



Pittsburgh Public Schools  
341 South Bellefield Avenue |  
Pittsburgh, PA 15213-3516  
<https://www.pghschools.org>

**The School District of Pittsburgh (Pittsburgh, PA)**

**REQUEST FOR PROPOSAL (RFP)**

**Social Students Instructional Materials: Grades 6 and 7**

**Issuance Date:**  
**Submission Date:**

## 1. Introduction

This Request for Proposal (RFP) seeks applicants who can provide standards aligned, instructional materials for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies courses. The instructional materials will ensure all Pittsburgh Public Schools' Social Studies teachers and students in grades 6 and 7 have access to the most impactful, culturally inclusive, and highest quality curriculum and instruction resources aligned to research. The grade 6 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Eastern Hemisphere with special emphasis given to Africa, Asia, and Oceania inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions. The grade 7 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Western Hemisphere with special emphasis given to North America (Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean), Central America, and South America inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions. The RFP includes detailed requirements for all proposal submissions. The purpose of this Request for Proposal (RFP) is to solicit one or more established publishers to provide the Pittsburgh Public Schools (PPS) with researched and reviewed instructional materials for Social Studies. This RFP seeks publishers ("Respondents" or "Offerors") who share a vision for ensuring that all students have access to the highest quality instructional resources to ultimately increase student achievement and ensure success in college, careers, and community participation.

Pittsburgh Public School believes that every student has the right to an equitable educational experience within the School District of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh Public Schools aims to close the opportunity gap by providing historically underserved students with equitable access to programming and support resources while eliminating policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce individual and institutional bias and create disparate outcomes. Racial disparities stem from the monocultural design and imbalance in the teaching population disproportionately affecting African American students who represent 53 percent of the district. Hanley and Noblit (2009) share that culture is "the basis of prior knowledge, which holistically includes cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains of learning" (pg. 31). However, many school systems across the United States were designed to be monocultural and have reinforced white, middle-class values as the standard, thus invalidating the contributions, perspectives and learning styles of culturally, racially, and ethnically diverse populations.

The Pittsburgh Public School District is the largest of 43 school districts in Allegheny County and the second largest in Pennsylvania. The district serves approximately 20,000 students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 12. There are approximately 1,393 students in grade 6 and 1,480 students in grade 7. Pittsburgh Public Schools has a vision that all students will graduate high school, college, career, and life ready; prepared to complete a two-or four-year college degree or workforce certification. Fifty-three percent of the students who attend Pittsburgh Public Schools are African American and another fourteen percent identify as non-White, but some curricular resources are still outdated and do not consistently reflect the aforementioned representation making it difficult to engage all groups in equitable learning experiences.

Introduced in 2019, *On Track to Equity* is the District's racial equity plan. The 97-page plan details 27 key action steps the District is taking toward this goal, each grouped under one of seven focus areas outlined in the Racial Equity Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Pittsburgh Public Schools and the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission. As a starting point, this plan illustrates the District's commitment to moving beyond compliance with the MOU to demonstrate our commitment to the continued monitoring of our progress and supporting the work of the Equity Advisory Panel (EAP). The EAP has made the following recommendation for grades 6-7: *The grade 6 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Eastern Hemisphere with special emphasis given to Africa, Asia, and Oceania inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions. The grade 7 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Western Hemisphere with special emphasis given to North America (Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean), Central America, and South America inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions.*

**Adopted materials will be implemented during the 2024-25 school year and physical materials will need to be delivered by July 31, 2024.**

## **2. Scope of Services**

The requirements outlined in this RFP, although extensive, is not exhaustive and is intended to provide interested Respondents with sufficient basic information to submit proposals meeting minimum requirements but is not intended to limit a proposal's content or exclude any relevant or essential information. Proposals must address the entire scope of services requested. In this RFP, Curricular and Instructional Materials are defined to be the comprehensive curricula and materials needed for 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies courses of study.

Proposals must comply with the following selection requirements as written in PPS Board Policy 106, Adoption of Instructional Materials:

- *The primary criteria for the selection of instructional materials are to address the needs of students as described in the Content Standards at each grade level. All instructional materials and supplementary materials shall reflect in both narrative and illustration a diverse American society and shall provide equal representation of African American and other cultural and ethnic groups. Adopted instructional materials must avoid stereotyped images based on race and gender. Instructional materials must reflect gender and ethnic minorities participating in leadership roles in all aspects of society. The instructional materials that are ultimately selected in each subject area must be challenging and stretch students to meet high standards.*

