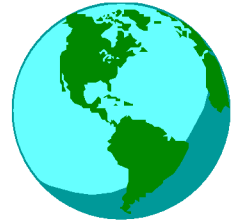




Social Studies VISION



June 2017

Volume 19, Issue 3

—GEOGRAPHY—

—CIVICS—

—HISTORY—

—ECONOMICS



Tuckahoe 4th graders prepare for their Colonial Day performance.



Key School 5th graders participate in the amazing dash at the Greek Olympics.



Ashlawn students strike a pose ready to share in this interactive Wax Museum.

Consider This...

Interdisciplinary Teaching: from siloed instruction to integrated learning

“This is not math class Ms. Jordan!” my students would say as we calculated the temperature and precipitation range of various climographs in World Geography. By analyzing these graphs, we examined trends and saw how people were impacted by and adapted to their environments. Yet this type of response to integrating content can be typical as students internalize the design of the school day with subjects separated by blocks of time and see subject areas as separate silos of knowledge with little relationship to one another. However, the world is not nearly as segmented as our division of subjects suggest and in fact our students benefit the more we can integrate subjects. Integrated studies or interdisciplinary learning “involves the combination of two or more subjects in a lesson, project, classroom, or curriculum. Teachers can draw interdisciplinary connections by making relationships between different subjects explicit and/or by working with other teachers in teams across subjects.” (Vega, 2013)

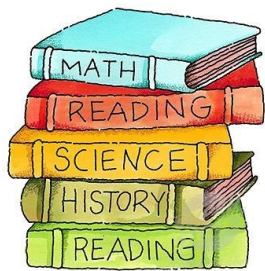
There are many benefits to interdisciplinary learning. In their extensive research report, “[The Logic of Interdisciplinary Studies](#)” Sandra Mathison and Melissa Freeman cite the benefits of interdisciplinary learning as “an opportunity to have more meaningful relations with students; teach cognitive skills associated with 'real life' (e.g., cooperation, problem solving, creativity, and adaptability); motivate students; increase student achievement; promote positive attitudes toward subject matter; create more curricular flexibility; diminish scheduling problems; and integrate new and rapidly changing information with increased time efficiency.” Interdisciplinary instruction provides real world learning, rather than isolated educational experiences. We see this trend toward interdisciplinary learning through approaches like Problem Based Learning and STEM/STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Math). These cross-curricular investigations that include both humanities and STEM subjects highlight the importance of creativity and collaboration.

continued on page 2

Consider This...Interdisciplinary Teaching: from siloed instruction to integrated learning cont.

The benefits of interdisciplinary instruction also extend to teachers as they view their own discipline from a fresh perspective, building excitement about teaching. That excitement is passed on to students. Interdisciplinary instruction encourages teachers to identify and bring into focus the “big ideas” of a lesson and articulate what’s most important to learn to the colleagues and students they collaborate with.

There are a variety of methods to successfully integrate curriculum, but three common approaches are Single Class Integration, Team-Teaching Integration, and Multidiscipline Integration. As the name suggests, Single Class Integration involves a single class where a teacher intentionally brings in other subject areas components into Social Studies. In this issue of



Vision, **Jamestown** 4th grade co-teachers share some of their favorite ways they tie Social Studies into all parts of the school day from Math, to Language Arts, to Science.

Some teachers effectively use the Single Class Integration through large culminating projects. Keith Knott at **Ashlawn** has designed a culminating project for his 3rd graders where they design a civilization incorporating language arts, math, social studies and science themes and skills. Skills and themes include illustrating a map with a key, compass, and scale; applying principals of government and laws, analyzing natural and capital resources; examining sources of energy, recycling, and waste management; and applying math concepts such as the use of multiplication, volume, and geometry with architecture restrictions on cubic units for designing their buildings.

In Team-Teaching Integration, a teacher partners with another teacher to uncover the same theme or skills with students. This is commonly seen at the secondary level with teams. For instance as described in this issue, 9th grade World History and English teachers at **Yorktown** team together to design an interdisciplinary lesson on social injustice. In history students examine topics of Enlightenment and Absolutism, while reading and analyzing texts of *Kill a Mocking Bird* and *Night*.

This method could also be used with science by team teaching a project-based learning activity on the Renaissance examining how history affects science and how science affects history.

Multidiscipline Integration involves a whole team of teachers from Social Studies, English, Science, Math, World Language, Art or Physical Education who can work together to design a fully integrated curriculum plan. That plan might span a single project for a pre-determined part of the curriculum or the entire quarter. But in this method a team of teachers agrees on the theme/content (like historical era) and the desired skills (like reading strategies, critical thinking, or small group discussion).

