

Non-Recommending Year Memorandum
Social Studies Advisory Committee
March 25, 2019

The Social Studies Advisory Committee is pleased to present the following summary of our activities during the current school year and areas of current interest.

Updates on previous recommendations:

Our major recommendations in the 2017-18 school year were inspired by the need to incorporate more global education into our curriculum across disciplines. The Social Studies office began this work in Summer 2018 during their planned curriculum revision. They looked for global education links and embedded them within the Social Studies curriculum as it was being built. This is a good start, but needs to extend to other curricular areas as well.

The World Language Committee has recognized this and included in its 2018-19 report the following recommendations:

- The Social Studies and World Languages offices collaborate to create complementary lesson topics and joint activities for the curriculum.
- Within each school, Social Studies and World Languages staff meet at least twice a year to discuss upcoming lesson topics and how they might build off of and complement each other.

We appreciate WLAC's recommending concrete steps toward our shared goals.

We also remain interested in better capturing the expertise within the Arlington community and bringing globally-minded Arlingtonians to APS classrooms. We previously recommended that APS develop a database of resources, such as outside experts who are willing to visit the classroom, field trip opportunities, or resources available online, and we are eager to see progress toward this goal. One possibility is that this effort could be crowd-sourced by teachers and administrators, perhaps with "user recommendations"/teacher feedback. This could potentially minimize the expense of such a project and allow it to be a "living" database.

Our other 2017-18 recommendation supported the additional use of Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) as vital formative and summative assessments that offer real advantages over content-driven standardized tests, such as the SOLs. The Social

Studies Office continues to work to determine how best to benchmark PATs and provide additional resources to teachers.

The Social Studies Office continues to promote History Alive training through a 4-day summer institute and a 1-day overview in winter.

Our activities:

We have made a particular effort to meet with other committees this year to learn more about their work and concerns and to explore topics of mutual interest: We met with the following groups:

- Science Advisory Committee
- World Languages Advisory Committee
- ESOL/HILT Advisory Committee
- APS-Community Working Group on Immigrant and Refugee Students.

We discussed topics such as cross-disciplinary instruction (in particular integrating social studies with science, world languages, and English/Language Arts), applied learning, the importance of students seeing themselves in the curriculum, ways to broaden the social studies curriculum to be more inclusive of immigrants' experiences and history, the value of team teaching in ESOL/HILT classrooms (content teacher paired with ESOL/HILT teacher), social studies professional learning opportunities for ESOL/HILT teachers, and the importance of knowing an ESOL/HILT student's background knowledge and reading level, having difficult conversations and teaching tolerance, civic responsibilities for environmental stewardship, and encouraging active citizenship.

Topics of interest:

We have focused this year on how to support APS students to become active local, national and global citizens. We see this as a critical mission of schooling. Disturbing trends of intolerance and apathy make this more vital than ever.

To this end, we have discussed how civic education is taught.

- Do students “finish” civics content with only knowledge of government structures or do they emerge with a deeper sense of their potential impact on government and their communities?
- Are students able to distinguish how to gather information and spot bias?

- How can we deepen students' sense of power to affect local, national and global issues?
- Do students have opportunities to practice civics skills, for example by advocating a position before a decision-making body or engaging in civil debate in the classroom on controversial topics?

We note, with some disappointment, that although “community engagement and civic responsibility” is an essential pillar of the “Profile of a Virginia Graduate” there are very few professional development possibilities in this area that are part of the current APS Professional Learning Framework. It seems that for such an important topic there is very little attention focused on how we help teachers develop the skills to promote these attitudes and competencies for students. Learners should leave school deeply engaged with the well-being of their community, their nation, and their world, as well as the integrity of the Constitution and our democratic institutions. Too often, this is not the case. We continue to explore the best next steps to address this concern.

Professional learning opportunities that enhance the global education skills of staff are always of interest to the Committee. The Social Studies Office distributes a newsletter that includes opportunities for globally-related professional development and is also gathering together various summer opportunities to distribute to staff. SSAC would like to explore distributing those opportunities related to global education to other curricular areas as well.

Potential Recommendations:

We continue to work towards a vision where APS engages all learners and prepares them to take an active role in shaping their community, their country and their world. To this end we are considering the following potential recommendations.

- 1. Explore methods to support the experiences and heritage of all Arlington students so that all students feel included and see themselves in the curriculum.**

We are discussing ways in which the social studies curriculum can more accurately represent the depth of experiences and heritages found in the Arlington community. We note, for example, the frequency of the retelling of the English colonial past of Virginia. Yet little to no attention is paid to later waves of migration, especially from locations outside Europe. This devalues the experiences and heritages of many Arlington students.

Balancing the need to explore the heritage and stories of all APS students with the need to teach the state-mandated Standards of Learning is an ongoing area of focus. Students should see the interconnections between the global and local: how global events impact our local community and how local choices can affect the rest of the world. Creating more opportunities to bring the experiences of recent immigrants into the curriculum can serve that goal.

We are very interested in exploring how the social studies curriculum can be enhanced to include the contemporary history, experiences, and contributions of immigrants and refugees in the U.S., consistent with the broader goal of the APS-Community Working Group on Immigrant and Refugee Students to broaden various curriculum areas in this manner.

2. Professional learning for staff in support of a more robust approach to citizenship education.

Moving beyond content-oriented civic education to engaging students with the idea of active citizenship is of great interest to the SSAC, as noted above. We will continue to explore possibilities of additional professional learning opportunities for staff in this area.

3. Continuing with the 2017-18 SSAC global education recommendations.

As stated in our 2017-18 Recommending Year Report, the SSAC strongly feels the necessity of providing all our students with an education that prepares them to actively engage with the rest of the world. The enhancement of global education links in the Social Studies curriculum is a good start, as is the World Language Committee's recommendation to interweave social studies and World Languages topics. However, a great deal of work still needs to be accomplished. Developing community resources, engaging with additional curricular areas and considering the best ways to support staff to embed global education into teaching and learning are all seen as important components of ensuring students are equipped for a global future.

4. Investigating and investing in innovative ways to combat the achievement gaps of specific populations.

Ensuring all student are competent and engaged with Social Studies must always be a primary interest of the SSAC. As we have interacted with other committees, we have considered how their perspectives can inform our work.

The ESOL/HILT committee shared compelling stories about the impact of even one hour of team teaching by content area teachers and ESOL/HILT teachers. ESOL/HILT teachers increase their content-area knowledge and content-area teachers are able to incorporate strategies to engage English Language Learners. The SSAC will explore this idea as a potential recommendation.

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