## **3. Instructional Material Requirements**

*The grade 6 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Eastern Hemisphere with special emphasis given to Africa, Asia, and Oceania inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions. The grade 7 materials must focus on the people and cultures of the Western Hemisphere with special emphasis given to North America (Canada, Mexico, Cuba, and the Caribbean), Central America, and South America inclusive of ancient civilizations and the study of indigenous people from those regions.*

### **• General Requirements**

- Materials must have a strong foundation in the core concepts of history, geography, economics, civics, and government. This includes knowledge of major events, people, and places, as well as the ability to analyze and interpret historical and contemporary data.
- Materials must prompt students to think critically about the world around them, including the ability to identify bias, evaluate sources, and make informed decisions.
- Materials must provide the opportunity for students to apply their knowledge and skills to solve real-world problems, such as those related to economics, civic engagement, and environmental sustainability.
- Materials must support students with communicating effectively about social studies topics, both orally and in writing.
- Materials must encourage collaboration with others to research, solve problems, and create/give presentations.
- Materials must reflect cultures and perspectives in the world, and how these have shaped history and current events.
- Materials must reflect the interconnectedness of the world, and the challenges and opportunities that we face as a global community.
- Materials must be inclusive of all cultures and perspectives and must avoid stereotypes and bias.
- Materials must be rigorous and challenging, but also engaging and relevant to students' lives.
- Students must be actively engaged in the learning process, rather than being passive recipients of information.
- The materials must be aligned with clear learning goals and objectives and must be regularly assessed to ensure that students are making progress.
- Materials should support the development of student criticality: their ability to think critically about information, to describe social and cultural systems and evaluate them.

- Materials should enable students to explore various identities within cultures as well as how they have changed and adapted in the present so that students may see themselves within and connected to these identities.
- **Key Components Supporting Curriculum Updates**
  - The PPS Social Studies department is transforming the curriculum for learners in grades 6 and 7. PPS Social Studies learners will have curriculum redesigned from World Geography courses to, Grade 6 Eastern Hemisphere, Grade 7 Western Hemisphere.
  - The instructional materials must align and support the content appropriately elevated within the updated curriculum in a culturally and historically responsive manner.
  - Instructional materials should have a strong focus on developing skills that support Geography, understanding cultures, and identifying perspectives.
  - The instructional materials should be well organized and visually stimulating, including opportunities for students to engage charts, graphs, maps, photographs, videos, and other digital materials.
- **English Language Learners and Students with Exceptionalities**
  - Instructional materials provide strategies and supports for students who read, write, and/or speak in a language other than English to meet or exceed grade-level standards.
  - Allow for flexibility in meeting the needs of a wide range of students and include accommodations for special populations, including English Language Learners, students with disabilities, including students who are visually impaired and/or deaf or hard of hearing, those with print disabilities, and students with significant cognitive disabilities, and students identified as gifted and talented. Lessons for whole group, small group, and independent instruction must be included.
- **Culturally Relevant Materials**
  - Include culturally relevant materials and culturally responsive teaching and instructional practices that are inclusive of a variety of cultures and ethnicities and are free from bias in the portrayal of ethnic groups, gender, age, cultures, religion, and people with exceptionalities. Materials must expose children to many forms of diversity (for example, race, ethnicity, family structure, disabilities). Materials need to portray the child’s culture and all cultures in a positive, authentic, and realistic light.
  - The materials must never convey that one group is better than another group.
  - Materials need to challenge all forms of stereotypes, such as only men or only women can have certain careers, or because you are from a particular race, you have a specific talent.
  - The materials need to emphasize individual differences and the diversity within large groups.
  - The materials include multiple perspectives and provide exposure to the larger world.
  - Authors of the texts represent diverse cultural backgrounds.
  - The texts represent a variety of cultures congruent with district demographics and include topics that reflect a variety of student identities and experiences.
  - The materials create a bridge between students’ home and school lives, while still meeting the expectations of the district and state curricular requirements.
  - The materials utilize the backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences of the students to inform the teacher’s lessons and methodology.

[Equity Glossary of Terms](#)

- **Expectations for Reading, Writing, and Speaking**
  - The instructional materials should provide students with meaningful opportunities to engage in reading, writing, and speaking skills.
  - The instructional materials should support analysis of reading primary and secondary sources,

determining central ideas and providing an accurate summary of text, provide descriptions and definitions of key processes and vocabulary related to Social Studies, engage students in how a text presents information and identify points of view and purpose in Social Studies texts with an emphasis on comprehension.

- The instructional materials should provide students with meaningful opportunities to create writing that is clearly organized to achieve purpose, designed for different purposes and audiences, based in fact, uses appropriate Social Studies vocabulary, develop an argument, understand the relationships between claims and establish formal writing styles.
- The instructional materials should expose students to other spoken languages than their own on a base level.
  