At **Jefferson Middle School**, 8th grade teachers plan several multidiscipline experiences for their students that incorporates ELA, World Geography, and Science. 8th graders participate in a water project to analyze issues of access to clean water and its impact on the quality of life for people around the world. Students read *A Long Walk to Water* and *Milk of Birds*. They create a public service announcement, write a letter to a policy maker about their chosen issue so action can be taken, and participate in Socratic seminar. 8th graders also complete a Problem Based Learning unit on nuclear energy to determine if a power plant should be expanded or closed. They investigate the nuclear disasters of Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima and read Ray Bradbury's, “There Will Come Soft Rains” from the *Martian Chronicles*. Through these experiences, the skills and information students uncover becomes more interrelated and aligned, enabling students to more readily make connections and achieve higher-level critical thinking.

Interdisciplinary learning provides an opportunity for a more relevant, less fragmented, and stimulating experience for students to help them develop their critical thinking skills, make connections, and foster a range of perspectives that will serve them in the larger world.

As you wrap up this year and head into the summer, we hope you’ll consider some of the interdisciplinary strategies shared in this issue in your Fall planning. You’ll find teacher-written contributions by the following grade levels.

Elementary examples

- ◆ Google Map meets Fairytales (p. 7)
- ◆ Interdisciplinary Connections in the Elementary Classroom (p.8-9)

Secondary examples

- ◆ Integrating STEM/STEAM through project based learning (p.10)
- ◆ Team Teaching in the Interdisciplinary Secondary-Classroom (p.11)



Social Studies into the Summer!

This summer **Jen Shearin of Yorktown** will spend a week in Richmond participating in the NEH institute, *The Long Road from Brown: The Story of Desegregation of VA*. During this institute teachers will interact with leading scholars in the field, visit historic sites and archives, and discuss curricular and teaching techniques related to school desegregation in Virginia following the historic *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.



Wakefield's Victoria O'Brien will be traveling to Italy and Greece through Education First Tours and taking 6 Wakefield students to explore the ruins of the Roman Forum and the Acropolis in Athens. As part of their eight-day tour, they'll also visit the Vatican City including St. Peter's Basilica and the Sistine Chapel. In Greece, they'll visit Delphi and take a guided tour of Athens and the Parthenon.



Daniel Moses, of W-L, will participate in the second annual Friends of the National World War II Memorial Teachers Network and Conference. The conference will feature presentations by fellow educators and other experts in the area of WWII history, a panel discussion with WWII veterans, tours of sites of WWII significance, and a remembrance ceremony at the WWII Memorial. One of the conference goals is to heighten a sense of community and civic engagement. Therefore, each participant will be expected to enlist their students to fulfill a community service obligation within their communities in the year following the conference.



Shout out to **Kenmore's Tiffany Mitchell** who recently earned her doctorate degree and presented her paper titled "Lessons from Arlington, VA: Reconsidering Civic Discourses on Integration during the Brown Era" at the History of Education Society in Providence, RI. The paper was based on the archival research she conducted at Central Library last summer. Her paper was well received and Dr. Mitchell plans on publishing the paper this year.

Abrianna Nelson (W-L) will be returning to the Washington Journalism and Media Conference as a Faculty Adviser for the third year from July 7-21. This role entails facilitating curriculum related to media literacy and civic education for 20-25 students; the program is run by George Mason University. Additionally, she will serve in a new role as a Virginia Civic Action Project Teacher Fellow with The College of William and Mary and the Virginia Public Access Project. Following an on-campus workshop, Nelson will help develop curriculum and provide feedback on the development of additional educational resources using data related to making government transparent in Virginia. Finally, Nelson was recently appointed as a Curriculum Coordinator for the Journalism Education Association, with which she has been serving as a curriculum writer for four years. This summer, she will begin mentoring four curriculum writers while editing and publishing their final projects



W-L teachers, Joel Rockwood, Julie Bell, Nitza Lord and Steven McArthur of Yorktown will participate in the Advance Placement Summer Institute. Participants will focus on curriculum challenges, share and discuss teaching strategies, and review the contributions of research to content, teaching, and labs.



Michelle Cottrell-Williams of Wakefield, Jennifer Burgin of Oakridge, and Diana Jordan, Teacher Specialist have again been selected to serve as a Teacher Trainers for the Virginia Department of Education's (VDOE) history and social science office. As a VDOE Teacher Trainer, they will participate in the Train-the-Trainer Workshop this summer in preparation of leading Fall Institutes to help teachers rethink and revise past instructional assessments practices as Virginia transitions to the use of locally-developed performance assessments.



