

# Social Studies VISION



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**Barcroft's** Geo Bee school champion relishes his win.



**Barret's** Geo Bee Champ has the whole world in her hands!



How is an unequal tug of war like the American Revolutionary War? ATS 4<sup>th</sup> graders participate in an experiential tug of war to find out.

### Consider This... Building a Student Centered Classroom

The very students who sit our classrooms today will become the citizens, leaders, caretakers, and innovators of our world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In their video *Shift Happens*, Karl Fisch and Scott McLeod describe the 21<sup>st</sup> century world as "exponential." With increasing connectivity, information, and world population growing exponentially, our world has shifted drastically and will continue to do so in the future. How do we best prepare students for the world that doesn't yet exist? Part of the answer rests in a classroom environment that moves away from the traditional teacher-centered model to one that is more student-centered. A student-centered classroom is one where the cognitive load is pushed onto students as they are more engaged and invested in their learning. Here are five questions that can help develop and refine teacher strengths needed for building a student-centered classroom.

- 1. **Personalization:** To what extent are all students doing the same thing at the same time? Students enter the classroom with a wide range of skills, experiences, and background knowledge. Differentiation involves tailoring instruction to meet individual student needs thereby allowing teachers to meet each student where they are and move all students forward. Leading expert on differentiation Carol Tomilson (2000) states, "whether teachers differentiate content, process, product, or learning environment, the use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction." Through the Collaborative Learning Teams, teachers can design and share differentiated lessons. For example, **Williamsburg 6<sup>th</sup> grade** teachers share their work on how they used technology to differentiate how content is accessed by students. They also developed a set of anchor activities that allows for student choice in the products they create to demonstrate comprehension and creativity. Read more about their work around differentiation and access these resources in this issue's Differentiation Corner. In addition, check out the differentiation resources available on Blackboard.
- 2. **Flexible Groups:** How does student grouping promote student interaction? Student collaboration is a mainstay of a student-centered environment. To promote maximum learning, students should move frequently among groups according to their specific needs. Flexible grouping is an effective way to meet the academic, social, and emotional

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# Consider This... Building a Student Centered Classroom cont.

needs of students, while allowing the teacher to focus in on specific needs of a group of students. Flexible grouping also gives students the opportunity to work with and learn from their peers. When students work in a variety of groups, they learn to work independently and cooperatively with a variety of personalities and peers of various back grounds and experiences. (Tomilson, 2001)

3. **Student Voice:** Who is doing most of the thinking and talking in the classroom? Academic discourse has always been part of the classroom but in the traditional classroom it has been teacher dominated. There is the teacher check for understanding, that



uses an initiate-respond-evaluation cycle (Cazden, 1988), this cycle keeps the talking limited to a few students. However, the person doing the talking in the classroom is the one who is doing the thinking. So the key is to develop opportunities

for purposeful student talk. This can be achieved in various ways that include imbedding more turn and talk opportunities in teacher modeling or guided instruction. Collaborative assignments and projects also provide opportunities for student talk. Debates, Socratic Seminars, and response groups are ways to culminate learning into more formalized and structured oral presentations by students. These more structured student led discussions can be incorporated into the regular routine of a classroom. **Daniel** Moses, World History teacher at W-L, facilitates student led discussions in his classroom regularly to not only give his students voice, but also to provide them the responsibility of leading their own learning. Read more about how Mr. Moses uses student led discussions in his classroom in this issue's Strategy Spotlight section.

4. **Student Self Evaluation:** To what degree are students involved in their own evaluation and reflection of their learning? Numbers, percentages, and letters on projects, activities, and report cards reveal little about student learning. A student-centered classroom includes narrative feedback and encourages students to resubmit work that do not demonstrate mastery. This approach involves reciprocal feedback between teacher and student. By involving students in the process of goal setting, reflecting

- on their learning and monitoring their own progress, they become more motivated, engaged, and responsible in their own learning (McMillan and Hearn, 2008).
- 5. **Setting the Stage:** To what degree does student learning link to a larger context? A student-centered classroom helps students connect their learning to larger context or understandings. In his book *Future Wise: Educating our Children for a Changing World*, David

Perkins suggests that classrooms move away from the idea of "understanding of" to the idea of "understanding for." He explains that student learning that evokes big questions



leads to big understandings and by making connections to big understandings students realize the larger significance of what they are learning. That is why for every course in the Social Studies curriculum, teachers will find an enduring understanding and essential question (s) for each unit. These questions help set the stage for the unit and help students connect their daily learning to a larger enduring understanding. Enduring understandings and essential questions are often posted in the classroom and revisited regularly through-out the unit. Some teachers incorporate the essential question in formative and summative assessments as well.

These five questions are designed to help teachers reflect on their own practices in light of student-centered learning. Traditional methods of instruction can be replaced with practices that have students engaged in critical thinking and collaboration, honing the very skills they will use in their future.



Abingdon's finalist for the 2017 Geography Bee.

