

PRSD History/Social Studies Curriculum Review Summary October 2019-June 2020

Curriculum Review Committee:

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1. Objective of Review

- a) Gather information & data from stakeholders to be comprehensive in our review
- b) Develop a document that outlines the scope and sequence of history/SS curriculum
- c) Identify high quality and aligned materials that are accessible for teachers and all students
- d) Ensure curriculum is culturally responsive, outline instructional practices consistent with guiding principles, and make changes and adjustments as needed.
- e) Identify Professional Development and create a communication plan needed

2. Summary of Process

The committee commenced meeting in Person in November. Several meetings were held for the entire group. The group continued to meet monthly with eventual subcommittee meetings for the varying grade levels.

The group began by outlining the objectives for the curriculum curriculum review process and establishing a timeline for each step. The group reviewed the structure of the newly released [History and Social Studies frameworks and state standards from 2018](#). This is the first such comprehensive revision since 2003 and the original version from 1997. We also all read and discussed some of the initial work by [Zaretta Hammond for MA DESE's framework on Culturally Responsive Teaching](#). The group also reviewed and

discussed the video titled, [*"The Danger of the Single Story" by Novelist Chimamanda Adichie.*](#)

Next, the group began to collect the "current status" of history and social studies curriculum and instruction by each grade level and members presented their findings to the entire group, allowing all grade levels to review the current status. These findings were compiled in one document and members began to compare it against the revised standards, identifying where shifts needed to be made.

Next, the group devised two surveys - one for families and the one for staff. These surveys were administered in January and the results were reviewed in detail and incorporated into the comprehensive review. Participation was high and the results provided added insight for committee members.

The committee then began using an Understanding By Design or Backwards by Design approach to mapping out the curriculum and instruction outline for each grade level at PreK-grade 7 and then course structure and sequence for grades 8-12. Attention was paid to the major shifts in content expectations at each grade and the 8-12 level, and attention was paid to the "Practices of History and Social Studies" to ensure adherence to those expectations and vertical alignment was developed.

Further development of the curriculum documents was done and cross-referenced with a needs assessment for curriculum materials that are current, grade/class appropriate, accessible for varying levels of students, and reflective of culturally responsive expectations. Plans were initially made to review materials with publishers and possibly even try samples however, the school shutdown has prevented that from occurring.

Recommendations have been developed and a timeline developed for making curriculum shifts, securing the appropriate materials, and providing the professional development needed to make these changes. This timeline has been impacted by the school shutdown.

3. Survey results

Surveys were issued to all staff and families in Pentucket. Below is a summary of the survey results that have impacted the committee's review.

Teacher Survey

In the teacher survey both the secondary teachers and elementary teachers all indicated that the skills in social studies and history that were most important and needing the most work were writing and research. Teachers at both levels did not rate Map Skills as important as other skills.

It was clear that students at all levels are routinely interacting with and engaged with content related to history and social studies in a variety of settings, even if it is not part of direct

instruction. The survey indicated that 87% of secondary teachers indicated that they reference historical events or context in their class weekly and the elementary staff largely indicated that they use non-fiction text and other historical resources regularly in their classes.

One important finding that may have a significant impact on school and district planning from the teacher survey was the use of a standardized citation format for research. Currently, the History department at 7-12 uses the MLA format. The survey of secondary teachers indicated 47% of teachers in all subject areas already use MLA 8 in their course. However, more importantly, nearly all of those who do not (they use a different format) indicated that they would be willing to use MLA 8 as a standardized citation format for research. This lends itself to a school/district procedures for MLA 8, allowing us to plan direct lessons and other support resources like a Google doc plugin, or other resources. There is also potential to trickle down to 3-6 grades in a developmentally appropriate fashion for MLA 8 basic structure building a strong district practice.

Teachers at all levels indicated they wanted to collaborate with the social studies teachers or as social studies teachers. At the secondary level $\frac{2}{3}$ of teachers who responded would like to collaborate with Social Studies and the Elementary teachers expressed a desire to collaborate with 66% responding that they would like to meet 3-4 times a year with district teams to discuss SS practices. Nearly 50% indicated they were interested in observing a colleague teach social studies.

