

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board

FROM: Social Studies Advisory Committee

DATE: January 11, 2016

SUBJECT: Recommending Year Report with Staff Recommendations

Background

The Social Studies Advisory Committee (SSAC) is comprised of a small but strong group, welcoming back members from service overseas, new parents, and new experts in the field. We were also informed by the Social Studies Office program evaluation report, which helped to illuminate our work with important new data both reinforcing and challenging our previous goals.

While armed with new members and new information, the core of our work remains the same. Indeed, it answers directly Dr. Violand-Sanchez's challenging question to the Advisory Committees this year: how do you define success for students?

We believe, at its core, educational success comes with an appropriate balance between teaching students *what* to think and *how* to think. Basic content skills, be they literacy, numeracy, or historic knowledge, are essential. But equally essential is instilling in students the capacity to be lifelong learners. Professors and employers alike often speak to the fact that "they can teach the content" but they need students and employees with the skills to turn what they teach into something meaningful.

This is why SSAC continues to look to support and augment the excellent overall program that Social Studies Office Supervisor, Cathy Hix has created for our kids by prioritizing and enhancing the "4Cs" skill-building (collaboration, communication, critical thinking, creativity) as described by the Partnership for 21st Century Skills (<http://www.p21.org/>). In that effort, we continue to focus on the specific higher-level thinking skills such as: creative and cooperative thinking; forming and defending fact-based opinions; understanding multiple perspectives; civic engagement, and multicultural awareness and sensitivity.

This year's recommendations build upon those of previous years, focusing less on specific historical content than on how to most effectively deliver that content to build lifelong learners.

Recommendation #1: All Grade 4 and 5 teachers who teach social studies participate in a mandatory one-day History Alive! training by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

2011-2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: We believe this recommendation is ideally aligned with Goal 1 (Ensure That Every Student is Challenged and Engaged) and Goal 3 (Recruit, Retain, and Develop High-Quality Staff). As noted below, this popular training gives teachers and students essential skills to make Social Studies as well as other curriculum areas a “full brain” learning experience. On that note, we also believe this comports with Goal 5 (Meet the Needs of the Whole Child) as this training goes beyond the information retention needed for standardized Social Studies testing to help build essential critical thinking skills.

Rationale: As discussed in our 2013-14 Recommending Year Report, History Alive!/Social Studies Alive! is the primary pedagogical approach for APS Social Studies teaching. The pedagogy has broad cross-subject application because it focuses not on specific content, but six teaching strategies:

- Visual Discovery
- Skill Builders
- Experiential Exercises
- Writing for Understanding
- Response Groups
- Problem-Solving Group Work

History Alive! is based on the following premises:

- Students have different learning styles so instruction should incorporate many ways of learning (e.g. visual, kinesthetic).
- Cooperative interaction increases learning and improves social skills. Instruction should incorporate multiple opportunities for students to discuss content.
- All students can learn. Instruction should be implemented to reach all the learners in the classroom.

The strategies can also be used in math, science, and language arts and are ideally suited to meet the needs of different types of learners and enhance the learning of ESOL/HILT students. Teachers who have been trained report cross-curricular connections that enable them to apply the strategies to other subjects, and many teachers who have had the one-day training are eager to attend the week-long session. When SSAC members met with the APS lead elementary social studies teachers in 2013, enthusiasm for History Alive! was very high—teachers noted in particular its value as a “great integration tool” and said History Alive! strategies empower them to be more creative in their teaching and focus on higher-level skills and activities that emphasize understanding of material.

According to the Social Studies Program Evaluation Report, History Alive! training results in increased use of History Alive! strategies in the classroom. A survey of teachers revealed a positive correlation between the level of History Alive! training

(single-day, week-long Level 1, week-long Level 2) and the frequency with which the teacher used the strategies. The Report also discusses student feedback, indicating that History Alive! strategies are memorable for students:

"Elementary students described many ways they participate in social studies class: activities such as giving a speech, role-playing in a debate, or making observations about a portrait. Interactive lessons were memorable for the elementary participants. They mentioned debates and activities that enable a person to experience feelings that a person living in the past might have felt."

APS has implemented the History Alive! training and pedagogy since 1998 with social studies teachers in grades K-12. All middle school and high school social studies teachers receive History Alive! training (all new secondary teachers are required to participate in the one-week summer training). Each year approximately 50 elementary school teachers avail themselves of either the one-day or the week-long training. This includes librarians, ESOL/HILT, Gifted, and Special Ed/resource teachers. Classroom observations conducted in spring 2014 as part of the most recent Social Studies program evaluation noted the use of History Alive! strategies in 44% of elementary observations according to the Program Evaluation Report.

In our 2013-2014 Recommending Year Report, SSAC recommended that all teachers in Grades 3, 4, and 5 receive training in the History Alive! teaching strategies by the end of the current (2015-2016) school year. We are pleased to see that the Social Studies Office is actively promoting and creating opportunities for teachers to receive History Alive! training, offering one single-day training session during the school year, one single-day session in the summer, and one week-long session in the summer. Further, the Social Studies Office tracks attendance at week-long History Alive! training sessions to facilitate reaching the training goal.

