

Transcript – Introduction to the Fine Arts TEKS – Panel Discussion

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Kim: Welcome to the revised Fine Arts TEKS information session. The Fine Arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, or TEKS, were revised in August of 2013 with implementation to begin in the 2015-16 school year. Today, we'll be speaking with content experts involved in the Fine Arts TEKS revision process. Our panel discusses the development process for the revised Fine Arts TEKS, the differences between the old and new TEKS, and considerations for implementation. Upcoming resources to support the Fine Arts TEKS include an interactive online course, supporting documents that provide ideas for classroom implementation, and informational materials to share with administrators, teachers, and parents. Let's get started to learn more.

Revised Fine Arts TEKS Development Process

Kim: We will begin discussing the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills, also known as the TEKS, and the developmental process for the Fine Arts. We'll go ahead and start with the first question: Talk to us about the TEKS as far as the development process. Ladies?

Roxanne: Sure. The original TEKS were first written in 1998—or implemented in 1998—so we've had a lot of work to do because it's been long time and many things have changed in the schools, with young people and the State of Texas. So we first had to really think about what has changed in education since 1998.

Linda: We also just had an application process where educators from across the state were invited to apply to be part of the TEKS review committee and that happened and we received letters that said we were going to be serving. So we had quite a few meetings; we had an introduction meeting and then we had another one in the summer and in the fall. It was a long process, but it was also very fast so we had to do a lot of considerations quickly.

Kim: Absolutely.

Lisa: And we had teams formed for each discipline for music, art, theatre and dance. And we had elementary teams, middle school teams, and high school teams.

Kim: Okay.

Lisa: So we worked horizontally in our teams, but we also worked vertically. And met at different points to make sure we were having a seamless, spiraling sequential standards we were developing.

Kim: And that's so important. As you start talking about the development and describing how you all got involved, tell us all about what's different about each discipline. Talk to us about how it was developed in your specialty.

Linda: I'm with art. One of the things we initially talked about vertically—we had four different groups in art. We had the high school, we had the middle school, and the elementary was divided into two groups. And we were talking about vocabulary first, having a commonality there. We also wanted to talk about exactly what the strands would mean, what they should be. So we had a lot of vertical conversation about those kinds of things. And then we started talking about what was foundational about art that was across all grade levels. And that was where we started, we found that foundation and we built on that.

Lisa: In music, we were organized at the elementary levels into two groups: kindergarten through second grade, and third through fifth grade. I served on the third through fifth grade team. All the way through music we felt a need for more specificity. The TEKS we had been using since 1997-98 were not very specific, so we got a little more specific so that you could see the vertical alignment. We worked a lot, vertically, together between our teams. And we also looked at higher level thinking skills. We took the action verbs that were already there and we tried to spiral them up.

Roxanne: I know there was a lot of thought about representation from all over the state and representation from teachers from urban schools and larger districts; that was an important element. All of these teachers from all over the state came together and in theatre we had three areas: elementary, middle and high school. And one of the first things we thought about was what are some of the disciplines within theatre that we haven't yet developed the TEKS for? So for example, musical theatre and technical theatre, there were no TEKS before. That was important. We also initially thought about middle school and having one, two, and three for levels instead of six, seven, and eight. Those are some of the first things we really wanted to think about.

Lisa: And we all followed suit in the middle school—Arabic number one, two and three—and had that change. Additionally, in music, just like [Roxanne] said they developed TEKS for musical theatre, we also developed TEKS for music studies. So, in high school we have the performance TEKS and we have the music studies TEKS, which leads us more into music media, music industry, and those types of things.

Marylou: The one thing I'm very excited about too is the addition of middle school dance. I think that is something that was long awaited. So I think that was the excitement for us in the dance division; we now have middle school dance one, two, and three. And again, everything is aligned, just like you said, horizontally, vertically. Also, just the way all of the fine arts—as an administrator looking into what y'all have done—it is truly amazing seeing how all the fine arts are now written to where it has the same introduction and that same line and it's all such a collaborative piece that I was very impressed with the outcome.

Roxanne: Marylou, I would also say that while we're all separate disciplines, everyone's excited about dance. Everybody was excited that now we're going to have the dance TEKS and while we were all working in separate rooms we were all running between each other and getting excited about each other.

Marylou: That's very nice to hear, thank you.