Family Survey

The family surveys received 203 responses from families with students at the secondary level and 173 with students at the elementary level. The committee was pleased with the response feeling it is providing a solid set of data points. The survey sought to gain information on parent/guardian perspective of their child's experience with social studies and history in school as well as gain information on how households view and interact with history and social studies content at home.

When asked what skills parents felt their children have learned in social studies classes, the secondary parents overwhelmingly indicated that reading and research skills were at the forefront. The Elementary responses had the highest-rated skill as reading (80%) with the next two highest skills rated were writing and research. Surprisingly, slightly over 50% said collaboration and communication were skills which their elementary students learned. This seemed low to the committee members as that is generally a major focus.

When asked about what content their children have learned, the secondary parents clearly responded that US History and Geography are two areas that had been taught. Elementary parents also stated that US History is the highest in terms of what they see their students have learned in SS classes with Geography second highest. However, current events was a topic that parents seemed unaware was covered throughout social studies classes. The committee

discussed this as possibly because it is embedded in classes and not stand-alone subject areas.

The perspective from households provided some insights into possible measures the departments and district could take to communicate what is taught and how students engage with history. At both the secondary and elementary levels, the data clearly showed that families are discussing current events at home. At the elementary level, 90% of households discuss historic and current events, yet parents reported that only 50% of their children discuss social studies or history content they learned in school while at home. This led the committee to question how younger kids may not really be understanding what Social Studies is and we discussed possible actions such as incorporating questions in weekly newsletters, e.g., “Be sure to ask your first grader about the atlas they saw today?” The secondary teachers also considered that parents are talking about current events and history at home; how do we let them know WE are doing it in school too?

Households also obtain information about history and current events differently now than they may have 10 years ago or when many of our current texts and resources were written. Our survey indicated that over 50% of homes are obtaining information via social media which is an important factor in teaching students about primary and secondary resources.

From the open-ended responses, families indicated a few areas for possible growth within the social studies and history curriculum.

Areas of growth as identified by parents and families:

- Including local history and purposeful current events - came up frequently
- Avoiding biased research and engaging students in understanding social justice
- Teaching factual history, not glorified history that has been debunked
- Native American perspective is missing
- The teaching of cultures

4. Development of Curriculum Guiding Documents

- We created “key shifts” documents for each grade and class which outlined the content areas that would need to be adjusted based on the revised state standards
- These documents also reviewed the practices of social studies and identified which practices were used already and which practices may not have received as much focus or purposeful teaching.
- The Guiding Documents indicate some areas of concern at the elementary level to provide an adequate amount of time to teach the content areas. Several steps have been reviewed, including use of ELA and Non-fiction text to support
- At the High School level, Guiding Documents indicate the need for text materials, a continued review of the upper-level World History scope and sequence, a

continued effort to integrate culturally responsive activities and materials, and more promotion of our current events work to the outside community.

5. Summary of Findings and Major Shifts

- Introduction to the Practices of History/Social Studies is a new component of teaching history. While many of the practices have been in place, by the nature of good history instruction and planning, there has never been such a document which clearly articulates the purposeful nature of teaching the actual practices and then planning for students to engage in these practices in a vertical manner throughout their educational experience.
- There are several key content shifts that require teachers to review the actual content and secure new instructional resources.
 - PreK - no major shifts; a focus continues on understanding social skills and communities
 - K - No major shifts. Classroom citizenship, basic geography and map skills, along with shared traditions
 - 1 - A focus on Leadership and understanding our role in the community
 - 2 - Strong emphasis on global geography and migration, movement of people and its impact on civics, culture, and economy
 - 3 - There is much greater depth to the Native American perspective and interactions with early settlers. Learning far more about the diverse Native American indigenous people of the region. Reading historical documents as primary sources - [Example of Key Shifts Document that teachers were provided with this week to plan for next year](#)
 - 4 - A focus on the regions and states of the US with geography, culture and economics as anchors. Expanded study of explorers to the US and the westward expansion of the US. Construction of maps and creation of timelines. - [Example of the Understanding by Design Plan for the entire year](#)
 - 5 - A much deeper dive into the creation of the United States but with much deeper content related to the treatment of indigenous peoples and slavery. Primary source documents serve as key features of study. American History up through abolition movements and pre-civil war. Connection to modern-day Civil Rights movements.
- The Grade 6 and 7 curriculum is essentially a 2-year course in world geography and ancient civilizations. The grade levels are working together to design an aligned course. 20-21 will be the implementation year.
- Grade 8 - Adjustments were made for the 19-20 school year in this course as the 8th Grade course became a year-long study in Civics with the intention of it being an action-oriented or project-based learning experience. This work was closely supported by Harvard's Democratic Knowledge Project, as we were recipients of a grant. Grade 8 utilizes materials and support from iCivics as well.

