



# Texas Beyond History K-12 Revamp

SOURCE: TEXASBEYONDHISTORY.NET

Emily McCuiston

The staff at the Texas Archeological Research Lab are delighted to share the revamped Teachers' and Kids' portions of TexasBeyondHistory.net (TBH)! The Teachers' section has been redesigned based on feedback from Texas educators to make it easier to find the lessons you want, and each of our dozens of lessons have been revised to align with current TEKS and teaching methods. The new Kids' section, TBH Kids, replaces the outdated Kids Only? Interface with streamlined navigation, a whole new look, and several new games! The TBH K-12 Revamp, as the project is called, was made possible thanks to a Texas Preservation Trust Fund grant from the Texas Historical Commission and donors from within the Texas archeological community. TBH is one of the few outlets where the Texas archeology community can share their work with the students of Texas, and their support of this project is a reflection of a shared value of education through archeology. The updated Teachers' section was completed in March 2024, and TBH Kids went live online in June.

Texas Beyond History is a free education service of the University of Texas at Austin's Texas Archeological Research Laboratory. The website has grown and evolved for 23 years. Keeping up with changing technologies and interfaces (such as phone and tablet use) is not simple for a website as large as TBH, which has tens of thousands of individual webpages. This K-12 Revamp entailed revising hundreds of html pages to improve functionality, content, and web design, to appeal to today's K-12 educators and youth.

The updated Teachers' section (<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/teach>) was launched in October 2023, and lesson updates were completed in March 2024.

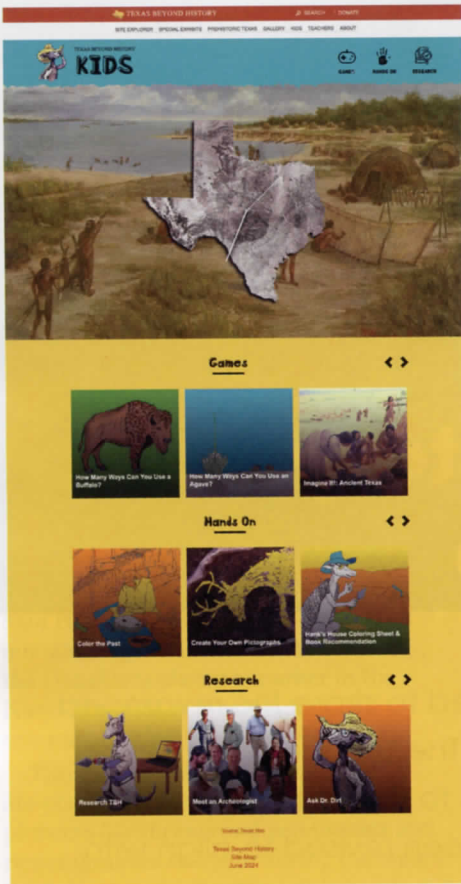
Revisions include a new web design for all of the Teachers' pages, with improved looks and navigation. The lesson plan page now can be sorted by grade and subject (social studies, language arts, math and science, and art). Rather than a long page of text, the lesson plans page also now features colorful image "cards" with lesson titles. The Teachers' Guide page has lessons and associated TBH material such as online exhibits and games organized by subject. The Teachers' landing page now highlights popular lessons and newly added lessons. These improvements were based on the feedback of an advisory committee of Texas K-12 educators!

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Each lesson plan was reviewed by Texas educators Jason Terry and Mary Rodriguez, and TEKS and lesson content was updated as needed for each lesson. A few outdated lessons were deleted from the site, and a new lesson, “Rise of the African American Free Press in Texas,” was added. All lessons were moved into a new layout, providing consistency across the lessons, which replaced a more cumbersome two-page system. Now, all lesson materials can be downloaded together from a single lesson page. We hope that improved functionality, design, and content will make it easier for you to find relevant, high-quality lesson material. We are eager for feedback, so please write Emily at [emccuiston@utexas.edu](mailto:emccuiston@utexas.edu) if you have any comments or suggestions!

