills**
 - a. Outline progression of analytical and research skills across grade levels, including presentation in written form
 - b. Incorporate opportunities to engage with primary sources
 - c. Emphasize civic reasoning, deliberation, and informed thought
 - **Civic Dispositions and Values**
 - a. Integrate development of civic virtues like respect for rights, respect for civil liberties, rule of law, and civic participation
 - b. Foster appreciation for constitutional principles and democratic processes
 - c. Promote civil discourse, evidence-based reasoning, and respect for diverse viewpoints
 - **Vertical Alignment and Coherence**
 - a. Ensure key concepts and skills spiral across grade levels with increasing depth
 - b. Ensure that early grades include essential content that will be revisited and expanded in high school courses

- c. Create clear connections between historical topics and civics/government
 - d. Balance breadth and depth of content coverage
- **Clarity and Specificity**
 - a. Recommend organizational structure that is user-friendly for educators
 - b. Provide guidance on appropriate level of detail in standards
 - c. Ensure language is clear, precise, and avoids educational jargon
- 4. Implementation Considerations**
 - Suggest professional development needs to support educators
 - Identify potential challenges in implementing new standards
- 5. Final Report and Presentation**
 - Compile findings and recommendations into a clear, concise report
 - Develop presentation materials for the State Board of Education
 - Be prepared to answer questions and provide additional context

Guiding Principles:

- **Content Rigor:** Ensure the curriculum is academically rigorous, providing a comprehensive understanding of essential historical and civic topics.
- **Skills Development:** Emphasize the cultivation of critical analysis, problem-solving, and the ability to make connections between historical content and contemporary issues.
- **Accessibility:** The standards must be clear, logically structured, and user-friendly for educators.

Timeline: The committee will have until June 2025 to complete its work, with a progress update provided to the State Board of Education at the January 2025 meeting. The final report and recommendations should be submitted no later than June 2025.

By fulfilling these deliverables, the Ad Hoc Committee will provide invaluable guidance to ensure Texas develops social studies standards that reflect best practices, promote academic rigor, and prepare students for engaged citizenship in the 21st century.