Kim: As you all have briefly started talking about the disciplines and the introductions to each one of your disciplines, let's talk a little bit about the purpose and the differences of these introductions compared to obviously 1998 and where we are now with 2015. Talk to us about some of the strategies behind that.

Linda: Well, mainly, we felt as a total group—a fine arts group—that we needed an introduction. It didn't need to be simply just an introduction of the strand, or really a description of the strand, because that's what it was before. We didn't truly have an introduction that laid the groundwork for everything. And we met together as a horizontal team, so there were representatives from art, from theatre, from dance, from music, and we met together. First of all, to say, “How are we going to do this?” Since it hadn't been done, we didn't have anything there to start with. Then, we went back to our content area teams. We talked. Each of us kind of really basically came up with a skeleton of what it maybe could look like. We were wanting to focus on the words and the 21st century skills, and not just the words, but the concepts behind it. We also wanted to focus on higher-level learning and then most importantly it was how the arts impacted other areas, and then for lifelong pursuits. We had all those goals. We came back as a horizontal team again and we used our skeletons and we meshed them all together. It was a fascinating process because even though we're all different we still know the impact that the arts have on all the other content areas. And then again, of course, an application on nurturing the whole child; raising a child up to where they can have a lifelong skill and pursuit. That was the basic goal of it and then we came back to the group as a whole and we said, “Ok, how is this?” It was a give and take back and forth. It was really very rich, and I think because of it, the introduction itself is rich and is very meaningful. It's very succinct, but meaningful.

Roxanne: I sometimes tell teachers that we can think about it as our elevator speech. We want to advocate the arts in our schools or in our districts, and we certainly can use that introductory language. Another piece of it that I love is the idea of creativity. We, in all of the disciplines, had a lot of dialogue about creativity and how every day our students need to be thinking creatively and with innovation. That was exciting for me.

Lisa: And how important it is for that creative process to impact all learning, not just in the arts, but to impact all learning overall.

Linda: And also that we were modeling it, because we realized that as a fine arts content that in a lot of ways we model that nurturing of the creative process, or even the training in the creative process, that we are actually models for that, so we were very cognitive of that as well. I think, too, one of the things for art—but I think it bleeds over into all of them—that we that were really wanting to focus on the fact that we wanted to stay out of just a process and then elevate it into a concept. Everything was kind of looked at through that lens because if you have just a product or a process then you stop at the application level and we wanted to get up into the higher Bloom's level of the creativity. So we knew that we had to start getting kids to talk about: why are you making art? Why are you making music? Why are you creating this movement? Why are you doing that? Because then that makes them start to think about that synthesis of their worlds.

Lisa: And how does it relate to the real world, at large.

Linda: Yes.

Marylou: Right. I think, too, just the energy that it has caused with the students and the student engagement. I believe, in watching the new curriculums being written off of what you created, the engagement alone is so much more with all of the students in the class. All of a sudden everybody has a piece to the decision making in the classroom—in that composition, in that conceptual design—and the energy in the class is just incredible.

Key Differences in Revised Fine Arts TEKS in Each Discipline

Kim: You know, Roxanne and Marylou, you both mentioned some key words that I want us to think about. You [Roxanne] mentioned teachers and you [Marylou] mentioned curricular. How much do you think, how hard is

it going to be to get the teachers prepared to implement this for the 2015-16 year in their curriculum? How do you think this is going to go? Is there a big learning curve between them?

Marylou: I mean, I know for myself, we saw this coming down the pike and so I know for working in a school district we started trying to implement this gradually so there's this gradual release, because it is a big change for the teachers. It is a big change for the students. Also, we tried very hard to get the administrators to understand that things will look different now. When they come into the classroom, from what they designed, they will see a lot of energy with the students, they'll see movement—not just in the dance class, movement in the classroom. They will see a lot of talking. They will see a lot of aha moments. And so I think that it was not as bad as I thought it would be in the transition. It was really seamless. It's just really about practicing it, learning from your mistakes. Also, going and observing other peoples' classrooms and seeing what's happening, assessing it, redesigning it. Having failures is okay. But I was very surprised that it's been a lot more exciting for the teachers and the students in the class, and the administrators also.

Kim: Alright, well, that leads me to another question. Let's start thinking about the process for them planning. We've said you've [Marylou] done some things in your district, and I'm not sure with you ladies, about the things that have taken place across the state and, of course, in your districts. What steps would you recommend teachers start now to prepare for August?