The TBH Kids’ section of the website went live online in June 2024 (<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/kids>). This part of the revamp entailed a complete redesign of the Kids’ pages. The new look was developed by web designer Erica Ndubueze and the University of Texas’ Liberal Arts Instructional Technology Services with TBH staff. The most significant feature of

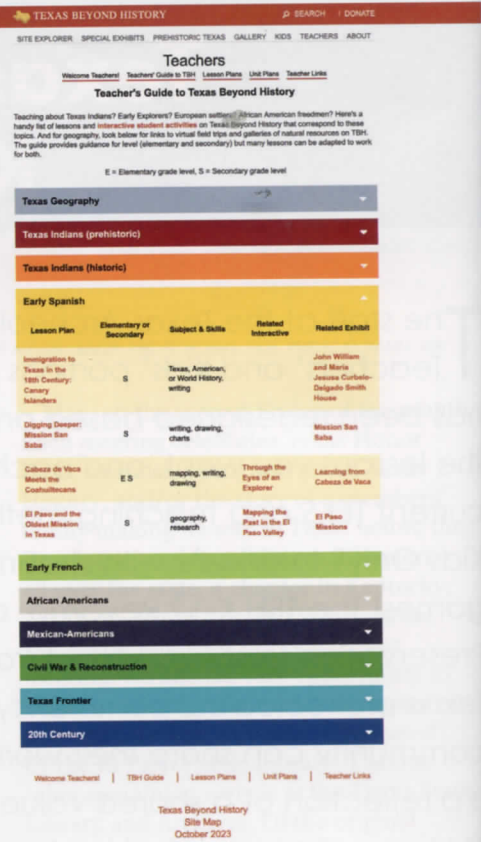
the new design is that the activity groups were simplified and condensed from seven to three categories: Games, Hands On, and Research. These groups make finding a favorite activity much easier and are accessible from a new Kids’ header and from the TBH Kids’ main page. Navigation between the Kids’ section and the rest of TBH is greatly improved by the new header format. TBH’s most popular games and new games are featured on the Kids’ main page scroll bars, which functions with touch screen devices. “Cards,” titled image squares, are now used across each section for a clean look and easy identification of each activity.

**The Teachers’ Guide page has lessons and associated TBH material such as online exhibits and games organized by subject. The Teachers’ landing page now highlights popular lessons and newly added lessons. These improvements were based on the feedback of an advisory committee of Texas K-12 educators!**

Two new games were added to the Kids’ section. “How Many Ways Can You Use an Agave?” (<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/agave.html>) is based on our most popular Kids’ game, “How Many Ways Can You Use a Buffalo?”. The buffalo game was also remade with the same great content and improved animations. “Radiocarbon Dating Games” (<https://texasbeyondhistory.net/kids/14c.html>) is a new addition to TBH Kids, a complement to the “Radiocarbon Dating Understood” exhibit that was published last year. It introduces core concepts about radiocarbon in the environment and its application to archeology, and is well suited to older K-12 students. The “Meet an

Archeologist” activity, which can be found in the “Research” section of TBH Kids, was wholly redone and features interviews with a new group of real-life archeologists.

We improved dozens of other activities, updating external links, fixing broken interactives, simplifying navigation, and updating aesthetics and function. To coincide with the new TBH Kids’ section, TBH’s homepage was also updated to incorporate styles and colors used in the Kids’ pages. The homepage now features recent posts to our Instagram feed as well! Follow us @texasbeyondhistory to learn about content across the site and be alerted when new content is created.



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We are always interested in learning how we can better serve you—the educators—so please reach out to us with comments or suggestions. We hope the K-12 Revamp will engage you in teaching Texas archeology and history, and will foster interest in and stewardship of the cultural resources of Texas by today’s youth!

*Emily McCuiston is a professional archeologist and assistant editor at TexasBeyondHistory.net. Begun in 2001, Texas Beyond History’s enduring mission is to share the results of archeological and historical research on the cultural heritage of Texas.*