#### **Differentiation Corner**

#### **Integrating Technology to Create Student Center Classrooms**

By Sara Winter, Patricia Carlson, Aaron Tagert, and Larry Peacock, 6<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies Teachers, **Williamsburg** Middle School

Many educators would agree that when it comes to 21st-century learning, having a student-centered classroom is certainly a best practice. What tools and resource do we have in place to build these environments? As a group of 6<sup>th</sup> grade social studies teachers at Williamsburg, we have found technology to be a powerful way to differen-



tiate *content*, *process*, and *product* in an effort to cultivate student centered classrooms. This article shares some of our great finds during this process.

Content: When considering content, we start with the knowledge and skills students will learn by addressing the essential knowledge, enduring understanding, vocabulary, the standards and the power standards (to identify priority for re-teaching). We learned that in Google Classroom, teachers can assign different materials to different students. This allows for content differentiation like assigning leveled readings or varied primary sources to analyze. In a recent Performance Assessment Task, students were given different levels of primary sources, different requirements, and shown different examples.

**Process:** Teacher can also use technology to differentiate the process. Process is about how students will be making sense of and understanding the material. These ac-

tivities should engage learners and help students apply the information they have learned. Processing activities should also allow time for students to reflect before moving on. We have used Quizziz



(www.quizziz.com) to differentiate process by creating in-class or homework tasks where students are able to work at their own pace. Teachers can control the timer and settings. Quizziz offers detailed reports of student learning which can be used in conferencing with students on their learning goals and determining needed strengthening or extensions. Other great technology for differentiating processing are NearPod/Peardeck. These apps and websites allow teachers to create custom presentations and control devices through a teacher access panel. These provide a good way to vary processing activities and allow in class reflection and discussion. Students can submit responses that can be displayed to the class anonymously and serve as jumping off points for discussion. Both are effective platforms to engage students digitally. For example, when teaching students to analyze primary sources of the American Revolution, students were able to digitally annotate and share political cartoons. These annotations were then displayed to the class and a discussion followed.

**Product:** Finally, technology can be used to differentiate student product. Products are often summative as-

sessments which should range in complexity and demonstrate what the student has learned. Products can offer choice and varying formats to meet the needs of all learners. Rubrics should match these varied skills. Guided by the standards



and identified power standards, our 6<sup>th</sup> grade CLT collaborated to create a digital learning menu of anchor activities that can apply to any unit. Anchor activities can be used to differentiate process and product based on student readiness, interest, or learning profile. Anchor activities give students time to conduct independent research, explore a concept in greater depth, and enrich their skill development. Scan the QR code to check out our example. All products found here can be accessed and created digitally.

We hope these technologies will be useful to fellow social studies teacher and their CLTs on their journey to created more student centered classrooms.

> Scan URL for digital learning menu of anchor





#### **Congratulations to the Geography Bee Champions!**

Abingdon: Peter Boersterling ASFS: Abuali Masalimov Barcroft: Luka Curcic

Glebe: Ally Bass

Long Branch—Keelin McCarty McKinley—Jack Felice Tuckahoe—Conor McGinty

Swanson—Matthew Carey

Barrett: Mariam McClure Henry: Claire Wiley

Gunston—Theo Bush Williamsburg—Evan Barrie ATS: Daniel Meyer

**Drew:** Krishnan Shankar Jamestown: Jacob Bowen-Glazeroff

Nottingham—John Voight Jefferson—Gregor Deininger





Congratulations Conor on being Tuckahoe's Geo Bee winner. Here he stands with Mr. Pascal, Tuckahoe principal.



Swanson's Geo Bee school champion.



Congratulations to Long Branches' Geo Bee Winner!



Gunston's Geo Bee Champion.



After a tight competition John wins Nottingham's School Geography Bee.



ATS Geo Bee winner stands with Ms. Meranama, Social Studies Lead Teacher.

 $Geography\ Bee$  It's that time of the year when students across the nation Grades 4 to 8 compete in the National Geographic Bee. Throughout this issue we've included a sampling of school Geography Bees across held across APS.



Barrett's Geo Bee finalists and champion.



Taylor Elementary School's Geo Bee Champion and runner up.



Williamsburg Geo Bee winner smiles with Principal Laurie.

Principal Turner stands proudly with Henry Elementary School Geography Bee champion





Science Focus students stand proud after finishing their school Geo Bee competition.



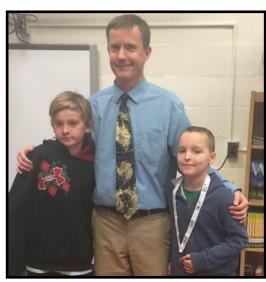
Jefferson's Bee Champ.



**Nottingham** Knights Geography Bee Finalists stand proudly with their certificates.



**Drew** Elementary's Geo Bee Champion and runner up pose proudly with their certificates.



Jamestown's 2<sup>nd</sup> place and 1<sup>st</sup> place winners of the school Geo Bee stand with 4<sup>th</sup> grade teacher,
Mr. Donovan.



