



**Noblesville Schools
K - 12 Social Studies Program Review**

**Report to the Board of School Trustees
December 2020**

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**Social Studies Program Review
Committee Members**

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Social Studies Program Review Activities

September 2019	Form committee Overview Social Studies Program Review - Purpose - Process - Timeline Review and critique NS Foundations of K - 12 Social Studies Program (2015) Select text sets for background information
October - November	Read and discuss information on - general social studies curriculum and instruction - underrepresented groups: African American, immigrant and refugee, women, LatinX and Hispanic, Asian American, Native American Indian, LGBTQ+, low SES, [dis]ability, religion Form groups to - create and administer surveys, and observe secondary social studies instruction - create and apply tools for audits of curricula and materials, and view videos of elementary social studies instruction
January - March	Conduct surveys, analyze results, conduct followup parent surveys for more information and clarification Create tools for use in classroom observations and audits of curricular units and materials
July - November	Synthesize information, evaluate status of review, revise activities and timeline
December	Present report to Board of School Trustees

Organization of the Work

Background Literature

All committee members read selected materials related to social studies curriculum and pedagogy. In addition, small groups read text sets related to the representation of groups of people within social studies instruction, including (dis)ability, African American, Asian American, gender (women), immigrant/refugee, Latino/a/x/Hispanic, LGBTQ+, Native American Indian, low income, and religion. While this is not an exhaustive list, the descriptions of how they are included in or excluded from materials and activities may be generalized to other groups.

Discussions of shared readings solicited responses to the questions: What stood out to you? What challenged your thinking? What are you wondering about? and What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies? Notes from these small groups appear in Appendix A.

Surveys

Approximately half of the Program Review Committee collaborated on survey questions for

- K-5 general education teachers and secondary social studies teachers
- Students in grades 5 and 8, and in US History (mostly grade 11)
- Parents of students who were surveyed

Responses were received from 1847 students, 572 parents, and 133 teachers.

Apart from demographic information such as grade level and years in Noblesville Schools, questions in the student and parent surveys asked about attitudes toward social studies. A series of questions focused on how often students learned *about* the groups of people noted above and how often they learned stories told *by* the people in these groups. Participants also indicated the groups to which students belong or identify.

Teachers were asked how often their social studies instruction includes stories or information *about* and *by* the groups of people being considered, the groups to which they belong or identify, and the sources (such as state standards and curriculum maps) that influence their instruction. Teachers were also invited to share or explain further if they chose.

Followup surveys were sent to 225 demographically representative parents to obtain further information about the results of the first surveys. Planned focus group discussions with students and teachers for the same purpose were halted by the suspension of in-person instruction in schools.

Audits of Curricular Units and Materials, and Observations and Analysis of Instruction

Sample units of study and related materials were used to develop an instrument for analysis of the inclusion of underrepresented groups within social studies curriculum and instruction. A tool was also developed to guide observations and analysis of instruction in secondary social studies classes. Both projects to gather data about current social studies curriculum, materials, and instruction were interrupted by the suspension of in-person instruction in schools. However, the

development of the curriculum audit tool exposed the significant need to revise and augment elementary social studies units of study.

Adjustments and Conclusion of Program Review Process

Among plans for the 2020-21 school year that were discussed in spring and summer 2020 was the topic of how best to continue the Social Studies Program Review. Directors of Learning judged that the benefits of initiating curriculum revisions outweighed the value of completing all activities that were originally planned for the program review process.

Compelling arguments for moving forward rest on the state's release of revised social studies standards in spring 2020 and evidence the review process had already gathered of sparse inclusion of various perspectives in social studies instruction. In addition, after the initial review of literature, committee members read a position statement from the National Council for the Social Studies, "A Vision of Powerful Teaching and Learning in the Social Studies" (2016), that describes the qualities of a model social studies teaching and learning program. Even the curtailed analysis of our program reveals an imperative need for review and revision.

The curriculum audit tool will be used in the improvement of social studies instructional units, and in addition to typical activities, as a result of the formal Social Studies Program Review curriculum revisions will incorporate questions about the groups, stories, and points of view that should be represented in units of study. This curriculum work will continue beyond the 2020-21 school year and will be accompanied by professional development opportunities for teachers and other school staff.

