

Testimony before the State Board of Education Regarding changes to the Social Studies Curriculum

by Brooke Dollens
Terry
Education Policy Analyst

Good afternoon, Chair Lowe and members of the Board. I am Brooke Terry, an education policy analyst, with the Texas Public Policy Foundation.

When I addressed the Board last March, I had serious concerns about changes being made to the state's social studies curriculum.

But after reviewing the July and October revisions, I am encouraged. Several of the items removed have been put back in the curriculum, changed back to their original wording, or moved to another grade level that was more age appropriate. For example:

- Independence Day, Veteran's Day, and the Liberty Bell are back in the elementary grades (Kindergarten, First & Second Grade);
- The phrase "justice and truth" has been added back in the list of good citizenship character traits (First Grade);
- The phrase capitalism has been changed back to "free enterprise system" (Throughout); and
- In the section on personal responsibility, the importance of "supporting one's family" has been put back in (Eighth Grade).

Thank you to all of the State Board members and members on the review panels who saw that these items were put back in the curriculum.

That said, I still have some serious concerns that history is being rewritten especially with the changes to the U.S. Government and U.S. History curriculum.

The curriculum appears to be dismissive of contributions from the private sector. For example, the U.S. Government curriculum has a section on science and technology that dismisses the role of the private sector in developing scientific technologies and technological innovations and only focuses on the benefits of government research. In fact, 87 percent of the research and development work is done by private companies and independent laboratories according to the National Science Foundation.

There also seems to be an ideological bias in favor of a liberal governing philosophy. The curriculum does not give equal time to both conservative and liberal American presidents, their policies, and accomplishments. The curriculum does not give equal treatment to politicians, ideas, and interest groups on different sides of the political spectrum.

While several important historical figures such as the Wright Brothers, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Clara Barton have been put back in the curriculum, many other individuals have been added in that do not appear to have contributed significantly enough to American history be included in our state curriculum. Do we really want to add to content of individuals of dubious significance at the expense of our students not learning important historical events? I hope members can analyze the merit and accomplishments of each new individual and see if they warrant the distinction of being taught to Texas students.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your work for children of Texas. ★

