

K-12 BSD Social Sciences Position Paper - 2021

Not simply to study the world, but to *change it*.

The Social Sciences play a central role in preparing students for informed civic engagement and responsible participation within and across their local and global communities. However, abundant research illustrates the troubling reality that fewer and fewer young people are receiving a high-quality Social Sciences education. In the Beaverton School District, we believe that a transformative K-12 Social Sciences education - and our students - can be part of the change that leads to a more just and equitable² community and world.

Social Sciences education* helps cultivate the intellectual and critical power for students to develop historical and contemporary knowledge, critical thinking, communication, and research skills. Additionally, Social Sciences education invites students to learn through multiple perspectives with an intentional inclusion of historically marginalized and historically excluded groups. Student learning expectations and learning targets are grounded in the 2021 Oregon Social Science Standards integrated with Ethnic Studies,³ and across domains of:

- *Civics and Government*
- *Geography*
- *Historical Knowledge and Historical Thinking*
- *Economics and Financial Literacy*
- *Social Science Analysis*
- *Multicultural and Ethnic Studies*

*K-12 Social Sciences education also includes specific learning through Tribal History/Shared History in Oregon, Holocaust and other genocides education, and international human rights education.

A culturally relevant approach and a culturally responsive Social Sciences education invites students to learn about the past and present, to build and grow within their community, to identify and work to dismantle injustice, and to promote liberty, justice, and equity in their communities and world. This includes learning that:

- Validates students' lived experiences and values
- Disrupts power dynamics that privilege dominant groups and perspectives
- Empowers students 1) to connect to experiences beyond their own, 2) to examine their own perspective by learning through multiple perspectives, and 3) to develop a historical and contemporary sociopolitical or critical consciousness of the world around them.⁴

In BSD, we believe a transformative Social Sciences education invites our students to:

Students explore one's self, community, nation, and world.

From the first days of Kindergarten, a transformative Social Sciences education meaningfully and inclusively invites students to explore their own identity and self, school and family, neighborhood and community, local and regional history, state and national history, and world history.

Students believe, belong, and thrive in an inclusive learning community.

A transformative Social Sciences education honors all viewpoints to the extent that they do not promote hate or bias,⁵ racism, objectification or exploitation, or discrimination.

- Social Science classes must be inclusive, dynamic, and affirming places where all students and staff of all backgrounds, cultures, and abilities feel welcomed, valued, challenged, seen and heard.

Students practice civic engagement by exploring historical and current events and issues from multiple perspectives.

A transformative Social Sciences education seeks to identify, explore, and analyze civic virtues (including respect for individual rights, community rights, democratic participation, diversity, equity, justice, freedom, liberty, and deliberation). Additionally, Social Sciences education addresses the complex nature of systemic oppression in the pursuit of a better world both now and in the future. Ultimately, Social Sciences education can help secure *and* enhance our dynamic and evolving democracy.

Students acknowledge and learn through the histories, contributions, resilience and resistance, and perspectives of many racial, ethnic, and social groups.

A transformative Social Sciences education includes learning through and from multiple perspectives with an intentional inclusion of historically marginalized and historically excluded groups. This includes learning from multiple racial, ethnic, and social groups, including intersecting groups; tribal nations, and religious groups. Further, this includes but is not limited to individuals who are:

- American Indian/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian, or Americans of African, Asian, Pacific Island, Chicanx, Latinx, or Middle Eastern descent; individuals from all religious backgrounds; and individuals from historically marginalized groups including but not limited to women, people with disabilities, immigrants, refugees, seniors/elders, and individuals who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning.

Students develop into critical consumers, producers of knowledge, and future leaders. A

transformative Social Sciences education recognizes and analyzes issues of historical and contemporary significance, as well as issues of local and societal significance. This includes asking critical questions and developing research investigations, separating evidence-based claims from opinions, and evaluating the usefulness and degree of reliability of different historical and current sources.

- Sustained engagement in the Social Sciences cultivates students as media-literate learners, inquirers, change-makers, and responsible global citizens.

We believe a transformative Social Sciences education calls our educators and schools to believe, belong, grow, and thrive in our dynamic and diverse community.

Ultimately, a Social Sciences education is achieved through a partnership between teachers, students, families, schools, administrators, and our diverse communities. We all must work together to ensure all students are valued for their diversity and contributions to our community, fostered in their historical and current thinking, and equipped to explore, analyze, collaborate, and act on local, societal, and global problems. We all must continue learning, growing, and coming together to secure *and* enhance our dynamic and evolving democracy.

We, as educators in the Beaverton School District, have the incredible responsibility and humble privilege of helping facilitate this transformational learning. Additionally, we as educators also have the responsibility to challenge our own biases and perceptions, and to look inward and constantly examine our own teaching practices, pedagogy, attitudes, and instructional materials with an anti-biased/antiracist focus.

In BSD, we believe that a transformative K-12 Social Sciences education - and our students - can be part of the change that leads to a more just and equitable community and world. We believe the change starts *within* our school district and our educators.