Despite these noteworthy efforts, it does not appear that the goal articulated in our 2013-2014 Recommending Year Report will have been met by the end of the current school year. In our 2013-2014 Report, we noted that approximately 25 percent of elementary school teachers had received any History Alive! training. According to the 2015 Social Studies Program Evaluation Report, a teacher survey conducted during the 2013-2014 school year indicated that approximately 62 percent of all elementary school teachers (including social studies teachers) had received some form of History Alive! training. Approximately 26 percent of elementary school teachers who teach social studies in any grade have received the week-long training, and only 45 (30 percent) of the 150 4th and 5th grade social studies teachers have participated in the week-long training. These figures exclude teachers who do not teach social studies, such as librarians, gifted resource, special education, and HILT teachers. Based on attendance data for the one-day training, the Social Studies Office estimates that 80-90 4th and 5th grade social studies teachers have not yet received any training.

SSAC continues to recommend that APS deliver either the single-day or week-long training to every elementary school social studies teacher in Grades 3 through 5. Based

on experience to date with this effort, however, and because resources are limited, we believe it would be prudent to re-calibrate priorities to focus at this time on training for 4th and 5th grade teachers who teach social studies (including ESOL/HILT and self-contained Special Education teachers who teach social studies), with the goal of delivering the one-day course to all of these teachers by the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

Training for 5th grade teachers is essential, as the 5th grade curriculum is a History Alive! product. Furthermore, the 5th grade curriculum is the only mandatory Ancient History course for Grades K-12. APS and the students are far less likely to receive the high-level thinking skills development embedded in this curriculum when teachers lack training in the History Alive! pedagogy.

Training for 4th grade teachers is equally important, though for different reasons. 4th grade is now the first Social Studies SOL year, and the pressure to “teach to the test” even as skills-based learning are becoming a more significant part of SOL testing (see SOL update later in this report) can often mean that content can trump skills-based learning in this, their first year of a more traditional Social Studies curriculum. Ensuring that teachers are properly trained in the HA! pedagogy will far better ensure that students are not “turned-off” to Social Studies in 4th Grade, something SSAC has heard from students and student members of our committee in the past. In addition, students receiving instruction from a 4th grade teacher with HA! training will benefit from an opportunity to learn how to use the interactive notebook method as well as a two years’ preparation for the pedagogy that is prevalent in middle school.

Budget Impact: The cost for the one-day training for 90 teachers is approximately \$6700: \$6300 for two school-year sessions totaling 60 teachers (\$105 per teacher to pay the cost of substitutes, no cost for the instructor) and \$400 during the summer for an instructor to train 30 teachers (no substitutes needed, teachers give up a day of vacation). Although the actual number of teachers not yet trained may be closer to 80, we believe it is prudent to assume at least 90 teachers will need training. We would expect that some teachers who have already been trained may leave APS or switch to a different grade, and new teachers will likely be hired to serve a growing, diverse student population. As a result, it is difficult to predict how many teachers will need to be trained in order to achieve our recommended goal by the end of the 2017-2018 school year. We believe that funding for an additional 90 teachers to receive the single-day training is a reasonable, though possibly conservative, estimate of the budget impact of our recommendation.

ACI VOTE:	YES	NO	ABSTAINING
	14	0	0

Staff Response:

The Social Studies Office supports this recommendation. Secondary teachers new to Arlington are required to have this training and the use of the strategies associated with the pedagogy are encouraged in classroom instruction. It would be extremely helpful for

students in Grade 4 and 5 to experience these strategies during Social Studies Instruction. Additionally, all lessons shared from our office are examples of the History Alive strategies.

Recommendation #2: APS shall develop a sustained, systemic commitment to providing all schools and teachers the space and resources for effective multi-curricular integrated learning. The School Board will instruct the Superintendent's Office to develop guidance to school administrators supporting integrated learning at all levels and commission an inter-departmental, single grade-level curriculum review to provide teachers with connections among the different subject areas to aid the development of 2016-2017 lesson plans.

2011-2017 Strategic Plan Alignment: SSAC believes that this recommendation touches on every goal in the Strategic Plan.

Goal 1: Challenge and Engage All Students: Integrated learning and curriculum development has been proven to provide superior learning outcomes for students in both subject matter retention and test scores and higher-order thinking skills achievement on performance assessments.

Goal 2: Eliminate Achievement Gaps: Integrated learning helps to provide relevance, which studies have shown helps to develop independent connections and higher-level thinking skills in students across the learning spectrum. Additionally, integrated curriculum development has been shown to increase differentiation opportunities in instruction.

Goal 3: Recruit, Retain and Develop High Quality Staff: Teaching partnerships, when given the proper space and priority by school administrations, have proven to be an effective teacher development tool. Indeed, teachers who plan across curricular areas report that they benefit by exchanging ideas with colleagues outside their particular area of expertise.

Goal 4: Provide Optimal Learning Environments: Clear evidence shows multiple benefits to integrated learning both in subject matter retention and higher-level thinking. Most importantly, it gives each subject heightened relevance for students as it, to borrow a phrase from ACI Chair Ted Black, "makes learning real." When learning permeates the walls of a particular classroom, it provides an optimal learning environment.