- **Digital Literacy**
  - The instructional materials should support opportunities for engagement of digital literacy. Digital literacy defined as, “the knowledge, skills and attitudes that allow children to flourish and thrive in an increasingly global digital world, being both safe and empowered, in ways that are appropriate to their age and local cultures and contexts.”
  - The opportunities for digital literacy implementations associated with instructional materials should support students in improved writing, reading, listening and speaking skills, ability to identify authentic materials, increased frequency and ability to use digital technologies, enhanced ability to collaborate with teachers and peers, enhanced student engagement and interest, fostering improved academic performance.
  
- **Global Competency**
  - The instructional materials should support in building global competence, which not only equips students with the skills and attributes to compete in a global job market, but equally importantly it cultivates their abilities to effectively, appropriately, and respectfully share ideas, problem solve, communicate, and interact across cultures which is critical to their success. Globally competent instructional materials must support in demonstrating the experiences of others, understanding of connections, analyzing and articulating how culture and access to learning influence perspectives and historical events impacted across cultures, and foster understanding of issues from various cultural perspectives.
  
- **Educator Guidance**
  - The instructional materials should provide guidance for educators. Materials should include teachers' versions as applicable, digital access, supporting/supplemental resources, and pedagogical guidance in best practice use of the materials. Support in differentiation, enrichment, and Social Studies skills development should be evident in the instructional materials.
  
- **Student Connections**
  - The instructional materials meaningful connection to students should be evident.
  - The materials should be well organized and visually stimulating, including graphics providing opportunities to engage the related skills of Social Studies. The instructional materials should be relevant to the modern Social Studies student.
  - The instructional materials should provide opportunities to implement thinking routines and thinking skills development.

- **Usability**

- The instructional materials are organized in a systematic way that is comprehensive and clear.
- The visual design (whether in print or digital) supports students in engaging thoughtfully with the subject and is neither distracting nor chaotic.
- The instructional materials include opportunities for teachers to effectively plan and utilize materials with integrity and to further develop their own understanding of the content.
- The instructional materials include resources that teachers may edit, adapt, or enrich.
- The instructional materials provide teacher guidance with useful annotations and suggestions for how to enact the student materials.
- Parent materials or any home/school connections must be provided in multiple languages to increase access for non-English speakers.

#### **4. Training and Professional Development**

- The proposal shall describe the initial training and professional development necessary to begin implementation of the proposed instructional materials. The training plan must include mechanisms to train district teachers and central staff who, in turn, will train school staff and provide support districtwide.
- The professional development plan must be designed to supplement, not supplant, the district's existing approach to professional development that includes the development of school and district expertise and capacity to deliver training districtwide; a focus on equity and cultural proficiency; school-based embedded support from school and district staff; and development of blended professional learning models that include both face-to-face and virtual learning.

#### **5. Parents/Guardians Engagement**

- The instructional materials include printable parent/guardians' letters for sharing course content information with parents/guardians.
- Parent/guardian materials or any home/school connections (digital and print) must be provided in multiple languages to increase access for non-English speakers.
- The instructional materials include tools, resources, and documents that provide parents/guardians and others with the necessary resources to provide transparency in the curriculum and to provide support to academic progress at home or outside the school setting.

#### **6. Proposal Submission and Deadline**

- All proposals must be submitted **electronically to Mr. Sean McBride ([smcbride1@pghschools.org](mailto:smcbride1@pghschools.org)), K-12 Social Studies Coordinator by 5:00 PM EST on October 18, 2023**, with "PPS 6-7 Social Studies Materials" as the subject line. Proposals, including any/all attachments and cover letters, should be submitted as a single PDF document. In addition, digital access to all program materials must be provided along with hard copy sample instructional materials units that can be mailed directly to: **Mr. Christopher Taylor, K-12 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator, School District of Pittsburgh Greenway Professional Development Center, Room 224, 1400 Crucible Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15205**. Proposals should be submitted in accordance with the proposal guidelines outlined in this RFP. Pittsburgh Public Schools reserves the right to reject any and all proposals, waive irregularities, and to select the proposal that is determined to be the most advantageous to the school district. Late proposals will not be accepted. Proposals submitted via hard copy or fax will not be accepted.

