A little over a year ago the State Board of Education (SBOE) appointed three committees to review and revise the fine arts Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). These TEKS define the basis for instruction and drive the interaction between the student, the teacher, and the content from elementary through high school. The previous TEKS—created in 1998—were the first real set of curricular standards for Texas music teachers.

After months of review (which included the opportunity for public comment) each committee has completed its review and revision. These revised TEKS will be in effect as of the 2014–2015 school year, and the next textbook adoption will align with the implementation of the revised TEKS.

As each committee was reminded, educators should also remember that the TEKS are not the curriculum. The TEKS should provide the what of our courses, not the how. It is up to the local school districts and teachers to write their curriculum to prescribe how to teach the TEKS, and a district’s curriculum can certainly extend beyond the minimum requirements established by the TEKS.

One overall change that affects all grade levels is the renaming of the strands to align across all four artistic disciplines:

- Foundations: Music Literacy
- Creative Expression
- Historical and Cultural Relevance
- Critical Evaluation and Response

This renaming necessitated additional changes to TEKS language so that each of the student expectations fit properly into one of the new strand titles.

To help explain the outcome of these revisions, we asked three TMEA members who served on the review committees to share their perspectives on their committee’s focus and provide a glimpse into the types of changes to expect. Our thanks go to Patricia Moreno (Austin ISD), Peter Warshaw (Leander ISD), and JD Janda (Georgetown ISD) for sharing their reports.

**Elementary TEKS Revisions**

The intent of the elementary music TEKS committee was to provide a sequential and spiraling set of concepts for general music. Separate subcommittees for kindergarten through second grade and for third through fifth grade also worked together to ensure vertical alignment and a seamless document. The third–fifth grade subcommittee also collaborated with the middle school committee.

The committee approached their charge mindful that students might be taught by a general classroom teacher or a music specialist, and music could be taught every other day, once a week, or once every nine days. To support elementary teachers who often have limited instructional time, the revised TEKS offer districts and teachers a short list of concepts per grade level.

The previous TEKS were too broad. For example, when reviewing the first strand, Foundations: Music Literacy, the committee added the word “reproduces” to the opening statement because reading music cannot be removed from the skill of performing the rhythm or melody or both. The student demonstrates the skill of reading by clapping the rhythm or singing the melody on solfège syllables or playing the melody on a xylophone. Even tapping the space bar on a computer or tapping on an iPad can be used to assess whether the student can read music. Performance is one way—probably the best way—to assess a student’s ability to read and write music. Teachers may notice a reference from one strand to another, and this was intentional throughout the grade levels.

Below is a comparison of two TEKS for second grade that deal with the reading and writing of music. Notice that the half note and half rest are specifically mentioned only in revised 3A. The corresponding revised TEKS in first grade require students to “read, write, and reproduce quarter notes, paired eighth notes,
and quarter rests.” Second grade students would review the first grade concepts—half note and half rest are the new concepts for that grade level. The phrase “previously learned” is used in third, fourth, and fifth grades to ensure the new concepts for that grade level are introduced only if the concepts from the previous grade levels are reviewed first. The other three strands also include “previously learned” language so that the TEKS are used in a sequential, spiraling format similar to the other content areas like math and science.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Previous TEKS</th>
<th>Revised TEKS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strand: Creative Expression/Performance. The student reads and writes music notation. The student is expected to:</td>
<td>Strand: Foundations: Music Literacy. The student reads, writes, and reproduces music notation. Technology and other tools may be used to read, write, and reproduce musical examples. The student is expected to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3A</td>
<td>Read and write simple music notation using a system (letters, numbers, syllables).</td>
<td>Read, write, and reproduce rhythmic patterns using standard notation in 2/4 meter including half note, half rest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3B</td>
<td>Read and write music that incorporates basic rhythmic patterns in simple meters.</td>
<td>Read, write, and reproduce pentatonic melodic patterns using standard staff notation.</td>
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</table>

The committee, expert reviewers, and many who submitted comments believed movement should be included in the TEKS. The movement component has been added to the revised Creative Expression strand. For kindergarten through second grades, the new student expectation states: “move alone or with others to a varied repertoire of music using gross and fine locomotor and nonlocomotor movement.” In third through fifth grades, the following phrase is included to allow more complex movement: “and integrated movement such as hands and feet moving together.” The culmination of this strand comes with the addition of a specific student expectation in fourth and fifth grades: “perform various folk dances and play parties.” Local school districts can still introduce folk dances in second and third grades if desired. This is a perfect example of how the TEKS are the floor, not the ceiling.

**Middle School TEKS Revisions**

The Middle School Music TEKS Review Committee consisted of representatives from all three music disciplines who responded to several charges in their review and revision of the middle school TEKS:

- Provide a proper bridge between elementary and high school music TEKS.
- Scaffold the middle school music TEKS to create increased rigor for students advancing through their respective music program.
- Revise the TEKS for first-year band, choir, and orchestra to reflect the nature of an entry-level music course while acknowledging prior learning in elementary music.

