



Revisions to Texas Civics Education Are Redundant, Contradictory and Confusing

IDRA Testimony against HB 2273, submitted by Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., to the Texas Senate Education Committee, May 18, 2023

Dear Chair Creighton and Members of the Committee:

IDRA is an independent, non-partisan 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.

HB 2273 is redundant with existing Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, introduces a skewed perspective to teaching specific forms of government, and could cause greater confusion around teaching civics education. The attached table compares the proposed changes to the civics education TEKS with similar language already existing in social studies standards across elementary through required high school courses.

In addition, this bill requires a specific bias in teaching forms of government. This violates good teaching practice and arguably violates SB 3, passed in the 87(2) session that required that any discussion of “controversial events” be conducted with objectivity and without “political bias.” The political ideologies listed have been the source of controversial historical events throughout the past century and beyond. For instance, these are central to learning about World War I, World War II, the Vietnam War, the Cold War, the Red Scare and American McCarthyism, to name just a few. The contradictory language of SB 3 as passed in 87(2) and this bill is confusing for teaching required state social studies standards.

IDRA supports students’ opportunities to learn accurate, comprehensive and truthful accounts of history. This bill introduces redundancy, contradiction and confusion, which could ultimately have the unintended consequence of compromising students’ learning.

For more information, please contact Chloe Latham Sikes, Ph.D., at chloe.sikes@idra.org.

Resources

Castillo, M., Craven, M., Gómez, & Latham Sikes, C. (2022). What Texas’ Classroom Censorship Law Means for Students and Schools. IDRA. <https://idra.news/WhatTxSB3means>
Texas Administrative Code, Title 19, Part 2, Chapter 113: Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for Social Studies.

HB 2273 Changes	Elementary School	Middle School	High School (U.S. Government & U.S. History)
<p><u>(h-1)(2) political ideologies, such as communism, socialism, fascism, and totalitarianism, that conflict with the principles of freedom and democracy essential to the founding principles of the United States;</u></p>	<p>Exists in Social Studies TEKS</p> <p>K: “Understand democratic values of state and nation”</p> <p>Grades 1, 2, 3, 4, 5: “understand a constitutional republic,” “democratic values,” “understand the role of the U.S. free enterprise system... capitalism”</p>	<p>Exists in Social Studies TEKS</p> <p>Grade 6: “Identify and give examples of governments with rule by one, few or many; “compare ways in which various societies such as China, Germany, India and Russia organize government and how they function”</p> <p>Grades 7, 8: “Understand that a constitutional republic is a representative form of government whose representatives derive their authority from the consent of the governed.”</p>	<p>U.S. Government</p> <p>Introduction: “Students learn major political ideas and forms of government in history.”</p> <p>“Students analyze major concepts of republicanism, federalism, checks and balances, separation of powers, popular sovereignty, and individual rights and compare the U.S. system of government with other political systems.”</p>
<p><u>(h-3) In providing instruction regarding the political ideologies described by Subsection (h-1)(2), a school district or open-enrollment charter school shall use first-person accounts as part of the instructional materials for the instruction.</u></p>	<p>Exists in source materials</p> <p>Grade 1, 2: Use of primary sources.</p> <p>Grade 2: Includes biographies as sources.</p> <p>Grade 3: “Study the effects inspiring heroes have had on communities, past and present.”</p>	<p>Exists in source materials</p> <p>Grades 6, 7, 8: “Use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material,” including documents, interview and biographies.</p>	<p>Exists in source materials</p> <p>“Use of a variety of rich primary and secondary source material”, including biographies, autobiographies, and (for U.S. Government) memoirs.</p>

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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 leading policy analyses and advocacy; dynamic teacher training and principal coaching; useful research, evaluation and frameworks for action; and innovative student, family and community engagement.