- Grades 9 and 10 have made some adjustments vis-a-vis the 2018 Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks. We intend to promote our work in current events more widely in light of the parent survey data (true for all high school classes). We have a significant need for new texts to provide more current and culturally responsive US History perspectives. US History I is taught in 9th Gr. and US History II is taught in 10th. MLA 8 is standard in high school social studies classes and we look to collaborate with other subjects on the same.
- In grades 11 through 12 we identified that our World History curriculum should be further reviewed & evaluated vis-a-vis the 2018 Frameworks. Mapping of content standards is warranted but interrupted by the COVID school closure. Our current approach uses multiple pathways and a combination of classes that is intended to cover all of the World History standards, while providing students with options and additional electives in Economics, Psychology, AP offerings, and others. We intend to promote our work in current events more widely in light of the parent survey data (true for all high school classes).

6. Recommendations

a. Curriculum

- i. Completion of UbD plans is the first phase of curriculum updates. This will establish a general scope and sequence for each class with essential questions, assessment options, and help staff plan. The core of these were completed in this review process but now wider input is needed on the more detailed elements.
- ii. Teachers in K-5 will need to view the SS/History Curriculum in two ways. First - what content, vocabulary and concepts (Examining the Declaration of Independence) need direct instruction along with what skills need direct practice with (ex: map skills). This will require designated time for SS/History lessons. Secondly - what content, and skills and concepts, can be integrated into Literacy lessons with text and research/writing. This will take purposeful planning and consideration of available resources.
- iii. The Key Shifts documents - with "new" information highlighted in red, will be shared with those UbD plans. These may be the most helpful from a teacher perspective initially so they can consider what they need to be more informed and prepared to teach about.
- iv. Grades 6 and 7 is essentially a 2-year course in Ancient Civilizations across the globe, World Geography and Cultures, and the early formations of government. These two years have been mapped so the 7th graders pick-up where they will leave off from 6th grade and complete the 7th Gr. year with a study of how ancient cultures formed the foundations for existing civic structures and modern government, connecting to the 8th Grade Civics curriculum.
- v. Grade 8 and 9 will continue to leverage the state grant received in conjunction with Harvard University's Democratic Knowledge Project. This

will focus on building curriculum and a Project-Based Learning experience around Civics.

- vi. The HS and MS level curriculum has been reviewed to ensure that the practices of SS/History are well-taught and experienced through the 6 years. Some revisions have been made to UbD plans to ensure complete coverage.
- vii. Additionally, some adjustments have been made to the sequence of US History I and II for standards alignment.
- viii. World History content in grades 11 and 12 has been reviewed and mapped for coverage in the various pathways students may take. Further work and mapping is needed due to the COVID school closure. We have a need to demonstrate to students how these standards are met so they can be more informed about course selection. There will likely be course title changes as we make adjustments. This would be reflected in the 21-22 Program of Studies..