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Evidence from Program Review Activities

Key Points from Readings

- Students benefit from including different perspectives in their learning.
- Stories of underrepresented groups should be embedded in instruction, not presented as separate lessons.
- Authentic voices are imperative: stories should be told by or from the point of view of underrepresented groups.
- Knowledge, understanding, and credible resources are necessary for teachers to effectively include a variety of information and perspectives.
- Precise and appropriate terminology is important.

Selected Information from Surveys

Students

- In general, a decreasing percentage of students in grades 5, 8, and 11 report *never* hearing information by or about specific groups of people, or hearing about them only during special times dedicated to them. Exceptions include information by Native American Indians, and information by and about persons with different abilities (special needs).
- The highest percentages in survey results include 79% of US History students learn *about* Black people, 91% report learning *about* White people, and 78% learn from stories *by* White people.
- An average of 81% of students report never learning about or from LGBTQ+ people.
- Approximately 10% of students belong to or identify themselves as Black, Latinx, and/or LGBTQ+. Approximately 13% belong to or identify with a religion other than Christianity.

Parents

- 91% of parents describe social studies instruction as either important or extremely important.
- 34% of parents said students learn stories by or about Blacks *never* or *only during special times dedicated to them*, while only 14% of teachers and 15% of students responded in this way.
- Open-ended items in follow up surveys prompted several responses in which similar ideas were expressed.
 - Explain the value of social studies instruction.
 - The past informs the future (11).
 - It helps students make decisions critically (11).
 - It is the foundation of our country/how it is run (10).
 - Explain the value of including multiple perspectives in social studies instruction.
 - Exposure to different viewpoints/cultures/sides (12).
 - Should all groups be represented equally?
 - All should be taught equally (10).
 - Not necessarily equally, but diverse perspectives should be consistent.

Teachers

- Information about and by white men is most consistently included in social studies instruction, while information by or about differently able, LGBTQ+, and Native American Indian people is least likely to figure in instruction.
- Significant differences exist in teacher and student responses regarding the inclusion of materials *by* authors who are Latinx, Asian American, immigrant, and differently able.
- Teachers base their instruction primarily on state standards and NS curriculum maps.
- The most common topic in teachers' comments was the need for resources to guide and support teaching.

Recommendations

- Update foundational statements of K-12 social studies instruction--philosophy, goals, and beliefs--to
 - express specific goals and desired outcomes
 - incorporate the role of citizens, including students, as agents of change
 - reflect an approach that is more inclusive of different perspectives
- Leverage ongoing standards review work to identify essential standards, unpack them, and emphasize them in curricular revisions.
- Incorporate stories, perspectives, and voices of all groups in the study of social studies.
- Use the curriculum audit tool to review and improve curriculum maps.
- Obtain or create resources and materials to support the implementation of revised unit plans.
- Provide teachers with needed professional learning to support effective social studies instruction.

Appendix A

Notes from Readings

The goal of our reading was to gain additional perspective to serve as a lens into the work of the program review.

Ability

What stood out to you?

- Thinking about abilities with a multicultural lens, disabled in particular.
- Disability as diversity and assumptions that are made by people who are not disabled (ableism)
- As educators we know the physical disability and lump together all disabilities. How are we servicing them? Do we constantly compare and think about what normal looks like vs people's reality.
- The motto of the disability rights movement is "Nothing About Us Without Us." Authentically include people with disabilities. Do we highlight individuals with disabilities when discussing achievements or accomplishments?

What challenged your thinking?

- Ableism - Starbucks took away straws which affected those who needed it out of necessity. We need to make sure they are included or have a voice in decision-making.
- How am I through my diversity and equity training advocating for those with disabilities?
- I did not know the difference between disability (physical or mental condition that limits movements, senses or activities), impairments (physical or mental loss of function) and handicaps (physical, mental or social restriction).

What are you wondering about?

- Learning more about the harmful legacies as it relates to ableism and colonialism - causing a disability to happen?

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- Are we accurately selecting materials that are being told from authentic perspectives.

