



## 'Truth in Texas Textbook': Not Credible

A small group called Truth in Texas Textbooks (TTT) released its "reviews" of proposed social studies textbooks for Texas public schools less than two weeks ago. The organization appears to be loosely affiliated with an extremist, anti-Muslim organization called ACT! for America. Moreover, there are serious questions about the release of the reviews very late in the adoption process, the qualifications of the reviewers themselves, the sources they relied on, and the peculiar complaints in their reviews. In short, the Truth in Texas Textbooks review is simply not a credible resources in this textbook adoption.

### Alleged errors or inaccuracies found by Truth in Texas Textbooks

- TTT casts doubt on the age of the planet, saying that many "scientists do not believe the earth is millions of years old." To support its statement, TTT points to a citation from the website Conservapedia, and information from the Institute for Creation Research and conservative radio talk show host Bob Dutko. (Cengage, World Cultures, Grade 6)
- TTT complains that a textbook includes too much coverage on civil rights and minorities, which TTT believes is inflammatory and engages in "racial politics." (Discovery Education, U.S. History – Civil War to Present, Grade 6)
- TTT deems the work of psychologist Kenneth B. Clark, which was cited in the ruling in *Brown v. Board of Education*, to be inflammatory and asks for its deletion. TTT calls a second reference to *Brown v. Board of Education* "redundant" and asks for its removal. (Discovery Education, U.S. History – Civil War to Present, Grade 6)
- TTT insists that the United States is a Christian country, adding that too much coverage is given to Muslims (Discovery Education, U.S. History – Civil War to Present, Grade 6)
- TTT complains that The Beatles and Bruce Springsteen are mention as artists that were influenced by Buddy Holly. Because The Beatles and Springsteen are not Texans, TTT believes that are Waylon Jennings, Willie Nelson and should be mentioned as having been influenced by Holly. (HMH, Texas History)

### Truth in Texas Textbooks reviewers

Dr. Sandra Alfonsi: One of two primary reviewers for most of the textbooks in the TTT project

- Education: Bachelor's degree in French language and literature from George Washington University; Ph.D. in romance languages and literature from Catholic University of America (<http://www.linkedin.com/pub/sandra-alfonsi/10/598/4b9>)
- On her website, <http://textbookalert.com>, she identifies herself as the head of ACT! For America's textbook review project. ACT! is an anti-Muslim group run by Brigitte Gabriel.
- Curriculum watch chair of Hadassah-Dallas Chapter (but doesn't live in Texas)
- Is credited with authoring "Troubling Trends in American Education." <http://www.hadassah.org/site/pp.asp?c=bjISK4NGLgJ4E&b=7743741>
- Claims she spent four years doing research for the Israeli embassy in New York City
- Video of Alfonsi available here, during a forum for EMET (The Endowment for Middle East Truth; Part 1: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MOFcvxZfAG0>; Part 3: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oPSaHuyTVX0>; Part 2 is missing from YouTube
- Facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/sandra.alfonsi2?fref=ts>



Dr. Amy Jo Baker: One of two primary reviewers for most of the textbooks for the TTT project

- At the SBOE's September social studies hearing, she complained that the books had a leftist bias. "I believe that political correctness can be a form of linguistic fascism," she said.
- Also during the hearing she complained that use of B.C.E. as opposed to B.C. was anti-Christian bias and that "jihad" should be narrowly defined as meaning only religious war (scholars agree that the term has a broader meaning not tied to violence) (<http://kut.org/post/state-education-officials-reignite-texas-textbook-battle>)
- Listed as Texas contact for the National Council for History Education (<http://www.nche.net/statecouncils>)
- Cites 40 years of social studies instruction experience (<http://truthintexastextbooks.com/sample-page/>)
- Education: Lists undergraduate and graduate degrees in social studies from Trinity University; doctorate in education leadership is from Nova Southeastern University

Pat Blair – Not listed as a reviewer but is identified by TTT as its director of research

- Education: Lists a Bachelor's in business administration, but it's not clear from where.
- Identifies herself as a home school mother, but no other mention of qualifications (<http://truthintexastextbooks.com/sample-page/>)
- Note the profile picture on her Facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/pat.blair.148?fref=ufi>

Mark Solberg

- We found information on Mr. Solberg, nor does TTT provide any information on his qualifications.

David Patterson

- TTT provides no information on his qualifications. We did find a David Patterson on the faculty at the University of Texas at Dallas, but it's unclear if this is the same person who worked with TTT. In any case, this reviewer appears to have examined just one textbook for the group.

Ellen Wald is executive director and textbook reviewer for Verity Educate. It appeared that Wald was involved with the TTT project earlier this year, but it is unclear if that remains the case. Her name is not listed on the TTT website or on the textbook reviews the group released.

- Undergraduate degree from Princeton University
- Boston University for graduate school; studied American history, Middle East history, economic history and international relations.
- Ph.D. from Boston University?
- Certificates in Near Eastern studies, creative writing and teacher preparation
- Taught middle school social studies and English in New Jersey
- Personal website with a bio and links to various articles: <http://www.ellenwald.com/>
- Facebook profile: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100007998277812&fref=ts>
- Facebook profile for Ellen Horrow: <https://www.facebook.com/ehorrow?fref=ts>
- Twitter profile: <https://twitter.com/VerityEducate>