b. Instruction

- i. UbD planning guides have been developed with some sections needing the full slate of teachers attending to elements. Teachers will need time in grade levels to review and add components of specific common assignments, projects and assessments. The committee recommends use of 3 Early release days scheduled in 20-21 for this purpose.
- ii. Consideration of time is a major item to address. Grades 3-5 have considerably more content to cover than in prior years.
- iii. The committee recommends that the use of nonfiction reading resources (biographies, text sources, etc.) be used as part of the Literacy work giving attention to content and vocabulary related to concepts in SS/history. A consistent and systematic approach to direct and explicit vocabulary instruction is needed and this can be provided to staff through in-house PD.
- iv. Rather than devote just 30 minutes per day to SS, it is recommended that K-5 classrooms work in units for both SS and Science. An example would be a week of SS, then a week of Science, etc. This would give longer class periods for more in-depth study of content and a better opportunity to connect content to literacy and vocabulary with a specific focus.
- v. It is recommended that in Grades 7-12 all content areas use the same research citation format. Based on survey data, it is recommended that MLA 8 become the district-wide format. HS Administration will address this in 20-21 with all departments.

c. Materials

- i. Elementary

1. Biographies for diverse individuals in history (grade 1- leaders, grade 3, grade 5 - early leaders)
2. Materials on Native Peoples of MA and Pentucket
3. Consistent resource of E-Maps - to display on projection
4. Wall or poster maps (political US, 13 colonies, world maps grade 2, 5, 6 and 7)
5. Map of MA (grades 3)
6. Grade 3 text Updated Massachusetts, Our Home 2020 Student Edition \$47.95 per copy (175 copies = \$9000) The committee recommends this purchase for the 20-21 school year as it is the current version of the text we use but the updated and more accurate version. This comes with a 1 year e version for free.
7. Grade 4 and 5 Text/Online ex: McGraw-Hill Impact \$80.71 per book for 6 years (350 copies = \$28,248). The committee does recommend a purchase at this time but recognizes the need for a consistent source of facts, visuals, non-fiction text. This is an example of the expense of such a program for just 2 grades. The 4th and 5th are in the great need of this consistent resource. It is possible that a text selection for 4th and 5th could be piloted in 20-21 and a decision made in conjunction with a Literacy plan that focuses on Knowledge Building with Foundational Skills.
8. The committee would like to sample and or pilot some of these materials in 20-21 with willing teachers.
9. The District is also working on a K-6 Literacy Plan. Such a plan may likely call for a core literacy program. Most core literacy programs that would match the requirements of ESSA and the MA DESE would include "content building" or "knowledge building" text and resources with explicit vocabulary instruction. It is recommended that we make that decision first, then see what history text resource would be the best fit to complement, rather than duplicate what may exist in a content-rich core literacy program. Recommendations for both would be at the end of the 20-21 school year for purchase and implementation in 21-22.
10. Grades 6 and 7 is essentially a 2-year course in Ancient Civilizations across the globe, World Geography and Cultures, and the early formations of government. A singular resource to cover the two years would be the preferred material/resource. Wall maps and atlases would also be extremely useful. The McGraw Hill text for 6th and 7th was designed specifically for MA and aligns perfectly with our course layout. A hard cover text for each student and 6 year e-licence is \$37,000. A class set of text and a 1 year e-licence is \$20,000.

11. Grade 8 is implementing the new civics curriculum with material support from the Democratic Knowledge Project at Harvard University (no cost). There is also support from iCivics. Teachers have a need for classroom materials such as pull-down maps.
12. Grades 9 & 10: US History I & II needs text replacement. Our current text (American Vision; McGraw Hill) was published in 1999 and is in poor condition. We currently issue texts to 9th graders but have classroom sets only for 10th graders. A six year e-licence and a class set of texts would be \$35,000 and a 1 year license and text set would be \$20,000.
13. Grades 11 & 12: AP students are responsible for their own text purchases at Pentucket. World History, Psychology, and Political Science use teacher-generated materials. After a continued review of our World History scope and sequence, there will likely be a need for materials.