**Upon the release of this RFP and during the conclusion of the selection process, there shall be no communication between any prospective respondents, their lobbyist(s) or agent(s) and any employee of PPS or its elected Board of Directors, except as provided for in the RFP. Any violation of this provision by any prospective firm and/or its agent shall be grounds for immediate disqualification.**

All proposal packages shall be submitted to PPS as follows:  
 Mr. Sean McBride  
 K-12 Social Studies Coordinator  
 School District of Pittsburgh  
 Greenway Professional Development Center, Room 224  
 1400 Crucible Street  
 Pittsburgh, PA 15205  
 Email: [smcbride1@pghschools.org](mailto:smcbride1@pghschools.org)

**7. Proposal Introduction**

- **Cover Letter:** Provide the name, mailing address, e-mail address, and telephone number of the firm submitting the proposal. The cover letter must be signed by an authorized officer of the organization.
- **Table of Contents:** Clearly identify material contained in the proposal by section and page number.
- **Introduction:** Provide an overview of the company and its products as they relate to this RFP. Share relevant data-based evidence of impact, outcomes from prior and current school districts with similar demographics.
- **Program Overview:** Provide an overview of the program and its core components.
- **Independent External Evaluations:** Provide access to findings from independent external evaluations, conducted by non-profit organizations.
- **Confirmation Certification of EBE Compliance:** Include the EBE participation percent.

**8. Timeline**

- The Pittsburgh Public Schools is requesting proposals from experienced and qualified firms to provide the services described herein. Selection of the firm will be made based upon proposals submitted. There may also be presentations or interviews. A timetable for the selection process is provided below:

RFP Issued	Week of October 2, 2023
Proposals Due	October 18, 2023
Presentations (If requested)	October 24, 2023 October 30, 2023 November 7, 2023 November 13, 2023 *Dates are subject to change. All dates might not be needed, and additional dates may be added.
Approval by the Board of Directors	January 24, 2024
Notification of Board Recommendation to Applicant Finalist	By January 31, 2024

**9. Evaluation Criteria and Selection Process**

- The contract will be awarded to the qualified proposer whose proposal is most advantageous to PPS, based on the evaluation criteria specified below. The overall evaluation feedback from reviewers will guide PPS in making an award decision based on the evaluation criteria.
- PPS reserves the right to request an interview from those companies determined to be in a competitive range and shall use the information derived from these interviews, if any, in its evaluation.
- An evaluation committee, including but not limited to math teachers, principals, chief academic officer, curriculum and instruction staff, assistant superintendents, district-level staff, board members, parents, and community members, will review the proposals. The role of the evaluation committee is to review and assess to what extent submitted proposals meet the evaluation criteria and to make a recommendation. The contract will be awarded to the qualified bidder whose proposal is most advantageous to the district. The evaluation criteria



will be considered but will not be the sole factor used to determine the successful bidder.

## **10. Overall Program Cost**

- Include overall costs for the entire curriculum and materials including but not limited to instructional materials and guides, interventions, assessments, professional development, program setup, delivery service, and related materials.

## **11. ELIGIBLE BUSINESS ENTERPRISE (EBE) PARTICIPATION**

1. **EBE Goal:** An aspirational Eligible Business Enterprise (EBE) goal of 10%, for business diversity spend, has been assigned for this contract opportunity.

An EBE is a collective of firms that are certified in one or more of the following business diversity categories, registered.

in our online EBE directory, and used to track the District's diversity spend:

- Minority Business Enterprise (MBE)
- Women Business Enterprise (WBE)
- Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE)
- U. S. Small Business Administration 8(A)

### **2. Proposed Business Diversity Utilization**

- Is your firm a certified MBE, WBE, DBE or 8(a) firm? If so, please provide proof of current certification from a certifying entity. Self-certification is not accepted.
- Please also provide detailed information regarding any additional business entity that will assist in completing the scope of work as defined by this solicitation. This should include the:
  1. Company Name
  2. Company Contact (including title, email, and phone number)
  3. Scope of Work
  4. Dollar Amount & Percentage of Contract
  5. Company Diversity Type (provide proof for each certified firm) oMBE, WBE, DBE, 8(A), Diverse but not certified, N/A

### **3. Good Faith Effort**

If no portion of this contract will be awarded to a diverse business, specifically \$0 or 0% diversity spend, please provide detailed information addressing your firm's culture for business diversity & inclusion.

1. Diversity Spend: How much money did your company spend with certified MBE, WBE, DBE and/or 8(a) firms last year? What was the diversity percentage based on your total spend?
2. Diversity Count: What is the total number of MBE, WBE, DBE and/or 8(a) firms that your company contracted with last year? Please itemize by each diversity type as well.
3. Membership: Are you a member of any supplier/business diversity organizations? If so, please share the name of the organization and provide details concerning your level of involvement with that organization.

For additional documentation related to EBE policies, the proposer should visit the District's website at:

<https://www.pghschools.org/mwbe> or contact Paula B. Castleberry, Minority/Women Business Coordinator at [pcastleberry1@pghschools.org](mailto:pcastleberry1@pghschools.org).