

2009 TEKS Review

A Preliminary Overview – TEKS Methodology

As an expert reviewer, I am to evaluate the Social Studies TEKS and make recommendations that will produce the greatest positive results for students. My work will be guided in part by the results of numerous social studies analyses undertaken and published since the current TEKS were adopted in 1998. The reports of the Intercollegiate Studies Institute (ISI) have been invaluable (and the SBOE specifically instructed us to incorporate the ISI findings into our evaluations) as well as those from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Colonial Williamsburg Charter Society, the U. S. Capitol Historical Society, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, the U. S. Department of Education, the *American School Board Journal*, and others.

Those studies all affirm an appalling and alarming deficiency in what should be elemental knowledge. Representative of their findings on history:

- More students thought Ulysses S. Grant rather than George Washington led the troops at Valley Forge
- One-third thought the Magna Carta was what the Pilgrims signed on the Mayflower
- One-half failed to recognize Patrick Henry as the man who said, “Give me liberty or give me death!”
- 40 percent thought the Constitutional Convention of 1787 produced the Emancipation Proclamation

Representative of their findings on government:

- 49 percent could not identify the three branches of government
- Only 54 percent could identify a description of the free-enterprise system
- Less than 15 percent could name the fundamental freedoms protected by the First Amendment
- Nearly 60 percent could not name even one of the 19 presidential cabinet level departments and only 4 percent of Americans could name as many as 5

Representative of their findings on geography:

- 67 percent of high school graduates could not find Iraq on a map, and 88 percent could not find Afghanistan
- After months of coverage of Hurricane Katrina, one-third could not find Louisiana on a map, and more than half could not find either New York or Ohio
- 75 percent could not find Israel on a map of the Middle East

Because the studies unanimously validate the abysmal lack of basic student knowledge in history, government, and geography, a complete evaluation not only of TEKS content but also of TEKS methodology is warranted.

A survey of state and federal laws enacted to address the massive deficiencies in student knowledge has been helpful. These laws indicate that the solution rests in moving away from the broad and expansive approach that became associated with social studies and instead returning to the much narrower content-based approach that formerly characterized American history studies.

For example, in “No Child Left Behind” (passed in 2002), special emphasis is twice placed on “the teaching of traditional American history in elementary and secondary schools as a separate academic subject (not as a component of social studies)” (§2351(a)(1)(2) (emphasis added). Two years later in 2004, a federal law was passed designating each September 17 as “Constitution Day,” requiring that schools set aside specific time to instruct students about the Constitution. That law also sought to create “a deeper understanding and appreciation of American history as a separate subject.”

A state law passed in 2001 (and strengthened in 2003) requires that each year social studies classes from grades 3-12 set aside a “Celebrate Freedom Week” (TAC, Title 19, Chapter 75, Rule §74.33(a)). Additionally:

Instruction during Celebrate Freedom Week. Each social studies class shall include, during Celebrate Freedom Week . . . appropriate instruction concerning the intent, meaning, and importance of the Declaration of Independence and the United States Constitution, including the Bill of Rights, in their historical contexts. The study of the Declaration of Independence must include the study of the relationship of the ideas expressed in that document to subsequent American history, including the relationship of its ideas to the rich diversity of our people as a nation of immigrants, the American Revolution, the formulation of the United States Constitution, and the abolitionist movement, which led to the Emancipation Proclamation and the women's suffrage movement.

The next section of that law specifically directs:

Each school district shall require that, during Celebrate Freedom Week . . . students in Grades 3-12 study and recite the following text:

“We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness – That to secure these Rights, Governments are instituted among Men, deriving their just Powers from the Consent of the Governed.”

This law mandates a knowledge of specific historical facts and content, including memorizing key portions of America’s founding documents.

And TEC 28.002 (referenced frequently throughout the TEKS) stipulates that student curriculum is to include instruction in “social studies, consisting of Texas, United States, and world history, government, and geography” (TEC 28.002(a)(1)(D)) (emphasis added). According to state law, social studies consists of the study of the three specific areas of history, government, and geography. (Other state laws require that within these three areas, citizenship, patriotism, and the free-market system must be emphasized.)

Strikingly, neither state nor federal law places any emphasis on the many additional strands currently appearing in the TEKS; the focus is entirely on attaining knowledge in three specific areas.

The current TEKS have strayed far afield from the mandate to focus on history, government, and geography; the primary emphasis on those three areas has clearly been diluted by the addition of numerous others strands. Based on the specific criterion set forth under state law, it would be beneficial to remove several strands and return to an emphasis on the three statutory areas.

As a related corollary, state law specifically stipulates the character traits to be instilled in the course of preparing students for citizenship (Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 478, Sec. 1). Those traits are to include:

Courage; trustworthiness, honesty, reliability, punctuality, and loyalty; integrity; respect and courtesy; responsibility, accountability, diligence, perseverance, and self-control; fairness, justice and freedom from prejudice; caring, kindness, empathy, compassion, consideration, patience, generosity, and charity; good citizenship, patriotism, concern for the common good and the community, and respect for authority and the law.

Given this criterion, care must be taken that the examples of historical personalities selected for special emphasis to students conform to these traits. Currently, some of the selected individuals highlighted in the 1998 TEKS did not reflect these traits. (See, for example, Grade 4 (b)(5)(b): Henry Cisneros, who pled guilty to charge of lying to the FBI about money he paid to a former mistress, and the mistress also pled guilty to 28 felony counts; and also John Tower, whose admitted “womanizing” cost him his job as Secretary of Defense in the Bush 41 Administration.) While it is appropriate to cover notable individuals (including their failings) in the ordinary course of historical studies, it is inappropriate under the standards set forth in state law to highlight these individuals as examples of good citizenship or of individuals who made a positive difference in their community.

Measurable Results

Currently, many of the TEKS are so vague and indefinite as to make them incapable of academic assessment; they should be clear and concise so as to be measurable.