Linda: One of the things that I've been working with the teachers on is that, really, it's not like you throw everything out. I think, at first, the teachers were afraid they would have to just pitch it all out and start from scratch. Actually, that's not the case, and we were discovering that if we tried to get them to come up with a key question or an idea—sometimes they call them a big idea, especially in elementary—but come up with a key question to take the lesson design they were already using, that was already successful from the 1998 TEKS, and take it and tweak it to the point where the students quit thinking about just the how and they start thinking about why they're doing it and that has to do with that question. So they've actually, I've seen the teachers getting excited because all of a sudden they've very simply elevated that lesson and made it into a 2015 TEKS lesson simply by changing the focus. Rather than focus on just that product, but also focusing on why, answering those questions. So it's really like she [Marylou] said, it's becoming seamless in a lot of ways.

Marylou: Right. What you [Linda] were just saying about the teachers getting excited about not throwing out those lessons, and adding to it, a lot of times, at first, they thought when I was saying, "Today, we're going to talk about conceptual design of your lessons," they said, "Oh my gosh, I just, here's another thing to do." And when they really figured out that it's just a continuation and a higher level of thinking, our product that our students are producing now, using these things that these ladies [Roxanne, Lisa, Linda] have been part of in writing has just been incredible. The level that our students are reaching is...

Lisa: And I think they're getting excited about the vertical alignment that they can see from grade level to grade level, spiraling it all the way up to make them career college ready. And I think when the teachers see that, they know that they don't have to tweak their lessons much, they just have to take it up to the next level. Use the same framework that they've been using.

Roxanne: I think that certainly the fine arts are second nature to some of the 21st century learnings. We are already doing many of these things in our classes, and I think a lot of it is about intentionality, naming those things. In some cases, it is about changing some of our lesson plans so that there is more creativity—there's more space, there's more collaboration, reusing media in different ways—and that's really important and we want to acknowledge a lot of the work we've already done so that we can build upon what we've been doing since 1998.

Marylou: Something that you [Roxanne] just said, too; the technology component. I think from what I have witnessed that has probably been, for us, the biggest leap. We received some new tablets and it's really teaching the teachers how to really integrate the technology from the 21st century skills. I think that's been probably, for us, the biggest leap.

Lisa: And also at the high school level, we have music media, dance media, theatre and art media and communications courses coming online now that are wonderful and really relate to all those advancements in technology that we're seeing now.

Marylou: That's been the hardest thing for us, I think.

Revised Fine Arts TEKS and Pathways to Graduation

Kim: Well, you mentioned something very important and we started talking about high school. We know with high school there's been the House Bill 5 Law. Let's start talking about how the House Bill 5, also known as HB5, is the law that established the Foundation High School Program. Let's talk about how the arts fit into the pathways for graduation under this program.

Lisa: Many districts have been doing wall-to-wall academies already and they've been having students pick a particular pathway and so this fits nicely into the endorsements that have been outlined for us through the new foundation program. I know that we've also been looking at community and student engagement measures and each of us have been involved in different areas in developing those engagement measures that we'll measure in each school district.

Kim: Ladies, let's discuss a little bit about flexibility. How does the flexibility play with the pathways? How does it give students opportunities to meet the graduation requirements?

Marylou: Flexibility is the whole name of the game, I think, with this design. There are so many opportunities for students to pick the broad view of their endorsement and then with each endorsement, there are so many pathways to go. It surprises me, in discussing with counselors, the opportunities for students are endless. It also really encourages for students to really have that pathway of taking something for four years and learning from the intro level to that high end level, so they really encourage that, but there are opportunities for students to have more than one endorsement. There are people that can have one endorsement, two endorsements, some people can have three endorsements. It's just about planning and making sure they have all the criteria ready for it. It's very, I think that's the way it was designed to be, very open to be about student choice so that the students can really pick what they feel is right for their pathway and their career.

Introduction to the Revised Fine Arts TEKS Online Course

Kim: Alright ladies, let's spend a little time talking about this online course. I mean, I would like to know some information about the format and the structure of developing it. How was the course actually developed?

Linda: We were invited to start a conversation first about developing an online course for the different content areas of the fine arts, so the four basic areas: art, music, theatre, dance. We were brought together first and then we started talking about where were we going to go with it, what were we doing with it, why it was important, and those kinds of things, before we started the conversation with it.