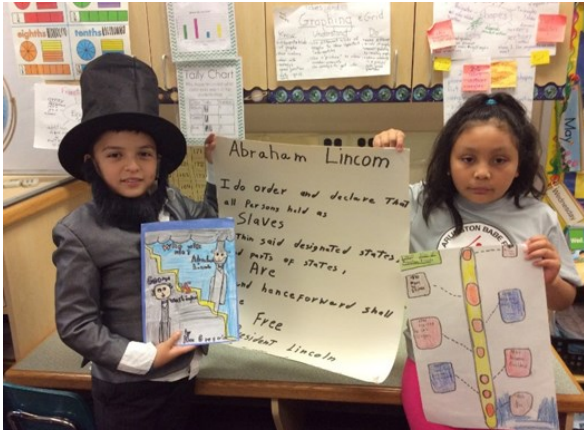
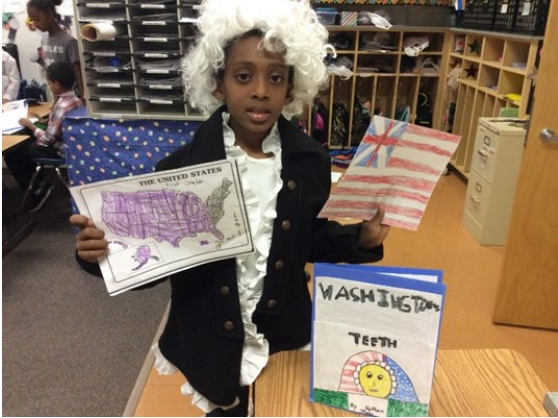
Hats Off!
to our teachers who were
honored as their
individual school's 2016-2017
Teacher of the Year

Twanna Betts, Barcroft
Elizabeth Kuleski, Discovery
Rachel Payne, Jefferson
Natani Vaughn, McKinley

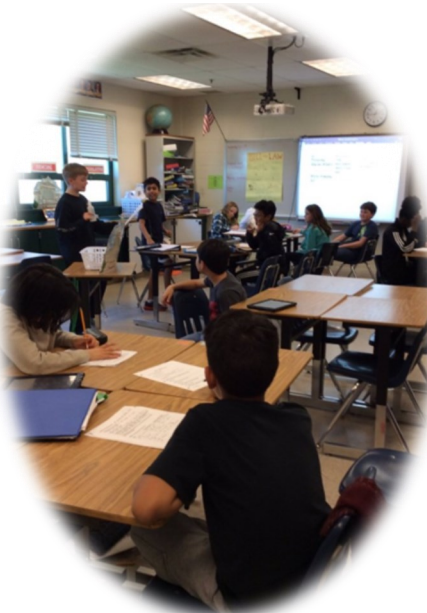
Special Congratulations to
Michelle Cottrell-Williams,
Wakefield, our 2016-2017
APS Teacher of the Year!

History Comes Alive!

Here's **Mrs. Cordero's, Carlin Springs**, culminating activity for the Famous America Unit "3 C's for Famous Americans: Challenges, Contributions, Change". Students studied a selected famous American to become an expert on. Then they wrote either an informational, persuasive or historical piece. They dressed in costume, created artifacts and graphic aids to develop a museum exhibit. Fellow second graders came to visit the museum.



Below are photos from **Discovery Elementary's** 5th-grade team of classroom teachers (Andrew Bridges, Deborah Patterson, Greg Rusk, Kristen Zarkowsky) who worked with Art teacher Maria Burke to create an interdisciplinary class that incorporated Social Studies with Art and Science. The students used their knowledge of ancient Egyptian society to create shadow puppets in Art class. They also leveraged their understanding of how transparent, translucent and opaque materials, as learned in Science, combine in shadow puppets to create depth, character and dynamism. As a culminating experience, students wrote brief dramas that they then performed and filmed.



Allison Bell, 6th grade USHCE teacher at **Gunston**, collaborated with her team's science teacher, Marianne Fahmy, to connect their Science water unit to their Civics lesson on the legislative process. Students drafted bills to address problems they had learned about in the water unit, then debated them in the House of Representatives. President Fahmy had the power to sign or veto their bills!



Math meets Social Studies, as **Ashlawn** students create HUGE timeline to scale (1 foot=100 years) to show how long ago Native Americans came to America.

HISTORY COMES ALIVE cont.

Keith Knott's 3rd graders engage in culminating activity called Barkville, a model town that incorporates integrated interdisciplinary concepts and skills in an interactive learning experience. Ashlawn 3rd grade students create money to interact with the economy by purchasing houses, and spending money on taxes and services that help grow the town. Students also build their homes and businesses in math after learning about geometry and volume. Multiple books, such as *Uncle Jed's Barbershop*, *The Lorax*, *Tortilla Factory*, and *The Giving Tree* are incorporated through language arts. Guest speakers from banks, Arlingtonians for a Clean Environment, and others also visit to fully integrate all the learning.