[See, for example, Grade 6 (3)(B); (20)(C); Grade 7 (17)(C); Grade 8 (1)(B); (10)(A); U. S. History (1)(B); (8)(A); (8)(B); (20)(C); World History (1)(C); (11)(A); (11)(B); (25)(E); World Geography (7)(D); (15)(C); Government (17)(C); (21)(C); Sociology (5)(A); (5)(B); (17)(A); (18)(A); Psychology (1)(A); (1)(B); (4)(A); (17)(B); World Geography (22 A-D and 23 A-D – which are repeated in many other of the courses); etc.]

In some cases, one might as well simply say, “Create an eight-grade history text, using history materials appropriate for eight-grade classes.” While textbook publishers surely appreciate this latitude given them in the 1998 TEKS, the results of historical assessments during that period affirm such an approach to be an embarrassing failure. The TEKS must become more definitive, stipulating specific rather than general content related to history, government, and geography.

Additionally, other TEKS are poorly worded and the concept badly expressed. An example is this one from Kindergarten (also in Grade 1 (b)(12) and Grade 2 (b)(4)):

(2) History. The student understands how . . . ordinary people helped to shape the community, state, and nation. The student is expected to:

(B) identify ordinary people who have shaped the community.

According to the dictionary, “ordinary” means “somewhat inferior or below average; mediocre; of no special quality or interest; commonplace; unexceptional; undistinguished.” Is this actually what is to be highlighted to students? And what is the measurement for “ordinary”? – and how does “ordinary” shape a community? Is the purpose of this TEKS to show that all citizens shape a community through their participation? – or is it to highlight the different professions that compose a community (e.g., police, teachers, clergy, engineers, media, etc.)? – or is it to use some nebulous standard to identify “ordinary” people who have shaped their communities? This TEKS is poorly worded and is not clear, concise, or measurable.

Similarly vague is the TEKS from Grade 2 (and Grade 3 (b)(10)(D)):

(13) Citizenship.

(C) identify ordinary people who exemplify good citizenship.

Again, who are they? – and how is the fulfillment of this TEKS to be measured?

An Overemphasis on Methodology and Pedagogy

Several of the TEKS currently focus on methodology more than historical, government, or geographic content. Since any competent teacher has already been trained for teaching, TEKS addressing methodology and pedagogy represent a needless redundancy and should be eliminated.

Examples of pedagogical TEKS (those that seem to relate to teaching method more than content) include these from World Geography:

(22) Social studies skills. The student communicates in written, oral, and visual forms. The student is expected to:

(A) design and draw appropriate maps and other graphics such as sketch maps, diagrams, tables, and graphs to present geographic information including geographic features, geographic distributions, and geographic relationships;

(B) apply appropriate vocabulary, geographic models, generalizations, theories, and skills to present geographic information;

(C) use geographic terminology correctly; and

(D) use standard grammar, spelling, sentence structure, and punctuation.

Not only does this TEKS relate to pedagogy more than historical content, but even the “skills” to be demonstrated in this section are more closely associated with Language Arts and speech class than history.

There are many other examples as well.

Significantly, multiple studies released through The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) over recent years affirm that attention on methodology exacerbates a decline of academic knowledge.

For example, students graduating with an education degree (where the study of methodology is a significant emphasis) who then take graduate admission tests (such as the GRE, MCAT, or LSAT) regularly record the lowest academic scores on those tests. For example, in the GRE, education majors score next to the last, and in the LSAT, they rank 26th of 29 majors. Conversely, teachers with a full major in the subject they teach (whether math, science, humanities, English, history, or any other subject) score much higher than teachers who hold either an education or an educational administration degree (where methodology is stressed). Consequently, some colleges have begun dropping schools of education, instead requiring prospective teachers to obtain a full degree in the field in which they plan to teach.

At the risk of offending education majors, statistics unequivocally prove that an emphasis on methodology and pedagogy detracts from a sound content-based education. The TEKS should reflect what these studies now affirm: methodology and pedagogy TEKS should be eliminated and the emphasis kept on stronger educational content that is clear, concise, and measurable.

Culture

Culture is defined as “the behaviors and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group”; culture is a natural product of every society. In the course of examining the history, government, and geography of a particular people, their common culture – their characteristic beliefs and behaviors – will be presented. So why contrive to make culture a separate element of study? Do we actually believe that students do not know that there are different cultures around them?

Further demonstrating the weakness of having culture as a separate strand, the culture TEKS frequently stipulate that students are to identify “the contributions of people of various racial, ethnic, and religious groups” [Grade 4 (a)(1); (b)(20); (b)(20)(c); Grade 5 (b)(4)(g); (b)(23); etc.] as well as understand the “differences within various and selected racial, ethnic, and religious groups” [Grade 4 (b)(20)(A); Grade 5 (b)(23)(A); etc.]. But since many individuals do not belong to a “selected racial, ethnic, or religious group,” does this mean they have made no specific contributions or that there is nothing to understand about them? And why limit culture to just three categories? Why not also require a separate recognition of those from gender (or perceived gender) groups, philosophical, professional, sports, geographic, geriatric, and every other possible grouping identification?

Study should be made of all significant contributions and those who made them – period – notwithstanding any “racial, ethnic, or religious group” to which they might (or

might not) belong. If the story of history and those who made significant contributions is accurately presented, then the culture involving those individuals will be presented as a matter of course.