d. Professional Development

- i. Content PD for Elementary Teachers charged with new and deeper content about
 1. US History (grades 3 and 5)
 2. European Settlers and conflict with Native Peoples (grades 1, 3, 5)
 3. Deeper understanding of slavery and it's longitudinal impact (grades 3 and 5)
 4. Emancipation and post Civil War racial relations
 5. Local history of Pentucket native peoples (Grades 3, 5 and 9)
 6. Possible "Facing History" course for multiple grade levels
 7. Further work across the district at all levels on culturally responsive teaching, using Zaretta Hammond's work, along with other resources to build the capacity of all staff members to understand implicit bias, its impact on learning, and how to improve our own practices, while facilitating meaningful conversations with students about challenging topics.
 8. Possible "content" PD for K-5 teachers could be offered by HS Staff and collaborate with neighboring elementary schools. It would not be "program" or textbook specific.
 9. Teachers in all subject matters in Grades 7-12 receive PD on MLA 8 Citation format.
- ii. **How to implement the "Practices of Social Studies and History"**
 1. MS and HS dept. Is updated curriculum to ensure that Practices of Social Studies and History is the primary focus with longitudinal planning to be sure all students regularly and routinely are engaged in these practices in:

- a. Learning activities
- b. Learning tasks
- c. Projects and presentations
- d. Group work

e. Communication

- i. Communication expectations have been disrupted by the school shutdown.
- ii. This report will be shared with all teachers at K-6 and with the outline of a timeline for implementation and future decisions.
- iii. There are 2 documents that each teacher at K-5 will need. The Key Shifts document and the UbD plans (in draft format). These will help them to understand what is expected.
- iv. In some cases we will seek staff who would like to pilot or sample various materials.
- v. Communication regarding the purpose and intent of 3 designated early release days for work on the UbD plans

7. Timeline of Implementation

- 1) Key shifts and draft UbD plans to be shared digitally with all staff K-5 and SS/History staff for review and preparation - June 2020
- 2) August optional PD for K-6 staff members focused on content and vocabulary development (offered by PRSD HSStaff) - August 2020
- 3) Early release days designated for SS/History Content and grade level preparation, further completion of UbD Plans - August 2020
- 4) MS and HS SS/History class changes in specific content reflected and updated for 2020-2021 school year. - August 2020
- 5) Purchase Gr. 3 MA Text (175) Massachusetts, "Our Home 2020 Student Edition" - August 2020 (\$8,500)
- 6) Purchase various sets (5-6 copies) of biographies of figures mentioned in standards or covered for grades 1, 3, and 5 (\$500-\$750 per classroom) - (\$7000) - August 2020
- 7) Possible purchase of US History text resource for Grade 5. (\$12,000.) August 2020 - or August 2021. Or Pilot for Grade 5
- 8) Train staff in Grades 2-5 in use of <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs> for primary source documents. August-November 2020
- 9) MS & HS discussion and training on district-wide use of MLA format for all classes and citations in research papers. - October 2020
- 10) Course title and descriptions altered for 21-22 school year in Program of Studies - November 2020
- 11) Secure and pilot text samples for HS Class US History I and US History II - October 2020 - decision to be made about purchase in July 2021

- 12) Secure and pilot text samples for Grade 6 and 7 World History - 2 year combo course. Or possible purchase (ex: McGraw Hill text - \$77.19 per copy = \$27,000) for 21-22 or text+6 year online version (\$101 per copy = \$35,000)
- 13) Grade 8 Civic Project Based Learning expo or demonstration - May 2021
- 14) Pilot US History text in 20-21 for possible purchase in July of 2021. To outfit both 9th and 10th grade with a 6 year e-licence and class set = \$37,000.

In general - we are in significant need of resource updating. The preferred approach would be to purchase e-license for HS students in 6 year bundles. Elem. students would do better with a hardcover resource paired with a general annual subscription to e-services for paired selections and current news that can be used for SS, SCI and Literacy like Discovery Ed. (\$3K-7K per year) This does require some organization and preparation for best use. The 6th and 7th Grade course should use a hard cover text with supplemental e-resources. We do not believe a multi-year e-license makes sense for this course as the content is unlikely to change.