Key 5th graders apply their acting skills to their Reader's Theater of Greek myths.

Teachers End Their Year Sharing Site Based Initiatives

At the Social Studies end of the year county-wide meeting, secondary teachers came together to celebrate the end of the year, recognize their colleagues leaving the division, and share their Site Based Initiatives (SBIs). This marks the office's fourth year implementing SBIs. Using school data to drive their choice, teachers worked in teams to address a professional development initiative that informed their instruction to improve student achievement. Over 30 SBIs were presented, all focused on the theme of technology integration and personalized learning. Topics included: Google forms and quiz features for target remediation, differentiated tech-based anchor activities, online formative assessment, and learning videos with the flipped classroom.



To our lead teachers who are stepping down, we give a big THANK YOU for your service and leadership in supporting Social Studies!

Stephen Utley—Abingdon
Sara Mehrnama—ATS
Veronica Perez Perea—ATS
Nita Wade—Science Focus
Rachel Payne—Jefferson

This Year's High School Voter Registration Drive, Another Success!

In March the League of Women Voter of Arlington and Inspire Virginia completed visiting some 60 high school government classes to register eligible students to vote. The voter registration drive was quite successful. Over 30 League volunteers and two Inspire Virginia staff members participated. They registered 288 students during the class room presentations. In addition, 136 students were registered by Inspire VA and LWV prior to the visits and 130 students registered on their own. That makes a grand total of 554 students registered! This was our second year participating and we would like to give a big thank you to our high school teachers who opened their classrooms for this important event.



Classroom presentation
Left to right: Joan McDermott and Mark Teel LWV Arlington; and Jessie Nowling, Inspire VA

Registering students
Left to right: Elizabeth and Kathy Matusiak, LWV Arlington; and Jessie Nowling, Inspire VA



GET TO KNOW APS SOCIAL STUDIES LEAD TEACHERS

This is the first year that **Sara Mehmama** and **Veronica Perez** shared the Social Studies Lead teacher position at **Arlington Traditional Elementary School**. Sara Mehmama has been teaching for 12 years, 3 of those years have been with Arlington Public Schools. She is currently teaching 3rd grade. Sara loves teaching Social Studies using the History Alive! strategies and seeing her students highly engaged in the activities. She enjoys spending time with her daughter, Kathryn (19 months) and husband, going to the beach as much as possible, and traveling to new places. Veronica has been teaching for 17 years, 15 of those years have been at ATS. She was a High School Spanish teacher for 2 years in Maryland. She is currently teaching Art. She believes that there is a natural correlation



between art and social studies. She likes to incorporate cross curricular/ multicultural lessons with her student's art activities keeping them engage with the world around them. Veronica loves to travel, learn about new cultures, photography, painting, jogging, meditation and spending time with family and friends.

Deitra Brady Pulliam is the Social Studies lead teacher at **Hoffman Boston Elementary School**. She has worked in the field of education for 17 years. Deitra's career reflects a desire for knowledge and a commitment to shaping and cultivating the minds of our future leaders. Each day, she looks forward to teaching stimulating and engaging topics to her 4th grade students. She received her undergraduate degree in education from Iona College in New Rochelle NY. She earned her master's degree in Curriculum and Instruction from Fordham University, NYC and is currently working on her doctoral degree from Walden University. She enjoys spending time with her family and currently reside in Stafford, Virginia.



SOCIAL STUDIES OFFICE

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Elementary Interdisciplinary Lesson