Therefore, when the story of the Battle of Yorktown is recounted, the famous portrait of Gen. Marquis de Lafayette standing with James Armistead will be shown, showing black and white heroes standing side by side – one, the young white general; the other, the black who was the first double-spy in American history who perhaps shaved months off the Revolution. Similarly, when students see John Trumbull’s Battle of Bunker Hill, they will see black hero Peter Salem (one of the most highly decorated soldiers of that battle) standing by white soldier David Grovesnor – the two fighting side by side. And when the picture of Washington crossing the Delaware is shown, students will see Washington standing in the boat with Prince Whipple and Oliver Cromwell – two black patriots who served with the general staff throughout the Revolution. Or when students see the famous Chicago statue of Revolutionary War heroes George Washington, Robert Morris, and Haym Salomon, they will see two Christians standing with a Jew, all close friends and compatriots throughout the Revolution. The opportunities are endless, but simply providing an accurate view of history will show students both diversity and culture.

The current emphasis results in pointing out differences between groups, thus emphasizing those things that divide rather than unite. It is literally taking *E Pluribus Unum* and reversing it to *E Unum Pluribus* – instead of many becoming one, we take the one and divide it into many. The separate culture strand should be removed – it detracts from the emphasis that should be placed on history, government, and geography, for when those three elements are accurately presented, culture is also accurately presented.

Social Studies Skills

At the end of nearly every grade level is a concluding TEKS that stipulates:

Social studies skills. The student uses problem-solving and decision-making skills, working independently and with others, in a variety of settings. The student is expected to:

- (A) use a problem-solving process to identify a problem, gather information, list and consider options, consider advantages and disadvantages, choose and implement a solution, and evaluate the effectiveness of the solution; and
- (B) use a decision-making process to identify a situation that requires a decision, gather information, identify options, predict consequences, and take action to implement a decision.

[See, for example K (17); Grade 1 (19); Grade 2 (19); Grade 3 (18); Grade 4 (24); Grade 5 (27); Grade 6 (23); Grade 7 (23); Grade 8 (32); U. S. History (26); World History (27); World Geography (23); U. S. Government (23); etc.]

As it now appears, this TEKS is essentially useless. It offers absolutely no direction to the publisher, who is therefore left free to concoct any scenario, including ones that have absolutely no relation to anything historical, governmental, or geographical.

If the object of this TEKS is to teach students to use their mind, then propose the type of historic forensic problems utilized by students throughout earlier generations of American history. For example, Robert Troup Paine (1829-1851) recorded that a problem students in his day addressed was “Whether the conduct of the patriots who destroyed the tea in Boston Harbor in 1773 is to be condemned.” Answering this question would require an application of the skills delineated in these TEKS.

A similar scenario could be proposed relative to the Fugitive Slave Law and the Underground Railroad; of whether to secede or remain in the United States; of whether to remain in Oklahoma during the Dust Bowl or move elsewhere; whether to send troops to the relief of the Alamo or hold them to build a larger army for San Jacinto; or a plethora of other genuine historical debates and dilemmas which require analysis and a use of the mind but which also reinforce a knowledge of history, government, and geography.

Unless this TEKS can be made clear, concise, and measurable, it should be removed.

Prioritization of Source Content

Every grade level and course has a TEKS with a directive to “use a variety of rich material such as . . .” [see (a)(2) in every section]. Notice the priorities established by those 11 separate TEKS:

- In all 11 TEKS, biographies, poetry, songs, and artworks are to be presented
- In 7 of the 11, novels, speeches, and letters are to be presented
- In 4 of the 11, folktales, myths, legends are to be presented
- In 4, autobiographies are to be presented
- In 3, diaries are to be presented
- In 2, landmark cases of the U. S. Supreme Court are to be presented
- In 1, the text of the Declaration and the Constitution is to be presented

From this listing, several questions arise:

- Why is “poetry, songs, and artwork” presented to students 11 times more often than the documents creating the country whose history is being studied?
- Why is knowing “folktales, myths, and legends” apparently four times more important than knowing the Declaration or the Constitution?
- Why is there such an emphasis on sources recording the subjective feelings of specific individuals and so little emphasis on official state papers, organic documents, and governing laws that reflect the will of the nation?

Concerning the latter point, there are many organic documents that should be studied – including the four currently listed in the U. S. Code Annotated (the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, the Northwest Ordinance, and the U. S. Constitution). Students should also be familiar with:

- The first government document composed in America (the Mayflower Compact of 1620)
- The first written constitution (the Fundamental Orders of Connecticut of 1638)
- The first written bill of rights (the Massachusetts Body of Liberties of 1641)
- The first joint government in America (the New England Confederation of 1643)
- The Frame of Government of Pennsylvania (1681-1682)
- The Constitution of Carolina (1690)
- The constitutions of independence (such as the 1776 constitutions of Delaware, Virginia, North Carolina, etc.)
- The only constitution in the world still in use today older than the U. S. Constitution (the Massachusetts Constitution of 1780)
- The Federalist and Anti-Federalist Papers (1787-88)

and several others, yet most of these documents are not referenced in the TEKS.

It is more important that students understand these documents and the repetitive themes they represent than to know autobiographies, folktales, myths, and novels.

Additionally, while speeches are sometimes indicated as a source to be presented [Grades 4-8 (a)(2); U. S. History, World History, and U. S. Government (b)(2)], some speeches definitely rank much higher than others and must be included – including Thomas Jefferson’s First Inaugural, Abraham Lincoln’s Second Inaugural, Patrick Henry’s “Liberty or Death” oration, John Hancock’s oration on the Boston Massacre of 1770, and especially George Washington’s “Farewell Address.” In fact, for over a century after it was delivered, Washington’s “Farewell Address” was printed as a separate textbook because of its singular importance; students were taught that this Address was the most significant political speech ever delivered by an American President. Many states even required students be annually tested on its content (as well as on the content of the U. S. Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the state’s constitution), and to this day, that Address is read annually in the U. S. Senate on Washington’s birthday. That Address has transcended every generation of Americans and should be studied today with as much vigor as it was in previous generations, yet the TEKS only mention that Address in passing and students do not even read from it. Furthermore, of the famous orations mentioned above, the only one read in the TEKS is Lincoln’s Second Inaugural; the others must also be read.

