

## ***CSCOPE Works to Improve Public Understanding of its Curriculum Management System***

CSCOPE, developed by the Texas Education Service Center Curriculum Collaborative (TESCCC) and sold by Texas Regional Education Service Centers (ESCs), is the curriculum management tool of choice for 875 school districts, charter schools, and private schools in Texas. It is aligned with the state standards adopted by the Texas State Board of Education (SBOE) and assist educators in covering all standards within the academic year. CSCOPE is completely customizable at the district, campus, and teacher level to meet the unique needs of students and communities. The CSCOPE system's unique and innovative design allows educators to modify or adapt CSCOPE content, create their own content, and incorporate district-approved resources, such as textbooks. This allows the instructor to maintain their authority in directing the learning environment of the classroom and individualizes a student's learning.

CSCOPE is designed to serve as a teacher resource and is not intended to be accessed by students. Any content in the CSCOPE system is only directly accessible to teachers and designated district personnel. However, a teacher at their discretion may choose to share certain content with students. Parents may access CSCOPE content by contacting their child's teacher or school district (more on parent access below).

### **CSCOPE Promotes Texas Standards**

CSCOPE was developed by Texas teachers; for Texas schools; to benefit Texas students. In no way is it based on, or affiliated with, the Common Core curriculum, a set of national standards used in other states. CSCOPE is only available to public school districts, charter schools, or private schools in Texas. The TESCCC does not provide curriculum management services to any other state. The Governing Board and development team take pride in creating a curriculum that is aligned to Texas standards and focused on improving education in Texas.

The purpose of this memorandum is to address misconceptions that have arisen about specific lessons and to assure teachers, parents and everyone interested in improving education in Texas that we are listening to their concerns and will do our best to be accessible and responsive.

### **Does CSCOPE Promote Islam?**

Absolutely not. This misunderstanding is based on lesson content that has been taken completely out of context. CSCOPE teaches the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS) which are adopted by the 15 members of the SBOE. A number of the TEKS call for students to learn about and compare the various world religions. One of the religions addressed is Islam and there is a lesson on the founding principles and history of the religion; just as there are for Christianity, Judaism, and other major world religions. One part of the lesson on the basic tenants of Islam has been presented as what students are to learn about all religions, when in fact it simply describes what Muslims believe and what Islam teaches.

### **What about the accusations that CSCOPE believes the Boston Tea Party patriots were terrorists?**

Again, absolutely not. The original lesson that is being misinterpreted was about terrorism and how perspective can shape one's views of an act, in this case how King George III and others from Great Britain might have viewed activities like dumping tea into Boston Harbor. The Boston Tea Party, though not named, was described and students were asked to respond on how they view what happened. The goal of the lesson was to take an incident well known by students and that was universally viewed as a patriotic event in American history and challenge students to hear about it from a differing perspective. In hindsight, the TESCCC acknowledges a different example would have been a better choice and would not have risked the misunderstanding about its intent. Rest assured that even in the original version students were certainly not taught that the Boston Tea Party was an act of terrorism.

One of CSCOPE's commitments is to listen to our users and to be responsive to their needs. It is worth noting; neither the lesson on Islam, nor the terrorism lesson ever received any feedback or complaints from CSCOPE users. However, both lessons were no longer aligned with state standards, so they were removed in a timely fashion. They initially continued to be posted as a resource, as were all former social studies lessons, at the request of school districts. Again, we take pride in being responsive to the districts that we serve. (To view both the Islam and Terrorism lesson in their original form, please visit [www.cscope.us](http://www.cscope.us))

### **What Steps is CSCOPE Taking to Broaden Parent Access and Support Parental Involvement?**

It has always been the intention of the TESCCC to allow teachers and school districts to share CSCOPE content with parents. That is a parent's right and the TESCCC strongly encourages parents to play an active role in their child's education. However, it was brought to the attention of the TESCCC that the user agreement teachers accept before accessing the site had language that was misinterpreted and had created confusion for our districts. To clarify this, the TESCCC has taken the following steps to remove any real or perceived barriers to parent access:

1. Amended the user agreement to specifically state that districts may share or post any content that they feel is helpful to assist parents in better understanding what their child is learning. (This does not include tests and answer keys as you can understand.)
2. Allow teachers to post handouts, worksheets, or lessons that they believe are beneficial for students to view, on their classroom website. They may also make hardcopies for parents to view. (On January 23, the Governing Board clarified that each district may establish their own policies and procedures for parental access.)
3. Allow parents direct access to the site by coordinating a time with their child's school. The TESCCC will continue working with CSCOPE schools on improving direct parent access and assist them in establishing set procedures prior to the start of the 2013-2014 school year.
4. Most exciting, in order to be responsive to parents, the TESCCC is currently developing a completely new Parent Resource Site that will provide more information to parents than ever before. The new site will include unit summaries, key terms students would be learning, and items related to student performance in the unit. It is the goal of the TESCCC that these elements are available starting for the fifth six weeks of this school year. The TESCCC will be collecting feedback throughout the remainder of the school year and will work to improve the site prior to the 2013-2014 school year.

### **Is it acceptable for teachers and educators to discuss CSCOPE material?**

Of course. The idea that teachers are prohibited from discussing CSCOPE content is another misconception. Teachers benefit from collaboration and it is important that they are allowed to discuss CSCOPE content with their peers in an effort to improve the education of all students. As was stated above, CSCOPE was designed with the teacher in mind and teachers are encouraged to work with their peers to improve the content or to add their own lessons and self-created content. We are also communicating with our colleagues in the schools to reassure them that there is nothing prohibiting them from discussing CSCOPE content or lessons with others.

### **Why can't CSCOPE make all lessons available to the general public?**

There are several reasons. We believe that this would actually undercut a teacher's ability to customize a lesson to best serve the students in their classroom. The teacher should always be a parent's primary contact in discovering what resources are being used in the learning environment. Ultimately, the teacher and district decides if a CSCOPE lesson will be used in full, in part or not at all. This decision is based on the best interest of their students and the teacher must be allowed to use their skills and judgment to determine how to best educate their students. The TESCCC does not wish to do anything that could generate confusion among parents and teachers. The TESCCC strongly believes and supports local decision making within school districts and insist that the member districts have the ability to release any CSCOPE content themselves, since it will more accurately reflect the instruction going on in that specific community. However, as noted above, we are redesigning the Parent Resource Site, and pledge to read each comment from parents and to reassess and report to the public in six months.

### **CSCOPE Values Transparency**

In effort to continue our goal of being a transparent organization, the TESCCC will be taking additional steps to those mentioned above to broaden the availability of CSCOPE materials. Please continue to check our website, [www.cscope.us](http://www.cscope.us), for additional information or to provide feedback on how we can continue to improve.