GOOGLE MAP meets Fairytales from around the world

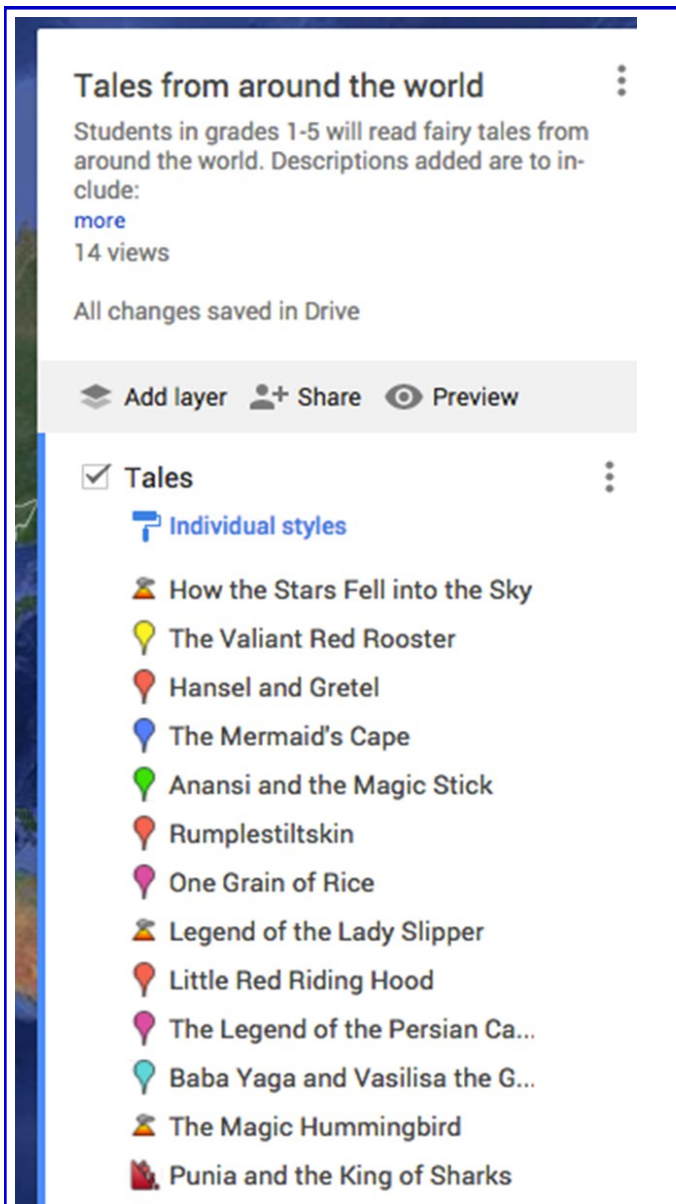
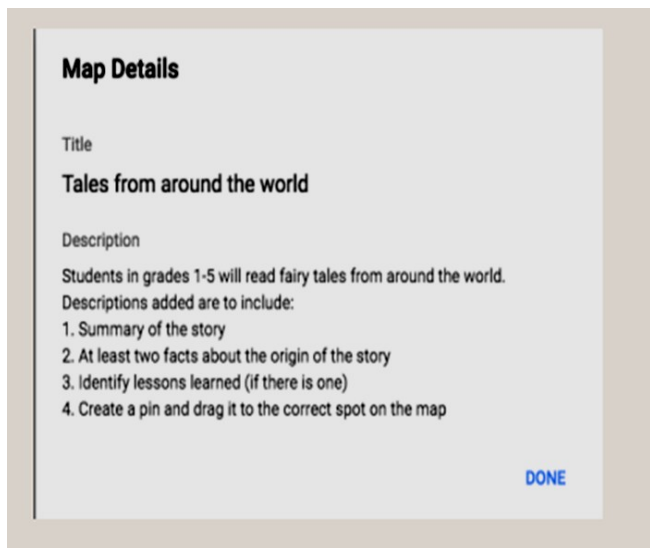
By Sharon Stutzman, Oakridge Reading Teacher

GOOGLE MAP is a wonderful way to explore maps and fairytales. At **Oakridge**, students learned to write descriptions, find locations on a map and learn how to “drop a pin.” GOOGLE MAP integrates map skills, summary writing, reading and the bonus of sharing with other teachers around the world using this interactive medium. Using GOOGLE MAP is an open ended medium that allows for integrated learn in social studies, language arts, computers and life skills. I hope you will give it a try.

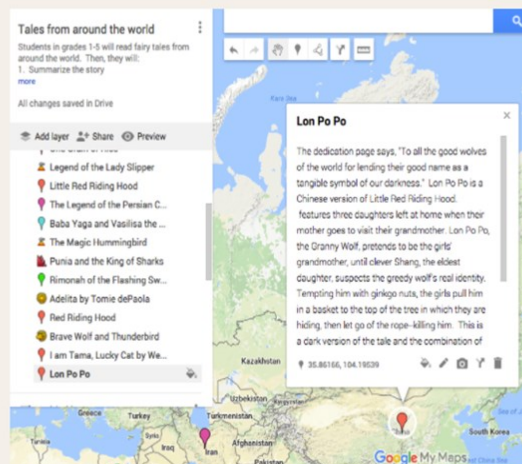


These are the steps:

- ◆ Create a new GOOGLE map and name it Fairytales from around the world.
- ◆ Create directions for students (see below).
- ◆ Play with “how to add a pin drop” by writing the area of the country/area in the search line.
- ◆ Add the name of the fairytale and the description.