Similarly, while letters are sometimes mentioned as a source to be presented [Grades 4-8 (a)(2); U. S. History, World History, and U. S. Government (b)(2)], some letters are definitely more important than others and must be presented, such as Abigail Adam’s letter of March 31-April 5, 1776 to John Adams; Thomas Jefferson’s January 1, 1802, letter on separation of church and state; Benjamin Franklin’s 1790 letter to Thomas Paine about the issues soon to be published in *The Age of Reason*; George Washington’s circular letter to the Governors in 1783; William Barret Travis’ famous 1836 letter from the Alamo; the Rev. M. R. Watkinson’s letter of November 13, 1861, to Secretary of the Treasury Salmon Chase; Dr. Martin Luther King’s April 16, 1963, “Letter from a Birmingham Jail”; etc. All of these letters represent more than just the single opinion of

one person – they embody sentiments that reflected the beliefs and feelings of large constituencies, yet only two of these letters are mentioned in the TEKS (Travis & King).

In short, the emphasis on sources as they currently appear in the TEKS is almost exactly opposite of what it should be; this must be reversed. The most important items should be covered most often; items of lesser importance should be covered less often. And while students are repeatedly called upon to “differentiate,” “locate” “analyze,” “sequence,” “categorize,” etc. the various forms of oral, visual, and print material [Grade 4 (b)(22)(A); Grade 5 (b)(25)(A); Grade 6 (b)(21)(A); Grade 7 (b)(21)(A); Grade 8 (b)(30)(A); *passim*], what is missing from the entire TEKS document is any type of structure establishing a prioritization for the various sources of information.

Students must learn that not all forms of information are equally credible and must be taught from the beginning how to prioritize sources and historical evidence: organic documents are of primary importance, legal and statutory documents next; then informational sources such as diaries, letters, biographies, autobiographies, and news sources; with novels and oral sources being toward the bottom of the list. Furthermore, students must recognize hearsay evidence or journalistic opinions and understand that they are given little weight; and even in documentary history, there are levels of sources, including primary, secondary, and tertiary sources; and confirmation from multiple sources is weightier than that from a single source; and sources “interpreting” history are only speculative opinions that are always less credible than authoritative sources presenting tangible documentable fact. And especially with the endless plethora of information easily available on the web, it is particularly critical that students not only early recognize that all sources of information are not equal but also that they learn to discriminate between and rank various sources and claims.

Additionally, the TEKS frequent directive to examine “poetry, songs, and artwork” seems to be misplaced, for that is a study much more directly related to Literature, Music, and Art TEKS than to history. What would be appropriate, however, would be a study of the poets, musicians, or artists that had an impact.

For example, while presenting Phillis Wheatley as America’s first black poetess (and pointing out that she began the study of Latin, history, astronomy, ancient history, geography, English, and Bible at the age of six and wrote her first poems at the age of 12), it would be appropriate to present some of her more famous poems, including the one expressing her feelings on being brought from Africa to America. It is also a logical connection to show that George Washington highlighted and promoted her work, even having her read her works at his military camp and before his officers and staff. It is also appropriate to show that she featured George Washington and George Whitefield in two special poems, recognizing two individuals who had a particular impact on her life.

Similarly, rather than presenting artwork such as the Great Seal, instead present Francis Hopkinson and Charles Thomson (the two Framers who devised that seal) and their explanation of its meaning as adopted by Congress in 1782. And rather than examine a song, instead study the account of Francis Scott Key that led to the writing of the Star Spangled Banner and read the words of that song in the context of its history; and then follow the subsequent use of that song across the decades, first as a poem, then a military song, then a national song.

The work of poets, musicians, or artists should be studied in history – but only if they made significant contributions that helped shape the state or nation. “Poetry, songs, and

artwork” should not be studied *per se* simply on their face; that is a study for academic fields outside of history.

“Folktales, Myths, and Legends”

Interestingly, this particular genre of information is presented to students only in their first four years of school [K-3, (a)(2)], and it is specifically listed as one of the primary sources of information to be presented to them. Why are non-factual sources of history such as myths, legends, and folklore presented to the youngest students who lack the age and maturity to clearly distinguish between that which is historical fact and fantasy? Young children tend to take things literally and believe their teacher without reservation; why teach them myths and legends as original sources of information? It is true that many lessons may be seen in Aesop’s Fables or Hans Christian Anderson’s tales, but they should be introduced to students only after they can safely and regularly distinguish between fact and fantasy.

The preferable approach for young children utilized through the first three centuries of American education was to teach factual history from the beginning; and then as maturity grew, introduce myths, legends, and folklore. Therefore, in the early grades, adopt the proven practice of using biographical history – of telling the interesting and adventuresome stories from the lives of George Washington, Abigail Adams, Wentworth Cheswill, Benjamin Banneker, John Paul Jones, Sybil Luddington, Lewis & Clark, Jedidiah Smith, the Wright Brothers, etc. Later, introduce stories such as Aesop’s Fables when students can understand that these are examples utilized to help teach moral truths or to provide entertainment (such as Pecos Bill or Paul Bunyan). The early and repeated emphasis on “Folklore, Myths, and Legends” should be delayed until a solid foundation of factual history has been embedded in the student.

The Declaration of Independence

The state law requiring that an entire week be spent in the study of the Declaration, Constitution, and Bill of Rights in grades 3-12 certainly requires the documents to be covered in the TEKS in every grade, so substantial content about these documents must be presented in each grade in order to provide a week of lessons. Currently, however, the Declaration is mentioned only infrequently in the TEKS, and references to it are broad and vague [c.f., Grade 5, §113.7(a)(1); Grade 5, §113.7(16)(A); Grade 8, §113.7 (16)(C)].

