

Social Studies Advisory Committee, Executive Summary, January 2020

The Social Studies Advisory committee is presenting its recommending year report next month, February 2020, so the following is a summary of a nearly-finalized recommendation.

Recommendation #1: External equity audit (or internal committee) to review curriculum and resources. The SSAC believes that to support the continued efforts of the county to increase equity, an external audit must be performed, especially in the subject of social studies.

Culturally relevant and responsive education takes into account existing cultural norms and preferences and strives to create educational experiences that will be engaging for all students in a classroom. Unfortunately, the SSAC has encountered and noted many cases where culturally relevant and diverse instruction has not been provided, as well as cases where students do not feel that the history or current situation of a cultural group was correctly acknowledged or received adequate attention. A variety of factors contribute to the current situation where equity in our schools is far from optimized. Because of this, the SSAC believes that a wide ranging, objective equity audit is necessary to better understand the scope of the problem in order to remediate it. APS should ensure that each student receives a comprehensive, multi-faceted view of history and current events.

Recommendation #2: As part of the APS professional learning opportunities, provide a series of professional development courses focused on the goal of building student skills for active democratic civic engagement.

According to the standards set out in the Virginia Department of Education Profile of a Graduate, graduating students must “build connections and value interactions with others as a responsible and responsive citizen (community engagement and civic responsibility);” and the Virginia General Assembly sets out the 5 Cs “critical thinking, creative thinking, collaboration, communication, and **citizenship**”. Despite this emphasis on the importance of graduating students ready to take roles as active citizens, there is virtually no component of the 2018 APS Learning Framework that focuses on community involvement, civic engagement, and the many aspects of modern-day active citizenship. We suggest that teacher professional development (PD) in citizenship would be an important part of a comprehensive APS approach to democratic civic education.

Past Recommendation #1: Increased focus on global education and citizenship

Status: Embedded global and citizenship resources have been added to curriculum documents and will be increased during curriculum work (Summer 2019). The Social Studies Office has also promoted professional learning opportunities that teachers can participate in to increase their lens on global education. We have suggested that a citizenship course, aligned to the Profile of a Graduate, be added as a professional learning option for teachers that would help them develop ways of embedding real life citizenship scenarios into their content.

Past Recommendation #2: Support Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) in social studies instruction and devote necessary resources to continue developing them

Status: The Social Studies Office has reviewed the offerings and increased the options for Performance Assessment Tasks. Professional learning sessions around the creation of PATs and how to embed the assessment into instruction have been offered.