African American

What stood out to you?

- Making sure that we are not just teaching Black History in February. Shifting people's thinking about only teaching or introducing people things within a specified month only.
- 4 ways that we make sure that students learn about Black History all year long: keep adding books about black individuals to classroom and school library, incorporate black history and experiences into all units, engage students in critical conversations about how black people are portrayed in the media and challenge yourself to read books by black others and other authors of color.
- Black history is American history. There are untold stories of African Americans that are left out of the history that is being taught in schools specifically. Making sure when students are learning about the American Revolutionary War, Civil War, etc.. that African Americans are also represented with the impacts and their contributions taught and celebrated.
- Expanding the narratives and stories to include a variety of African American stories taught in schools. K-5, students are told about the same 5 or so African Americans year after year as if these are the only stories worthy of being told.

What challenged your thinking?

- I struggle with the elementary level (K-2) and how we can teach history throughout the year.
- How the history that we are teaching can be embedded throughout and what that looks like?
- How can we make sure that what we are teaching is developmentally appropriate?

- That children aren't the ones afraid to talk about race, its the adults. All children are capable of learning about race.
- It is at the elementary level where race and the history of race needs to occur.
- How can we learn from other communities, urban districts, resources to help incorporate this instruction in our curriculum?

What are you wondering about?

- What will teaching Black History all year long look like in the elementary setting where social studies is not taught as much? How can we teach it interdisciplinary?
- How can we be more aware of the importance of integration vs. isolation?
- Trusting the resources that we use and determining if the source is a true/accurate depiction
- How can we leverage our diverse families to bring black history education into the elementary classroom curriculum?
- How can we embed more depictions of African American culture, representation, resources, to the elementary buildings.
- How can we ensure we are not cherry picking which history is taught and not avoiding areas that make teachers uncomfortable?
- How can we ensure we are not isolating African American students while delivering the curriculum?

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- How are teaching history?
- What does the teaching look like in all grade levels?
- What resources are we using?
- Are we using authentic pieces/resources?
- How are we effectively integrating the history that needs to be taught?
- Execution of the instruction
- Student interaction and engagement
- Who or what themes are left out
- The feeling in the room

Asian American

What stood out to you?

- "Model minority" is problematic although it seems positive at first glance
- The term "Asian American" is a problem because too broad of a term for many groups of people
- "The Life Changing Power of Representation"-transformative feeling of feeling represented in the media (20 years went by between *Joy Luck Club* and *Crazy Rich Asians!*)

What challenged your thinking?

- Blanket terms can still be isolating, it can be important to be even more specific when talking about cultures and race, particularly Asian American cultures

What are you wondering about?

- How can we use social media to connect with powerful examples of Asian Americans to influence our discussions and perspective?
- How can we also incorporate more texts written by Asian American into the topics that are consistently taught in the curriculum. (I'm thinking about the book *No-No Boys* by John Okada, 1957)

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- How deeply students benefit from seeing themselves (their culture and race) represented

Gender

What stood out to you?

- The untold stories of women from history (e.g., Emily Warren Roebling)
- Historically, men have participated in alliances with women who have been advocates for women's rights
- The term "persistent women"
- The slow/limited pace of change / attention to this area today

What are you wondering about?

- Related resources for the elementary grades
- Women's representation in current units of study
- "Women's History Month?"
- The label "persistent women"

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- U.S. representation vs. international perspectives [*globalized economy*]
- Need for inclusion of focus on female STEM achievements like Ada Lovelace (1st computer programmer) [*"smart girl" social issues*]
- Systematic attention to development of advocacy skillset and mindset for both teachers and students
- "critical literacy is about imagining thoughtful ways of thinking about reconstructing and redesigning texts, images, and practices to convey different and more socially just and equitable messages and ways of being that have real-life effects and real-world impact" [FROM CORE READING SET - BUT APPLICABLE TO GENDER STUDIES]

Immigrant/Refugee

What stood out to you?

- How immigration policy is manipulated due to the economic needs of Americans
- Immigration law has not been updated since 1965
- American history is one of immigrants

What challenged your thinking?