Since the proper emphasis for successful standards must be content-based, at least five specific areas of knowledge concerning the Declaration, its history, and its modern relevance that should be specifically set forth as objects of knowledge for students throughout grades 3-12.

1. Causes of the Conflict. TEKS Grade 8 (b)(16)(C) instructs students to read the Declaration and to examine the grievances listed in the Declaration; however, given this directive, modern texts almost universally present only the issue of “taxation without representation,” but that issue was actually #17 in the list of the 27 grievances set forth in the Declaration – that is, the issue of “taxation without representation” did not even make the top half of the list of what concerned the Framers. This TEKS should therefore

specifically require students not only to examine the grievances but categorize all 27 of them – such as the 10 clauses on the abuse of representative powers; 7 on the abuse of military powers; 4 on the abuse of judicial powers; 2 on fostering domestic instability; and 1 each on opposing immigration, increasing the size and intrusiveness of government, cutting off foreign trade, and imposing taxation without representation.

2. The Signatories of the Declaration and the Sacrifices they Made. Nowhere do the TEKS indicate that the writers of the Declaration should be examined; rather they only vaguely mention that students should “identify the contributions of significant individuals during the revolutionary period, including Thomas Jefferson and George Washington” [Grade 5 (b)(2)(A)]. The current modern trend is to present only two or three signers of the Declaration (in the aforementioned case, only one); and almost universally absent is any presentation of the personal sacrifices incurred in honoring their pledge of giving their lives, fortunes, and sacred honor. Virtually unknown to this generation are their sacrifices – that 7 of the 56 signers died during the Revolution; that 3 were made prisoners of war (and 3 wives of the signers were also made prisoners of war); 3 signers lost their children; 3 lost their wives; 17 lost their fortunes and estates; several lost their health; etc. Students should be asked to identify and study not just the typical two or three signers but several of them, including their character, sacrifices, family, and leadership. Such an historical examination will also inculcate the elements of patriotism and citizenship required by state law.

3. Understanding American Government. Students [Grade 5 (a)(1), (b)(16)] are told to “identify the roots of representative government in this nation as well as the important ideas in the Declaration of Independence,” but nowhere are those ideas specifically identified. Students should be familiar with the fundamental principles of America government set forth in the 126 words in the first three sentences at the beginning of the Declaration and those principles should be regularly reviewed throughout their tenure as a student:

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitles them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.

(It is from this section that students are to recite by memory under state law.)

The principles set forth here and subsequently secured in the Constitution and Bill of Rights include:

1. There is a fixed moral law derived from God and nature
2. There is a Creator

3. The Creator gives to man certain unalienable rights
4. Government exists primarily to protect God-given rights to every individual
5. Below God-given rights and moral law, government is directed by the consent of the governed

Students must also understand the Framers' very explicit (and very frequent) definition of inalienable rights as being those rights given by God to every individual, independent of any government anywhere (as John Adams explained, inalienable rights are those rights that are "antecedent to all earthly government; rights [that] cannot be repealed or restrained by human laws; rights [that are] derived from the Great Legislator of the Universe"). The inalienable rights specifically listed in the Declaration include those of life, liberty, and property, and the Bill of Rights subsequently identified other inalienable rights, including freedoms of religion, press, speech, assembly, and petition; the right of self-defense; the sanctity of the home; and due process. Each of these rights is to remain beyond the scope of government and is to be protected inviolable by government. These fundamental five precepts of American government must be thoroughly understood by students, but they are not currently addressed in the TEKS.

4. The Dual Documents of American Government. The TEKS should stipulate (but currently do not) that the Declaration of Independence is symbiotic with the Constitution rather than a separate unrelated document. As Samuel Adams pointed out:

Before the formation of this Constitution. . . . [t]his Declaration of Independence was received and ratified by all the States in the Union and has never been disannulled.

John Quincy Adams, in his famous oration, "The Jubilee of the Constitution," similarly explained:

[T]he virtue which had been infused into the Constitution of the United States . . . was no other than the concretion of those abstract principles which had been first proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence. . . . This was the platform upon which the Constitution of the United States had been erected. Its virtues – its republican character – consisted in its conformity to the principles proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence.

Significantly, the Constitution directly attaches itself to the Declaration by dating itself from the year of the Declaration of Independence rather than from 1787, the year of its writing. In fact, to this day every federal law passed by Congress as well as every presidential act is dated not to the Constitution but to the Declaration. Additionally, the admission of territories as States into the United States was typically predicated on an assurance by the State that its constitution would violate neither the Constitution nor the principles of the Declaration.

The interdependent relationship of these two documents was so clear that the U. S. Supreme Court has openly affirmed:

The latter [Constitution] is but the body and the letter of which the former [Declaration of Independence] is the thought and the spirit, and it is always safe to read the letter of the Constitution in the spirit of the Declaration of Independence.

Only in recent years have the Declaration and the Constitution wrongly been viewed as independent rather than inseparable and interdependent documents. No opportunity for that mistake should be allowed in the TEKS; they should explicitly connect the two documents and identify the fundamental principles set forth in the Declaration and subsequently secured in the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

5. American Exceptionalism. Students should understand that incorporating the five principles in government has resulted in what is called American Exceptionalism. They must know that not every nation experiences what Americans now routinely take for granted – that the prosperity, stability, and freedoms we enjoy are the direct products of specific ideas of government that we embrace – ideas not held by most other nations either then or now. Therefore, students must learn that they have a responsibility to defend and protect the fundamental ideas behind American Exceptionalism if they wish to continue enjoying the prosperity, stability, and freedoms to which we have become accustomed.

Alexis de Tocqueville, in his famous book *Democracy in America*, penned the phrase that has resulted in the term America Exceptionalism when he declared:

The position of the Americans is quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one.

Students must understand that American Exceptionalism is the result of the five distinctive ideas set forth in the first three lines of the Declaration and subsequently secured in the Constitution and Bill of Rights.

