

State Board of Education

Reviews Social Studies Revisions; Reduces Textbook Expenditures; Announces Webcasts of its Meetings

During an extensive review of proposed revisions to Texas' social studies curriculum standards, State Board of Education members in September made it clear that they want Christmas, Rosh Hashanah, César Chávez and Thurgood Marshall included in the standards.

Board members were reacting to proposals made by expert reviewers and review teams of educators, parents and citizens who are suggesting updates to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills.

The board offered numerous suggestions to the TEKS review teams who will continue to refine the revisions to the standards next month. The board will not take a preliminary vote on the social studies standards until its Jan. 13-15 meeting. Final adoption of the standards is expected to occur during the March 10-12 meeting.

Board members also took steps to reduce the costs of purchasing new English language arts and reading books for Texas students. The board had requested \$547 million for the instructional materials but the Legislature appropriated \$465 million.

To stay within budget, the board approved an across-the-board cut of 4.74 percent to the maximum cost the state will pay per textbook. Because the state will need to purchase about 6.2 million English language arts books for kindergarten through twelfth grade next year, this reduction will cut costs by about \$23.1 million.

This decrease comes in addition to other cost cutting measures already enacted by the board. Those include reducing the amount of materials a district can order to 103 percent of enrollment and basing costs on 2008-2009 enrollment figures.

Publishers will be asked to rebid their materials based on the restrictions imposed by the cost cutting measures.

The board also voted to cut the maximum costs for additional English language arts materials contained in Proclamation 2011 by 6.66 percent.

Board members discussed the need to revise high school graduation plans because of changes enacted to the Recommended High School Graduation Program by the Texas Legislature. To provide students on that program with additional scheduling flexibility, the legislature eliminated the requirement that students take health and technology applications classes and reduced the number of physical education requirements by one semester. However, those classes are still required for students following the Minimum High School Program and the Distinguished Achievement Program.

The board directed staff to bring back proposals that would amend the requirements for health, technology applications and physical education for the Minimum High School Program and the Distinguished Achievement Program to align with the requirements in the Recommended program.

Board members also directed staff to ask the TEKS committees to review additional speech courses for alignment with the Communications Applications course so the board can consider additional options for students to fulfill the speech requirement for graduation.

The board will consider in November whether courses that can be substituted for physical education credit should be connected to specific P.E. curriculum standards. They will also consider adopting TEKS for extra-curricular activities that currently count as P.E. substitutions, as well as narrowing the list of courses allowed for a substitution.

Currently, students can substitute Dance I-IV, drill team, cheerleading, marching band, athletics, Junior ROTC and private or commercially-sponsored physical education activities for P.E. credit.

Staff members were instructed to draft rule language to allow the following Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses to count for a fourth high school science credit: Advanced Animal Science, Advanced Plant and Soil Science, Food Science, Forensic Science and Advanced Biotechnology. A proposal to allow the Integrated Physics and Chemistry course to count as a science credit, although not as a fourth year science credit, will also be prepared.

Additionally, a proposal to allow Mathematical Applications in Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources, if taken prior to Algebra II, Statistics and Risk Management, and Engineering Mathematics to count as a fourth science credit will come forward.

The board indicated that these, as well as other proposals, will be considered as they begin updating the graduation programs during the Nov. 18-20 board meeting.

Webcasting of State Board of Education Meetings

All State Board of Education meetings will now be broadcast live online with full audio and video feeds.

A link to the webcast will be posted on the Texas Education Agency homepage at www.tea.state.tx.us on the day of meetings and will be posted at <http://www.tea.state.tx.us/index4.aspx?id=3876>.

The broadcasts were required by House Bill 772 by Rep. Donna Howard, D-Austin, and Sen. Wendy Davis, D-Fort Worth. Live audiocasts of the State Board meetings have been available since 2004.

The webcasts of the meetings will cover meetings of the full board, as well as meetings of all subcommittees. The video files will be archived online for six months and available upon request for up to five years. The agency has contracted with TexasAdmin.com to provide the webcasting services.

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