- How do you find credible sources for histories that are not recorded or not accurately recorded
- How the educational system will change as a result of Trump policy

What are you wondering about?

- The trauma of students who are refugees
- How do you create empathy within the kids who are hearing the stories of immigrants and refugees who have not experienced this
- How do we accurately represent these groups of people?

Latinx/Hispanic

What stood out to you?

- The shifts in identity for the Latin-American community was eye-opening to us and knowing the differences as adults that separate the different distinctions was new knowledge.
- There were also moments in Hispanic History that none of us had any knowledge of before reading the Huffingtonpost article.
- We were somewhat proud of knowing that our Spanish classes at the middle school level do a really great job of teaching Dia de Muertos with an accurate, respectful cultural lens.
- There's still a real need to make sure that kindness isn't enough to conquer some of our problems as a people.

What challenged your thinking?

- We are curious as to how this can be incorporated into a classroom setting without it being

contrived and a “special” lesson.

What are you wondering about?

- We are curious as to how this can be incorporated into a classroom setting without it being contrived and a “special” lesson.
- How do we move forward with a day-to-day need with the inclusion and equality that is needed in the classroom?
- It’s challenging trying to meet everyone’s needs and wanting to include all while also not wanting to be offensive or demeaning in a way towards others.

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- There are always multiple sides to a story and that doesn’t change just because we’re talking about the history of our country and our world.

LGBTQ+

What stood out to you?

- Training is key
- Word choice and vocabulary in the classroom and school
- Students are a little more progressive on this topic (school checklist)

What challenged your thinking?

- This needs to be incorporated into our curriculum
- This is not currently present, how do we make it present?

What are you wondering about?

- How do we tell this story and learn about this story without it being a small blurb in history...
- How do we keep updated on proper terminology to ensure we do not offend anyone.

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- What resources should we use to ensure the information being presented is factual and correct.

Native American Indian

What stood out to you?

- Marginalized voices are hard to find in primary sources
- When we teach accurate history, it is interesting and inspires change!
- The path to countering centuries of misinformation-rethinking traditional courses to be more accurate and inclusive..."Prejudice and discrimination is in our cultural DNA"
- Native Knowledge 360-Essential Understandings about American Indians (Powerful tool for social studies units)

What challenged your thinking?

- Conceptual sea change...thoughtfully reconstructed narratives
- Being kind isn't enough- "Even if they can't yet articulate why, our students know that's not enough."
- Ethnic studies (success of it)-how do we incorporate this into the everyday work in elementary curriculum....study of older grade work and make it an integral part of the curriculum
- How to develop the knowledge base for teachers to feel comfortable teaching the accurate representation of historical events...possible idea of play writing to create narratives

What are you wondering about?

- How to break down walls of people thinking that the textbook and stories that have been told are adequate
- Leading Social Justice standard training?
- How do we help teachers dig beyond "being kind is enough?"
- Teaching Native American history in age-appropriate ways that is respectful but also includes

the real history

- Partnering with people of Native American descent in our community to rethink the way SS is taught
- Utilizing the county/state histories and viewing them across grade levels to lift the learning

What do you want to remember when viewing curriculum and observing instruction in social studies?

- How are marginalized voices a part of the curriculum we are teaching?
- Including Social Justice standards supports SEL and identity work and builds empathy
- Ethnic Studies-dispelling myths
- Progression across grade levels

Religion

What stood out to you?

- We liked the three approaches to teaching religion.
- It is important and critical to teach religion. It is not about indoctrination. Important for educators to be clear about their objectives at the beginning.
- There's an enormous amount to learn and even best intentions can still place students in difficult situations.

What challenged your thinking?

- We realized how much there is to learn regarding the many different backgrounds of our students.

What are you wondering about?

- I'm wondering how our teachers can adequately juggle the many expectations in this area. With so many different backgrounds, how can teachers adequately be sensitive to our growing diversity? And how does this compare between elementary and secondary?

Appendix B
Survey Responses
Students

We can print survey results then scan the entire document as a pdf.

Appendix C
Curriculum Audit Tool

Print and scan into document. Make sure it's the latest version.