(A similar emphasis must be placed on the ideas, people, process, and content of the Constitution and Bill of Rights in order to accommodate the mandate of the state law regarding “Celebrate Freedom Week.”)

“Founding Fathers”

The first mention of a “Founding Father” is in Grade 8 (b)(21)(B). This is way too late. Since students will be covering the Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights every year beginning in grade 3, the Founding Fathers must be introduced much earlier.

Nowhere in the TEKS is definition given to who constitutes a Founding Father. and the current definition is dramatically different from the historic definition. The modern tendency has become to consider only half-a-dozen individuals as Founding Fathers; and while today’s writers consider James Madison as “The Father of the Constitution,” previous generations also accorded that title to George Washington, James Wilson, Roger Sherman, and Charles Pinckney – individuals largely ignored today. In fact, the finished Constitution was closer to the recommendations made by Charles Pinckney than to those of any other Framers, yet who today has heard of Charles Pinckney?

Historically, a “Founding Father” is one who exerted significant influence in, provided prominent leadership for, or had a substantial impact upon the birth, development, and

establishment of America as an independent, self-governing nation. Some two-hundred-fifty or so individuals fit within this definition, including the fifty-six signers of the Declaration of Independence, the fourteen Presidents of Congress during the Revolution, the two-dozen or so prominent Generals who secured independence, the fifty-five delegates to the federal Constitutional Convention, the earliest State Governors largely responsible for the ratification and adoption of the Constitution, and the members of the first Congress who framed the Bill of Rights. In short, it was not just half-a-dozen individuals that birthed the nation; and students should be exposed to many who today are neglected but who nevertheless played substantial roles and made significant contributions – such as Richard Henry Lee, Benjamin Rush, John Witherspoon, Gouverneur Morris, Thomas McKean, Charles Carroll, Henry Knox, John Peter Muhlenberg, Benjamin Lincoln, Jonathan Trumbull, and many others.

Government

Missing in the TEKS is any identification that the government of America is a constitutional republic. And while High School Government (c)(1)(B) identifies various forms of government, there have been some significant changes in classification and terminology since 1998, so a modernization is appropriate. According to the classification made by the U. S. Intelligence communities, current dominant forms of government across the world include:

- Authoritarian (whether dictatorship, military junta, monarchy, oligarchy, emirate, or sultanate): seen in nations such as Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Bhutan, Jordan, Belarus, Kuwait, Qatar, Burma, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland, Brunei
- Socialistic: France, Sweden, Denmark
- Communitic (or Maoist, Marxist, or Marxist-Leninist): China, Cuba, North Korea, Laos, Vietnam
- Democratic: Guatemala, Hong Kong, Macau,
- Ecclesiastical theocracy: Iran, the Vatican
- Parliamentary: Jamaica, Grenada, Aruba, Australia, Bangladesh, Barbados, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Israel, Iraq, Latvia, Lithuania, Mauritius, Slovakia, Bermuda, Mongolia, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Estonia, Greece, Singapore, Slovenia
- Tribal: parts of Pakistan, Libya,

Students should not only be able to identify the prominent characteristics of each type of government but also which countries currently use different types of governments; students should also locate those nations on a map to reinforce geography skills.

Additionally, not only should students be able to recognize the various forms of government but a specific comparison of our government should be made with other governments. Clearly, not all governments have the same outcome, and students must understand the consequences of certain philosophical ideas and be able to articulate why those forms of government are inferior to and provide less liberty, stability, and

individual rights than that which is provided in a constitutional republic. This bolsters an understanding of American Exceptionalism.

Rights and Duties

One of the emphases lacking throughout the TEKS addressing government is that of citizen responsibilities. There is an occasional mention of citizen rights, and an occasional mention of responsibilities – as in Grade 6 (b)(14)(B) [and to a lesser degree in Grade 7 (b)(16) and Grade 8 (b)(20)(F)]:

(14) Citizenship. The student understands the relationship among individual rights, responsibilities, and freedoms in democratic societies. The student is expected to:

(B) explain relationships among rights and responsibilities in democratic societies.

This theme should be expanded from its mention in Grade 6 and be included in the other grade levels. From both the historical and citizenship viewpoint, it is improper to teach rights without teaching responsibilities – a point repeatedly made clear by the Framers and early statesmen.

For example, James Wilson (signer of the Declaration and Constitution) declared: “To each class of rights, a class of duties is correspondent.” John Quincy Adams agreed: “The connection between a people and their government is a connection of duties as well as of rights.” Dewitt Clinton similarly declared: “If knowledge teaches man his rights, it also teaches him his duties.” (Significantly, the word “duty” appears nowhere in the TEKS yet it is a powerful word indicating the gravity of the responsibilities of a citizen.)

It is appropriate to teach the right of free speech, but it is also incumbent to teach the responsibilities accompanying free speech – that of accuracy, civility, truth, and good taste. It is appropriate to teach the right to keep and bear arms, but it is also incumbent to teach safety and good judgment. The same is true with every other right – it has a corresponding duty and responsibility.

In fact, voting and civic participation should not be portrayed as an optional right but rather as a civic duty – as a responsibility incumbent on all citizens. For example, in Grade 4 (b) (notice the indicated changes):

(18) Citizenship. The student understands the ~~importance~~ necessity and duty of voluntary individual participation in the democratic process. The student is expected to:

(A) explain how individuals ~~can~~ must participate voluntarily in civic affairs at state and local levels;

(B) explain the role of the individual in state and local elections;

The casualness of civic involvement in the TEKS should be strengthened and made more sober and serious.