This is what it looks like when a description is added – this one is mine:



Interdisciplinary Connections in the Elementary Classroom

Jamestown Elementary 4th grade co-teachers Jimmy Scarano and Angela Foreman are always looking for ways to integrate social studies into other subjects. It encourages connections between disciplines and cultivates more critical thinking. Here are some of their favorite ways to make Social Studies permeate all parts of the day.

Math

Almost any math word problem can be adapted to make it related to Social Studies content. We all know that math is more readily understood when presented in the context of a story—and Social Studies content is all about stories! We can't think of a reason NOT to throw in some Social Studies themed word problems that reinforce Social Studies concepts during the math block.

If you REALLY want to reinforce social studies concepts you can leave important vocabulary terms **blank** in word problems and students have to not only solve the math problem but also figure out the Social Studies word. We like to include a word bank for these types of problems for students to use. We love to do this in our room to review for both math and social studies assessments simultaneously. Example:

As a _____, Kathy did everything she could to help the British during the American Revolution. She wanted to stay a colony of Great Britain. She made 435 socks and gave them out equally to 8 soldiers. She kept the remaining socks for herself. How many socks did she give to each soldier?

Another twist is to make even simple math computation questions into Social Studies riddles. Example:

Take the number of letters in the first president's last name and multiply it by the number of regions in Virginia.

Students also enjoy writing their own math word problems about Social Studies related content. Social Studies content can be a great source of inspiration for word problems. Students could be given portraits, photographs, letters, and other primary sources to be jumping off points for math.

Language Arts

There should be plenty of opportunities to read and write during the social studies block of the day of course, but there are also a myriad of ways to bring Social Studies into language arts. This translates to a double or triple dose of Social Studies, which is always a good thing.

Readers Theatre: Aside from reading historical fiction and nonfiction selections for guided reading and literature circles, Readers' Theatre activities are another great option. Most any topic has some scripts already available online that you can tweak for your students. We did performances this year with John Brown and Harriet Tubman and it was powerful for the kids to see the history come to life and practice their fluency and intonation at the same time!

Reading Skills and Strategies: Inferencing skills mesh perfectly with Social Studies standards. During the reading block this year our students, with the help of our school librarian, interpreted and created their own political cartoons commenting on the Civil War (both processes revolve entirely around inferential reasoning). Song lyrics for parody songs or real songs (from the Civil War Era, the Civil Rights Movement, Ancient history, Explorers etc.) are also great fodder for the reading block. Students can listen to a song and analyze its meaning using background knowledge gained in Social Studies and story clues found in the lyrics. Our kids loved listening to and reading parody songs this year about the American Revolution and Civil War.

Text features are always reviewed any time students access print or digital materials in Social Studies. A fun extension during the reading block is to give students a paragraph of information they have learned in one large chunk of text on a white piece of paper. Then they have to cut it up and add text features to make the information easier to understand and better organized by adding headings, sections, sidebars, diagrams, etc.

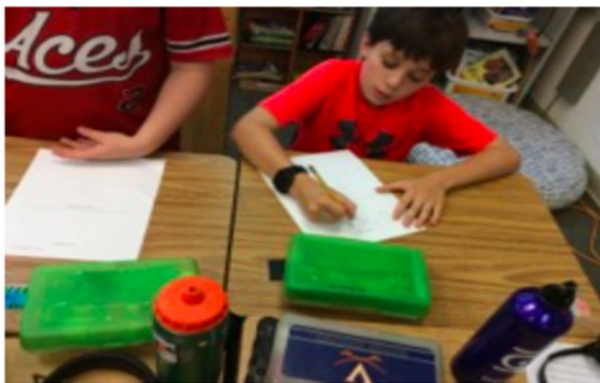
Interdisciplinary Connections in the Elementary Classroom cont.

Writing: It is always great to have a few “evergreen” style writing ideas that can work for almost any content in Social Studies and require the kids to really think. We love doing variations on students simply evaluating what they have learned by ranking things and justifying their thinking. This year students had to declare an MVP for the Jamestown Colony and say why, determine the gold, silver and bronze medalists of the American Revolution, and explain winners for Virginia’s “History Hall of Fame.” We’ve even had kids rank the best rivers in Virginia or the best region. Kids LOVE to rank stuff and it gets them to really write because they love to justify why they think they are right. Any topic and any grade level can be pitched as a “rank ‘em” type activity. It can even be the cornerstone of a unit. Who is the MVP of explorers? Let’s learn about them and then you can pick a winner and explain why. What civilization wins the Most Epic Ancient Civilization Award? Learn about them, make a decision, and back it up with evidence in your writing.