Spotlight is on Student Facilitated Discussions, a student discussion strategy that provides an encouraging, openminded environment with minimal teacher intervention.

**Daniel Moses** of **W-L** runs Student Facilitated Discussions regularly with his intensified World History classes. We visited Dan's class to capture a <u>Student Facilitated</u> <u>Discussion in action</u> and spoke with Dan about this technique.

#### (1) How did you come to use this method with your students?

I began doing student facilitated Harkness discussions with my students years ago when teaching in Chicago, then in DC. I became disenchanted with many of my class discussions that seemed to essentially be me giving my opinions or asking probing questions and then hoping the students would take things from there. My AP World History class seemed like the natural place to try something new and take a risk.

#### (2) What do you see as the greatest benefit to student facilitated discussions?

The greatest benefit is that students have to take primary and secondary sources and discuss them in a professional way without the filter of a teacher explanation. It really lends itself well to truly organic advanced historical thinking and allows students to take a greater ownership over their own classroom.

## (3) What tips would you share with a teacher wanting to try this with their students?

- First, it can be a bit scary to turn over the reins of instruction to the students so try it out first in a class that has lots of strong class leadership and innovative thinkers.
- Make sure you have your laptop giving the students feedback and making suggestions about where to take the class discussion.
- Make sure to give students a primary source of some sort that allows them to reflect on the class discussion topic and give them a thought-provoking question to begin with.
- Be sure to have a strong class leader who can facilitate the conversation on your behalf.
- If it doesn't work, don't be scared to try again. Make every single student responsible for participating.

As seen in <u>the video</u>, Student Facilitated Discussions have many benefits to student learning. It increases on-task peer interaction, it builds academic confidence and supports critical reading and inquiry. By putting students at the center of their learning, they are challenged to be more inclusive of one another and take more ownership of their discussion.

# **History Comes Alive!**



H-B Woodlawn Sociology students learn about social networks.



**Wakefield** students create the French Revolution story boards in World History.



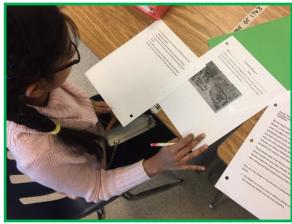
**Gunston** 8<sup>th</sup> graders apply economic and demographic concepts as they design authentic Shark Tank pitches to potential funders.



**Barrett** 4<sup>th</sup> graders take on different roles in this board game they learn about the economics of Colonial Virginia.



Budding cartographers at **McKinley** design their floor maps of the United States' physical features.



**Gunston** 6<sup>th</sup> graders analyze Paul Revere's depiction of the Boston Massacre and ask the question, do you always trust the news you read?"



APS teachers vote with their feet and form a human bar graph at our December Social Studies Alive! Training.

# GET TO KNOW APS SOCIAL STUDIES LEAD TEACHERS

**Meg Enriquez**, a native Arlingtonian, is in her 6<sup>th</sup> year teaching at **Key Elementary School**. She is a Special Education Teacher who works with Students in both 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grades. She graduated from George Mason University with an



undergraduate degree in Social Work and continued on to get her Masters in Special Education. Through her work with students, she loves learning more about all of the cultures that help to diversify Arlington! Teaching is not just a passion but is also in her genes, as her mom, Laurie Shaw, is a long-time APS teacher currently teaching 3<sup>rd</sup> grade at Abingdon.



Mary Kell is in her second year of teaching 7<sup>th</sup> grade at Gun-

ston Middle School. Originally from Chambersburg, PA, Mary came to Virginia to teach in Prince William County Schools in 2010 and taught Civics and Economics there for five years. Mary holds a bachelor's degree in history and political science from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Arts in Teaching, also from Pitt. In her spare time Mary enjoys cooking, hiking, and visiting Virginia wineries. She likes spending time with local friends and exploring the rich history of this area.



Ricky House is a 2012 graduate of the University of Pitts-



burgh where he received his Bachelor of Arts in History and Political Science. In 2013 he graduated from the University of Pittsburgh with his Master of Arts in Teaching Degree. This is his second year in Arlington County and at **Gunston Middle School**. He previously was a team leader and 8th grade social studies teacher in Anne Arundel County, MD. Ricky enjoys skiing, tennis, and rollerblading and spending time with his labradoodle Zoey.

He is originally from Harrisburg PA and is a diehard Steelers and Pitt Panther fan!

**Barbara Watkins** is the IB Coordinator at **Randolph Elementary**. She began teaching at Randolph in 2004-2005 as a PDS intern from George Mason University. After her internships, she was hired as a second grade teacher at Randolph. Prior to teaching, Ms. Watkins worked in sports marketing for 4.5 years and in the Senate for 1.5 years. Ms. Watkins obtained

her Bachelor's Degree from Drury University in Springfield, Missouri, and her Master's Degree in Education from George Mason University. In her free time, Ms. Watkins enjoys obstacle course racing, running, tennis, reading, hiking, cooking and lifting weights. She complet ed her first Spartan Race in August.



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