Similarly, another duty of citizens is to be virtuous – American constitutional self-government simply cannot function without a virtuous and educated citizenry:

Only a virtuous people are capable of freedom. **BENJAMIN FRANKLIN**

A popular government [a government of the people] cannot flourish without virtue in the people. **RICHARD HENRY LEE**

The government . . . can never be in danger of degenerating . . . so long as there shall remain any virtue in the body of the people. **GEORGE WASHINGTON**

He who makes a people virtuous makes them invincible. **JOHN WITHERSPOON**

While the people are virtuous, they cannot be subdued; but when once they lose their virtue, they will be ready to surrender their liberties to the first external or internal invader. **SAMUEL ADAMS**

The Framers also understood that religion provided the surest basis for virtue:

It is religion and morality alone which can establish the principles upon which freedom can securely stand. Religion and virtue are the only foundations . . . of republicanism and of all free governments. **JOHN ADAMS**

The great pillars of all government and of social life . . . [are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible. **PATRICK HENRY**

Religion and good morals are the only solid foundations of public liberty and happiness. **SAMUEL ADAMS**

True religion affords to government its surest support. **GEORGE WASHINGTON**

To neglect the duty to be a virtuous citizen and expect the nation to remain strong is just as chimerical as removing the heart and soul from a body and expecting it to remain alive, healthy, and vibrant.

Additionally, inspirational stories of those fulfilling their duty and disregarding their own safety or personal convenience should be presented throughout this strand – such as the account of The Four Chaplains; William Carney; soldiers at Valley Forge; those in the Alamo; Dorrie Miller; the personal losses suffered by signers of the Declaration such as Abraham Clark, Richard Stockton, Thomas Nelson Jr.; etc. These are all examples of individuals who did their duty and fulfilled their citizen responsibilities regardless of the personal cost or inconvenience.

Free Enterprise System

The free-enterprise system is mentioned throughout the TEKS but is very poorly presented. Students are told to “explain the characteristics of the free enterprise system” [Grade 5, (a)(1)] but those characteristics are inadequately identified. While the TEKS do

mention supply and demand [Grade 5 (b)(12)(a-b)] and scarcity [Grade 3 (b)(7)(a-d)], they go no further. Consider the following poor presentation in the TEKS [Grade 3 (b)(7)(a-c)]:

“The student is expected to define and identify examples of scarcity; explain the impact of scarcity on the production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services; explain the impact of scarcity on interdependence within and among communities”

Yet, it is indisputable fact that the abundance of a product is just as great an influence on a market as is its scarcity (just try opening a McDonalds on a corner if there are already McDonalds on each of the other three corners). Why require that just half (scarcity) of a paired influence (scarcity and abundance) be discussed?

Other specific elements of the free enterprise system that must be included in the TEKS include:

- Competition
- Quality
- Ethics
- Innovation
- Entrepreneurship
- Choice
- Accountability
- Profit
- Freedom from government regulation, interference, or subsidy
- Private ownership

These elements must be presented, identified, learned, discussed, and understood by students if they are indeed to “function in a free enterprise society” as currently directed by the TEKS [K-8 (a)(4); U. S. History and World History (b)(4); etc.].

Economics

An emphasis on economics as a separate strand results in many historical misportrayals. It is true that free-enterprise is required by statutory law to be an emphasis, but that is definitely not the same as a separate strand for economics. In fact, the pursuit of economics as a stand-alone strand in history reflects what has now become a discredited approach. Originally introduced in the 1920s, popularized in the 1950s-1980s, and rebuffed in the 1990s, this approach was termed “the economic view of American history” and reduced complex historical issues to a single motive – a motive that often did not accurately reflect history.

For example, in Grade 5:

(11) Economics. The student understands the reasons for exploration and colonization. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the economic motivations for European exploration and settlement in the United States; and

(B) identify major industries of colonial America.

By this strand, the motivations for exploration and colonization are directly tied to economics; but the colonial charters cite religious motivations many times more often than economic motivations. The use of a separate economic strand becomes a means to exclude an examination of other sometimes complex motivations, including not only that of religion but also the desire for freedom, a longing to begin a new life, or even just the simple love of adventure.

Similarly, in Grade 4:

(11) Economics. The student understands the reasons for exploration and colonization. The student is expected to:

(A) identify the economic motivations for European exploration and settlement in Texas and the Western Hemisphere; and

(B) identify the economic motivations for Anglo-American colonization in Texas.

Again, the economic strand is used to identify economic “motivations” for the colonization of Texas, thus excluding an examination of other causes.

It is because the “economic view of American history” excludes so many other significant aspects of history that this approach has been discredited and rejected. Consequently, economics as a separate strand in the TEKS should be dropped; it should be presented only as it naturally occurs within history, government, and geography rather than as an artificial emphasis that often generates an inaccurate portrayal of history.

Geography

Because recent findings of students’ knowledge of basic geography report that “American [students] scored second to last on overall geographic knowledge, trailing Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan and Sweden,” more attention should be focused on the study of geography.

Beginning at the elementary level, there needs to be an increased emphasis on locating nations within the framework of contemporary news. At every grade level, students should be able to identify on a globe or map the location of nations or events they are hearing in the news for that week (e.g., the war in Afghanistan and Iraq, nuclear weapons in Iran and North Korea; slavery in the Sudan; the economic changes in China and Pakistan; the change of leadership in Cuba; the genocide in Darfur; the president’s visit to Egypt; etc.).

Furthermore, there is little repetition of locating the same places from year to year – that is, in Grade 5, students are to locate all fifty states; but why not do the same in Grades 6-12? An emphasis on repetitive geography as well as stronger emphasis on practical news-driven geography beginning at the elementary level and continuing throughout high school will help diminish the deplorable geography results now so apparent by the time students finish high school.

Heroes of History

It often appears that the names included in individual TEKS do not necessarily represent what is described in a particular TEKS; instead it seems that a list of names to be covered in a history text was compiled and then those names were scattered throughout the document without specific regard to the specific content of that TEK. In other cases, the selection made was not a particularly strong representative.