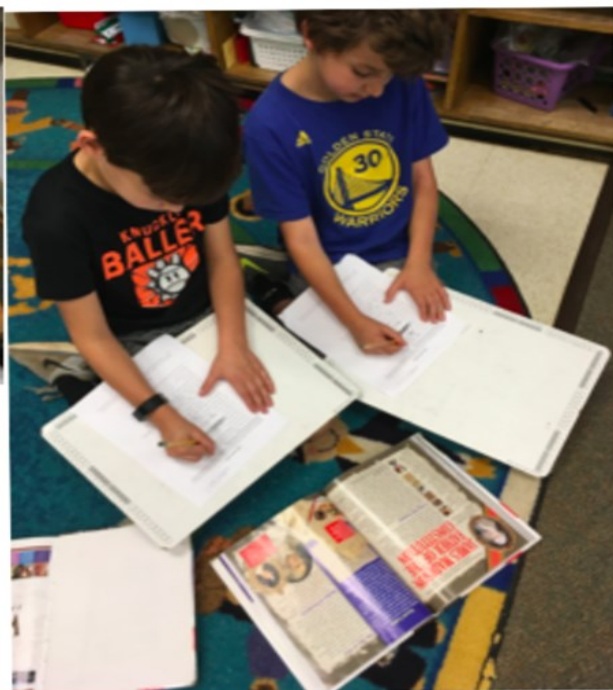
We have also found that kids love writing in “graphic novel” formats, which is easy with Google Slides. You can create a template in Google Slides with some photos, paintings, or portraits for whatever unit you are doing and add blank speech bubbles, thought bubbles, and text boxes for them to fill with writing.

Science

Especially in fourth grade, incorporating social studies into science is an easy and effective thing to do. After the students spend an entire school year immersed in Virginia’s history they gain a deeper appreciation for their home state. Using that new found love we pose this scenario: the Chesapeake Bay is dying and we need to do something about it. The students learn about the various plants and animals in the different ecosystems across the five regions of Virginia, revisit its main rivers and two natural lakes, review the industries that may be great for our economy, but not so much for our watershed. At the end of the unit the students then create a public service announcement which not only reviews Virginia’s geography but also proposes solutions about how each individual person can help “Save the Bay!” It’s a powerful way to end the year by having social studies and science become truly intertwined.

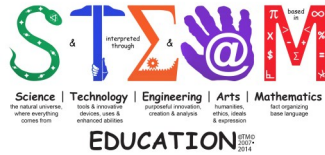


Jamestown students write nominations for the Virginia History Awards, including “Most Epic Battle,” “Best Beard,” and “Best Talker” in Virginia history. On the back they provide justifications for their voting choices.



Integrating STEM/STEAM into the Secondary Social Studies classroom through project based learning.

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and Science, Technology, Engineering, Art and Math (STEAM) are movements to develop scientific and mathematical foundations in order to ensure students will be competitive in the 21st century workforce. So how can a social studies teacher integrate STEM/STEAM into the classroom without “losing time” on content curriculum? If you are incorporating DBQ (document-based questioning) and primary sources into your curriculum, it is likely you are also integrating STEM/STEAM into your classroom. Often a small adjustment to delivering content will provide students with STEM/STEAM experiences through problem-based or project-based learning.



PBL is an acronym that is used for both problem-based learning and project-based learning so what is the difference? **Problem-based learning** is task-oriented and smaller in scope with a problem or parameters designed by the teacher to mirror a real-world scenario. Problem-based learning generally includes a viable solution to a defined problem. Problem-based learning can be done within one content classroom or be interdisciplinary. **Project-based learning** is an in-depth, authentic task over a sustained period of time requiring project management skills and the delivery of a final project to an authentic client, not the teacher. In project-based learning teachers are facilitators and students have voice and choice in how the project will be completed. Project-based learning is not limited by content and will often require students to contact experts in a variety of fields in order to deliver a robust product to the client. Project-based learning has design elements that include reflection, client critique and a delivered product.

World Geography Example:

Standard WG.4: The students will locate and analyze physical, economic and cultural characteristics of world regions.



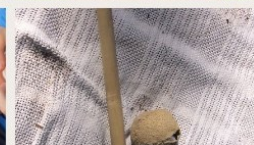
Contents: Geography, Science and Math.

Problem-based: Directions to students: “Is there any relationship among the physical geography, a continent’s population and a continent’s percentage of wealth?” Be sure to describe the physical geography (including any natural resources), calculate the percentage of the world’s population living on each continent and the percentage of the world’s wealth for each continent. Your final product must describe any relationship within a continent and across the globe.

Project-based: Create a whitepaper for Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) answering the question, “How can we solve poverty in (country/continent)?”