Perhaps the most obvious differences in the new TEKS are the titles of the levels—Music Grade 6/7/8 are now Music Middle School 1/2/3 (sometimes listed as MS). This change is intended to reflect the nature of a middle school music course in terms of the grade levels represented in each. For example, several campuses offer the entry-level music course in grade 5 or 7, and this has created some confusion in applying credit and in the counseling world.

Additionally, the second-year courses in music typically comprise a mix of students from multiple grade levels, similar to high school courses. As suggested by SBOE Member Gail Lowe, the change in designation will more accurately reflect what occurs in middle school music courses and will provide a connection to high school courses that use roman numerals for their course designations.

The Student Expectations (SEs) in middle school music are directly connected to those in the corresponding elementary and high school music courses. While an effort was made to create a connection from kindergarten to Music IV, the increased number and subcategorization of SEs as students progressed through middle to high school made this impossible. Still, educators should recognize an increased degree of correlation in the revised TEKS.

A primary source for the scaffolding language in the revised TEKS was Bloom’s Taxonomy. The MS committee ensured the SEs in each strand increased in rigor as students moved to a higher grade level and prepared students to successfully meet the requirements of SEs in corresponding strands for the HS TEKS. An example of this occurs in the Foundations: Music Literacy strand (formerly known as Perception).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MS 1 SE 1(A)</th>
<th>MS 2 SE 1(A)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student is expected to experience and explore exemplary musical examples.</td>
<td>The student is expected to compare and contrast exemplary musical examples.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Further examination of the revised TEKS will reveal many more such examples.

The committee identified numerous SEs that had been assigned to inappropriate strands and moved them to the correct ones (e.g., some of the SEs that required a student to demonstrate a specific skill were in a strand other than Creative Expression/Performance and have now been corrected).

The committee prioritized inclusion of all three music disciplines (as well as General Music) in the revisions. The application of each SE to band, choir, and orchestra was thoroughly considered—resulting in more specificity relating to such items as physical and kinesthetic awareness.

With today’s students having a much wider range of learning opportunities at their fingertips, several of the SEs in the Critical Evaluation and Response strand have been updated. Additionally, more of these opportunities are taking place outside of the traditional classroom and in less formal settings. The committee revised the SEs in both the Creative Expression strand and in the Critical Evaluation and Response strand to reflect the influence of technology in music education.

Committee members strongly believe the revisions will provide for more clarity and efficiency in music instruction, as well as provide a solid and supportive bridge between elementary and high school music courses.
High School TEKS Revisions
Based on their experience and public comment, the committee began its work by creating a list of issues with the existing set of standards, including:

• Since not all music students are drawn to band, orchestra, or choir, there is a need to create more varied music opportunities and courses.
• Current verbiage does not adequately address the differences in vocal and instrumental music.
• More opportunities must be created that increase the use of technology to improve instruction and enhance music learning/understanding.
• The recent push for higher levels of college and career readiness must be actively addressed by the new TEKS.
• Standards must be created for music courses that are non-performance related (e.g., Music Theory, Music Business, Music Composition, Music and Media Communications).

Specific courses and more generic course names were created to support the diverse Texas student population and to allow new courses to be added (as long as they use the new set of TEKS standards and student expectations). “World Music Ensemble” can be used as a course title for many current or future music groups that may not fit within a band/orchestra/choir identifier. The committee’s intent is not that anything could qualify as a recognized course. Any newly created course must use the new rigorous standards set forth in the revised TEKS.

While the committee initially focused on unique standards for each ensemble type, members soon realized that high school music courses have more similarities than differences. Using the previous courses (Music I, II, III, and IV), the committee added terms unique to vocal techniques, percussion techniques, and orchestral techniques along with several others to create better descriptors for greater flexibility of teacher use.

Language was also added that allows students and teachers to use available technologies to listen, record, critique, and create new music and to expand on current musical knowledge and understanding. Student expectations were added to encourage students to understand the ethical implications of using these new technologies—especially those dealing with personal rights, privacies, and copyright issues.

Student expectations were created that deal very specifically with the task of preparing high school music students for their futures—related and unrelated to careers in music. The committee accepted the challenge of providing a higher level of validity and importance to music courses by inserting specific student expectations that require students to consider and develop skills that are easily transferable to careers outside of music, while still pursuing musical excellence in high school.

Finally, TEKS were created for music courses that traditionally do not require a significant performance component. “Music Studies” became somewhat of a catch-all for courses such as music composition, music history, music theory, or music business. The new Music Studies TEKS provide opportunities for students and teachers to explore new musical forms, understand existing forms differently, and incorporate cross-curricular concepts into music related endeavors. The student objectives in Music Studies maintain a very high standard of musical comprehension because in large part, these expectations are rooted in the TEKS for other high school music courses.

With these most recent revisions, the resulting standards and student expectations in the TEKS should serve Texas music students and teachers well for years to come. No one can predict exactly what will be around the next musical corner or what technology will emerge, but these revised TEKS should provide great flexibility while fostering high student expectations for success—all while moving into an exciting and mostly unknown musical future.

Patricia Moreno is Instructional Coordinator of Elementary Music and Secondary Choral Music for Austin ISD. Peter Warschaw is Fine Arts Director for Leander ISD. JD Janda is Director of Fine Arts for Georgetown ISD.

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