For example:

- In Grade 5 (b)(1)(B), Anne Hutchinson, although an historic figure was not “a significant colonial leader.”
- In Grade 5 (b)(5)(B), Colin Powell is a weak choice for a group representing those “who have made contributions to society in the areas of civil rights, women's rights, military actions, and politics,” but Harry Truman desegregate the military and called for civil rights planks in the Democrat Platform, end WW II, and serve as an effective president, thus including him in three of the categories off that TEKS rather than just the one category for Powell.
- In Grade 5 (b)(19)(C), Cesar Chavez may be a choice representing diversity but he certainly lacks the stature, impact, and overall contributions of so many others; and his open affiliation with Saul Alinsky’s movements certainly makes dubious that he is a praiseworthy to be heralded to students as someone “who modeled active participation in the democratic process.”
- In Grade 5 (b)(24)(A), there are certainly many more notable scientists than Carl Sagan – such as Wernher von Braun, Matthew Maury, Joseph Henry, Maria Mitchell, David Rittenhouse, etc.

Causes and Motivations in our Form of Government

In the government section, more attention should be given to why certain things occurred – American constitutional government and its unique features are not just a happy accident or a cosmic stroke of luck.

As one example, in High School Government (c)(8)(A)

(8) Government. The student understands the American beliefs and principles reflected in the U.S. Constitution. The student is expected to:

- (A) explain the importance of a written constitution;

But the importance of a written constitution cannot be understood unless one understands why written documents were originally introduced into American government.

In 1638, when the Revs. Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, John Davenport, and Theophilus Eaton established Connecticut, Hooker delivered a famous sermon based on Deuteronomy 1:13 and Exodus 18:21 explaining that “They who have power to appoint officers and magistrates [i.e., the people], it is in their power also to set the bounds and limitations of the power and place.” From the Rev. Hooker’s teachings and leadership sprang the “Fundamental Orders of Connecticut” – America’s first written constitution (and the direct antecedent of the federal Constitution), thus causing Connecticut to be titled “The Constitution State.”

But while Connecticut produced America’s first written constitution, it definitely had not produced America’s first written document of governance; to the contrary, written documents were the norm for every colony founded by Bible-minded Christians. After all, this was the Scriptural model: God had given Moses a fixed written law to govern that nation – a pattern that recurred throughout the Scriptures (c.f., Deuteronomy 17:18-20, 31:24, II Chronicles 34:15-21, etc.). As renown prize-winning Cornell University professor Clinton Rossiter affirmed:

The Bible gave a healthy spur to the belief in a written constitution. The Mosaic Code, too, was a higher law that men could live by – and appeal to – against the decrees and whims of ordinary men. (emphasis added)

Bible-minded pastors and colonists were so committed to the principle of written documents of governance that they even required them in their own churches. As famous historian John Fiske (1842-1901) noted:

If we remember now that the earliest New England towns were founded by church congregations and led by their pastors, we can see how town government in New England originated.

Very simply, a written document gave the people security against arbitrary or capricious actions by their rulers and also established clear guidelines that provided for societal stability, establishing “the rule of law, not of men.” Therefore, to “explain the importance of a written constitution,” students must understand the origins of written governing documents in America.

Similarly, students are to identify how our government reflects the “separation of powers” [Grade 7 (b)(14)(A); Grade 8 (a) & (b)(16)(D); World History (c)(8)(B); Government (b) & (c)(8)(D)], but there is nothing to tell students why this important feature was incorporated – why did America become the first nation of recent centuries to include this characteristic in its government documents. And why were governmental powers separated?

According to George Washington, John Adams, James Madison, Alexander Hamilton, and many other Framers, it was because of their belief in the religious teaching of the depravity of man as taught in churches of Reformed theology across America. Man in himself was no “angel” (as Madison expressed it in the *Federalist Papers*) and therefore in his natural selfishness he would be tempted to abuse power. Consequently, given the variable and undependable nature of man, if American government was to endure, power

must therefore be separated between branches so that when one acted improperly or corruptly (which each eventually would), then perhaps the other two would be able to restrain that branch and remain a safeguard between it and the people's liberties.

On a related subject, a feature completely ignored in the TEKS is the vertical separation of powers – that just as the three branches were to check each other horizontally at the national and state levels, so, too, were the local, state, and national governments also to provide a vertical check and balance against each other – thus were the Ninth and Tenth Amendments were included in the Bill of Rights. Vertical separation of powers and constitutional checks and balances should be included as an element of federalism [Grade 7 (b)(14)(A); Grade 8 (a) & (b)(16)(D); World History (c)(8)(B); Government (b) & (c)(8)(D)] but those vertical checks and balances are never mentioned.

Also completely absent from the TEKS is any mention of the Electoral College system and its benefits – how it allows small states to have a voice, thus preserving the bicameral nature of America's constitutional government, allowing both the people and the states to have a voice in the selection of a president.

Democracy v. Republic

In the minutes of the COI meeting provided by TEA to the expert reviewers, its members explicitly expressed that in the TEKS there was to be an “emphasis . . . on constitution republic as compared to democracy.” The distinction between America as a republic and not a democracy is an important one, validated by numerous sources, including (1) the U. S. Constitution (Art. IV, Sec. IV); (2) the *Federalist Papers* (e.g., #10, #48, #39, #51, etc.); (3) declarations of official governmental bodies – including the National Intelligence Service World Factbook, U. S. Military training manuals, and the U. S. Congress (as when Congress established that we pledge allegiance to a republic and not a democracy); and (4) succinct and unambiguous declarations of the Framers of our government.

Because America is correctly identified as a republic and not as a democracy, the derivative of this is that “republican” rather than “democratic” is the proper adjective – that is, we have “republican” values or “republican” process rather than “democratic” values or process. While this might appear to be a distinction without a difference, it is a valid constitutional and historical point and therefore for accuracy sake should guide the rhetoric utilized throughout the TEKS.