



Texas Social Studies Curriculum Should Include Black, Latino, Indigenous and Women's History

IDRA Testimony on Proposed Framework for Kindergarten Through Grade 8 Social Studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, Submitted to the Texas State Board of Education, May 16, 2022

Dear Chairman Ellis and Members of the State Board of Education:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the proposed K-8 Social Studies TEKS Framework. IDRA is an independent, non-partisan, education non-profit committed to achieving equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college.

We believe all students deserve access to high-quality, culturally-sustaining schools, where learn about themselves, their histories, and the world. Following the passage of Senate Bill 3 in the second special session last fall, Texas schools have seen books about racial justice and gender inclusivity pulled from their libraries. IDRA has closely monitored the implementation of SB 3 and related legislation and the negative impacts on students, teachers, librarians and school communities. Earlier this year we surveyed educators. Teachers reported increased barriers to planning lessons that are meaningful to their students, and programs that offer student leadership and civic engagement opportunities to K-12 students have been cancelled.

The feedback we have received illustrates that an overwhelming majority of educators have not received guidance from their school district about classroom censorship legislation or they are unsure if they have received any guidance. Additionally, most respondents (53%) indicated that this legislation had had an impact on their classroom discussions of current or controversial events.

The effect on classroom discussions coupled with the lack of guidance on censorship legislation has only added to the confusion and frustration that educators have had to navigate in an already extremely uncertain and difficult two years. Educators in discussion have also noted that censorship of learning standards and materials contributes to low teacher morale, a key factor in the current teacher shortage.

Recommendations

As you undertake a review of the K-8 social studies TEKS, we make the following recommendations:

- Consider integrating civic skills and dispositions throughout K-8th grade;
- Consider adding historical figures who are Black, Latino, Indigenous and women to the revised TEKS, including those named in the stricken sections of HB 3979 (87R) (see IDRA September 2021 analysis);

- Avoid alterations to TEKS that are redundant to those already appearing in existing code;
- Take care, as the bill states, that your review not “be construed as limiting the teaching of or instruction of essential knowledge and skills” as listed.

IDRA is available for any questions or further resources that we can provide. Thank you for your consideration. For more information, please contact Michelle Castillo, Ed.M., IDRA Deputy Director of Advocacy, at michelle.castillo@idra.org.

Resources

IDRA. (September 2021). Senate Bill 3 Strikes Learning Standards and Censors Classroom Conversations, TEKS Review. <https://idra.news/SB3strikesLearning>

IDRA. (February 2022). What Texas Classroom Censorship Law Means for Students and Schools: Texas SB 3 Guide. <https://idra.news/WhatTxSB3means>

IDRA is an independent, non-profit organization led by Celina Moreno, J.D. Our mission is to achieve equal educational opportunity for every child through strong public schools that prepare all students to access and succeed in college. IDRA strengthens and transforms public education by providing dynamic training; useful research, evaluation, and frameworks for action; timely policy analyses; and innovative materials and programs.