Both situations are real-world problems that will require students to construct their own knowledge. The problem-based learning activity however, allows the teacher to create parameters that narrow the scope and ensure students focus on specific areas that meet the content standards and includes mathematics. The project-based activity requires students to construct an extensive understanding of a specific continent and the content learnings would be dependent upon the criteria outlined by the contact at CARE.

If you would like to brainstorm ways to bring PBL and/or STEM/STEAM into your classroom, please do not hesitate to contact STEM Specialist Pam Nagurka at pamela.nagurka@apsva.us or 703-228-7219.



Civil War and STEM at **Williamsburg** Middle School.

Team Teaching in the Interdisciplinary Secondary Classroom

by Anne Stewart, NBCT and Tracy Maguire, Ph.D., NBCT

Seven years ago, when we first began to team for our World History/English 9 block, there were a few examples of what successful teaming should look like. The goal, initially, was to co-plan and implement a few interdisciplinary lessons. After several years of trial, error, and reflection, we now have an open English/history block with forty-five to fifty students where cross-curricular connections are made on a continuous basis.

At the core, team teaching is about building a trusting, creative, flexible and non-judgmental relationship with a fellow teacher. It takes time and a great deal of reflection for team teachers to create an open classroom environment that is both supportive and enriching for students and professionally fulfilling for teachers.

PLANNING FOR THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CLASSROOM

When planning together, we always begin with our students. We assess both where they are with the curricula and what skills they need to develop as students. As in any classroom, the students' needs drive instructional planning and differentiation is key.

In planning interdisciplinary lessons, we start by looking for overarching themes that can tie the two curricula together. The enduring understandings and essential questions for the unit reflect both the curricular goals and the interdisciplinary themes. From there, we individually plan lessons for each content area that will support the theme, EUs and EQs, and Standards of Learning. For example, students in our interdisciplinary block examine the theme of social injustice through the lens of history, with topics such as Enlightenment and absolutism, and through the lens of English, using texts such as *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Night*. Connections to this theme are made throughout instruction and over time, deepening student understanding and retention of key concepts.

In planning, we also identify academic skills that need to be developed in our students. For example, we co-teach text annotation as a skill using both history and English texts. We also teach the elements of a well-constructed paragraph in both English and history class, using writing prompts apropos to each. When deciding which of the two of us will lead the lesson, we look to our own strengths and knowledge as teachers. Often, both teachers work with the class simultaneously, each adding her expertise to the topic at hand.

HOW STUDENTS BENEFIT IN THE INTERDISCIPLINARY CLASSROOM

One of the primary benefits of the team taught interdisciplinary classroom for students is that, by connecting the two subject areas, the content is automatically more scaffolded than if it were taught in isolation. Students are able to see connections between topics and how various skills (such as annotating a text or using knowledge of word bases and affixes to decipher unfamiliar words) are used across subject areas. When students are learning about the Renaissance in history, for example, they are simultane-

ously reading *Romeo & Juliet* in English. The students bring their understanding of the patriarchal society of the Renaissance from history class to their reading of the play and the characters' choices and attitudes surrounding marriage. When students encounter the word "polytheistic" in history, they use their knowledge of prefixes and base words learned in English class to analyze the word for meaning.



At the beginning of the school year, we, as teachers, will often be the ones pointing out the connections between the two subject areas. Over time, the students begin to make these connections on their own, excited to see how their understanding and knowledge in one area can deepen their understanding and knowledge in the other. At the same time, students are broadening their background knowledge base, a critical factor for deep and meaningful learning. These interdisciplinary connections lead to more complex and critical understanding and retention in all subject areas, both in the current school year and beyond.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

Here are a few tips for anyone who is teaming for the first time or considering team teaching.

Be flexible. As mentioned earlier, this is non-negotiable in an interdisciplinary, team-taught classroom. The ability to be flexible with planning, instruction, and time is key to a smooth collaborative relationship.

Know your curriculum. The best time to form a collaborative team is when both teachers feel very comfortable with their curricula, their classroom management styles, and their instructional repertoires. Having a broad and deep professional base from which to draw is a vital teacher characteristic for success.

Know your students and *always* put students' needs before your needs. Students' needs drive collaborative planning and, often, pacing.

Be willing to be open-minded and vulnerable. Collaborative teaching involves giving and receiving constructive criticism, willingness to make mistakes in front of another teacher, and collaborating honestly. Check your ego at the collaborative classroom door.

Believe that both subject areas (and both teachers) are of equal importance; moreover, they are BETTER together.

Start small- try planning one or two collaborative lessons per quarter until you get the hang of the process. Get to know each other, learn your own strengths and weaknesses, and learn to trust your co-teacher. As you grow together as teachers, your students will grow, as well.