Lisa: We looked at the differences between the former TEKS and what we have now, the revised TEKS. We each have a little bit different for our strands, but we highlighted what the main differences are so that the educator can easily recognize those.

Roxanne: It was exciting to come together, all of the four disciplines, and talk about what is the essence of the new TEKS and how are we going to celebrate all of them and also think about our individual disciplines. It was neat to be in the room together. There were different rooms for us to work in and we kept coming back together. We were like magnets because we wanted—we're collaborative, right? In nature, we're collaborative. We wanted to work together and we had really exciting dialogues about why do we want to do this and how is this going to help teachers and students and that was really a lot of fun.

Linda: I think it's interesting that the new TEKS, and not only that, but the nature of the fine arts itself, is really all about communication. That's one of the 21st century skills as well, so not just the collaboration, but the communication, that development of a voice, an individual voice. It was interesting that we kept coming back together and having that conversation together, constantly. We ended up just staying together the whole time [group laughter] and we worked collaboratively, very collaborative. And the goal was to do that comparison, and I know that Lisa brought that up, that we were really comparing the 1998 to the 2013 [TEKS] so that the teachers who were familiar already with 1998 TEKS will be able to, like we said before, seamlessly move into the 2013 TEKS and know what to do. What do I do now? How do I start? Basically, we wanted to give them a place to start.

Lisa: The overall strands and how the TEKS are organized changed just a bit and so we highlighted those changes.

Marylou: And I will say, I was not part of that group, but looking at the whole design of what they've created, I'm very excited to see that a lot of districts in The State of Texas do not have the opportunity to have the resources that a lot of big districts do, so having this designed for other people in smaller districts to be able to see these things and to be educated and to focus in on some new ideas. I think right there we are reaching out to people who may have never had the opportunity in the past and that's why I think that online courses are the best thing we can do for our fine arts people.

Kim: And the most important, reaching out to those people helps all of our students. What an amazing thing to bring up. Let's talk about the format of the course. How is the course formatted?

Lisa: Well, it's formatted into modules. It starts with an overall introduction, a module about the overall introduction to all of the fine arts courses, and then it'll break down by strand: music, art, theatre, and dance. Then, within those strands, there will be modules for elementary, middle school, and high school. Teachers, from what I understand, teachers can go in and choose which modules they want to take. They can take them all or they can just take some of them. I think it's going to be very informational for the educator and how this really is going to be implemented in their instruction.

Linda: I'm also hoping that it helps administrators and counselors because there's a misunderstanding sometimes about what the goals of the fine arts are and some of the ways it could be a positive thing for their campus, a development of campus culture. I'm hoping that not just the teachers would really benefit from it, but the administrators, especially in the introductions and those type of things.

Marylou: And what you're saying about the administrators, I think a lot of times, being a former campus administrator, we walk into classrooms and we are not aware of that subject. And so, as an administrator, as you said Linda, for them to see what does a fine arts classroom look like? What should it look like? Walking into an art, or dance, or music, or theatre class, and so it will help them to be able to give feedback to the teacher to be able to be even stronger.

Roxanne: We really had to think about this was going to be engaging and accessible. For the online course, we kept going back to where do we need to tweak this, how do we need to make this more accessible, and how is this really going to be helpful?

Kim: Okay. How can teachers access it? This is some great information that's coming out, and I know everybody's getting ready for the summer, but in the summer what do we do? Plan for August. So, how do teachers get access to this information?

Roxanne: The online course is divided into modules so that teachers and administrators and anyone in education can access them by discipline. The idea is that it's going to be very flexible, so that people can access what they need.

Kim: Ladies, and with us talking about flexibility, I really want to thank you all for coming out today and spending some time so we can have this wonderful and rich discussion on the importance of our upcoming 2015-16 Fine Art TEKS that are going to be implemented in our school systems. Thank you so much and I hope everyone has a fabulous afternoon.

Group: Thank you.

Kim: The Introduction to the Revised Fine Arts TEKS Online Course and Supporting Resources are designed to help educators meet the unique challenges of modifying curricula to align with the revised standards. The online course and supporting resources will outline how the revised TEKS affect fine arts programs as a whole, as well as how the changes will impact art, dance, music, and theatre disciplines by grade band. Course participants will be eligible to earn up to eight CPE credit hours. The Introduction to the Revised Fine Arts TEKS Online Course will be available summer 2015.