

State Board of Education

1701 North Congress Avenue
Austin, Texas 78701-1494
(512) 463-9007



Gail Lowe
Chair

Lampasas, District 14

Lawrence A. Allen, Jr.
Vice Chair

Houston, District 4

Terri Leo
Secretary
Spring, District 6

Rick Agosto
San Antonio, District 3

Mary Helen Berlanga
Corpus Christi, District 2

David Bradley
Beaumont, District 7

Barbara Cargill
The Woodlands, District 8

Bob Craig
Lubbock, District 15

Cynthia Noland Dunbar
Richmond, District 10

Patricia Hardy
Fort Worth, District 11

Mavis B. Knight
Dallas, District 13

Don McLeroy
College Station, District 9

Ken Mercer
San Antonio, District 5

Geraldine Miller
Dallas, District 12

Rene Nuñez
El Paso, District 1

Robert Scott
Commissioner of Education
(512) 463-8985



March 19, 2010

Thomas Jefferson remains in social studies curriculum

After hours of public testimony and more than 100 amendments offered to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills for social studies, the State Board of Education last week gave preliminary approval to the curriculum standards that will be used in Texas public schools.

One amendment in particular has garnered a lot of attention, after some media outlets erroneously reported the State Board of Education was dropping Thomas Jefferson from the curriculum framework.

"The only individual mentioned more times in the curriculum standards than Thomas Jefferson is George Washington," said Gail Lowe, chairwoman of the 15-member board. "We expect students at the elementary level, in middle school and in high school to study the Founding Fathers and to be well versed in their contributions to our country. That includes Thomas Jefferson and his legacy," she said.

In fifth grade, designed as an introductory survey course of the United States from 1565 to the present, students are expected to "identify the Founding Fathers and Patriot heroes, including John Adams, Samuel Adams, Benjamin Franklin, Nathan Hale, Thomas Jefferson, the Sons of Liberty, and George Washington, and their motivations and contributions during the revolutionary period."

In the eighth grade, in which the history of the United States from the early colonial period through Reconstruction is presented, the TEKS framework requires students to "explain the roles played by significant individuals during the American Revolution, including Abigail Adams, John Adams, Wentworth Cheswell, Samuel Adams, Mercy Otis Warren, James Armistead, Benjamin Franklin, Bernardo de Galvez, Crispus Attucks, King George III, Haym Salomon, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, the Marquis de Lafayette, Thomas Paine and George Washington."

The U.S. Government course required for high school graduation states that students will "identify the contributions of the political philosophies of the Founding Fathers, including John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Thomas Jefferson, John Jay, James Madison, George Mason, Roger Sherman and James Wilson on the development of the U.S. government."

In addition, students must "identify significant individuals in the field of government and politics, including George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, John Marshall, Andrew Jackson, Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt, Franklin Roosevelt, and Ronald Reagan."

Although Jefferson had been listed in a World History standard, the board removed his name from a list of European Enlightenment philosophers that included John Locke, Thomas Hobbes, Voltaire, Charles de Montesquieu and Jean Jacques Rousseau.

"This was inappropriate placement of Jefferson's name," said Lowe of the World History proposal. "Jefferson was not himself an Enlightenment philosopher, although he was heavily influenced by the writings of these individuals. But to say the State Board of Education has removed him from the TEKS is inaccurate and irresponsible," said Lowe.

Lowe continued, "Jefferson not only penned the words of the Declaration of Independence, served as the third president of the United States and was father of the University of Virginia, but his promotion of the ideals of a limited federal government and states' rights also permeated our nation for generations. No study of American history would be complete without his inclusion," she said.

The social studies Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills will be finalized in May when the board holds its last public hearing and final adoption of the standards.