Goal 5: Meet the Needs of the Whole Child: Integrated curriculum development is an essential step toward looking at the whole child, as it does not compartmentalize learning in an unnatural way, and allows students to make independent connections to subject matter. In short, it helps to create learners, not just students who learn.

Rationale: The concept of integrated learning, or integrated curriculum development, means to teach core concepts or skills by connecting multiple subject areas to a unifying theme or issue.

As reported in our non-recommending update last year, SSAC hoped to continue our conversation with the Science Advisory Committee (SAC) and English and Language Arts Committee (ELAC) in order to further what has been productive early conversations regarding whether the 6th Grade Reading course might be an ideal testing ground for an APS-wide learning integration strategy given the fact that a school-wide model of this sort had been adopted at Jefferson Middle School. We also hoped to continue our conversation regarding elementary school Science and Social Studies integrated work, noting supportive feedback from the School Board on both the prospective educational and time-maximization benefits of better-integrated curricular work.

At a joint discussion at the end of the 2014-2015 school year, members from all committees attending expressed an interest in the opportunity to hear from teachers currently working on integrated curricular efforts. In response, SSAC organized a session with teachers and administrators working on two relevant integrated learning settings, 6th Grade Reading and 9th Grade English and Social Studies.

On October 19th, we were pleased to host a meeting attended by SAC, SSAC, ELAC, and WLAC members as well as ACI co-chair Ted Black listening to and interacting with teachers and administrators from Kenmore Middle, Thomas Jefferson Middle, and Yorktown High Schools. This highly informative session broadened the conversation to the nature of integrated learning and curriculum development—a valuable step back to consider practices currently in place.

You can find the full notes of this meeting, as well as feedback from other members of SAC, ELAC, WLAC, ASEAC, and the GSAC in Appendix A. The key findings from this meeting included:

- Integrated learning allows students to see, recognize, and create independent connections in their work that gives them the opportunity for more enduring understanding of both the content and value of their studies. In short, integrated learning makes learning real for students.
- Giving students the opportunity to create connections among subjects is a core objective for the School Board's "Teaching to the Whole Child" priority.
- There are numerous ways to create integrated learning opportunities. If Advisory Committees were to give recommendations in this regard, it should be less to advocate for specific models, but instead to have APS provide teachers the support, guidance, information, and space to make integrated learning a higher priority.
- Teachers seem to benefit from interdisciplinary planning. It helps them see their own subject in a different light and promotes creative thinking and new ways to connect and relate materials to their students.
- Integrated learning only has a chance for sustained success (rather than depending only on teachers' own initiative) with school administrators that make this issue a priority; providing the initiative, space, and time for both teachers and students to create connections.

- Looking at curriculum alignment/mapping could be a substantive first step-- getting a multidisciplinary group together to look at the standard curriculum and create a standing guide to subject matter connections that can serve as a foundation for integrated learning.
- While integrated learning is worthwhile, it should not become onerous. We do not want finding the connections in content to become more important than the content itself.

Evidence from outside of APS strongly reinforces many of the findings from this meeting. Attached you will find a synthesis of research on curriculum integration undertaken by the Michigan Department of Education (Appendix B). Their findings included:

- Experts proposed that more can be taught and learned in less time and at higher levels of learning if we connect disciplines.
- Integrated learning environments lead to more differentiation in instruction and the deepening of disciplinary understanding, resulting in high scores on achievement tests.
- Integration can be utilized as a venue to develop both complex-cognitive and career-related soft skills, preparing students of today to become college- and career-ready for tomorrow.
- Higher-order cognitive processing leads to longer-lasting achievement regardless of socioeconomic status by embedding skills, expanding content knowledge, and increasing understanding.
- Integrated programs offer *more* individualized learning opportunities and opportunities to differentiate instruction than traditional methods.
- Students in integrated curricular programs are less prone to attendance and behavioral problems.
- A meta-analysis conducted in 2000 of 30 studies showed achievement escalates by a ½ standard deviation gain as computed through standardized measures when schools use integrated learning methods. Multiple studies through 2012 support the conclusions of the meta-analysis.

A report from the Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat (Appendix C) also suggests a significant benefit for APS's primary math and reading objectives, as curriculum integration can embed core academic goals throughout the curriculum. As one "front running" teacher recommended:

"I revisit the strands throughout the year. I begin planning with numeracy and literacy and let the other subjects fit in."

Despite the evidence of efficacy, the evidence of sustained integrated planning within APS is unclear. The Social Studies Office Program Evaluation noted:

The staff survey included questions about the integration of social studies content with other content areas. Teachers at all levels were asked the question, "During your instructional planning, how frequently do you integrate other content areas (including

non-core areas) with your social studies instruction each year?” Elementary teachers were the most likely to report that they integrate other content areas into social studies instruction often (51 percent). Thirty-three percent of middle school teachers and 38 percent of high school teachers selected this response.

Within the Social Studies program itself, the statistics on collaboration are even more stark:

Interdisciplinary instruction is not widely implemented in the secondary APS social studies program, with 21 percent of middle school teachers and 26 percent of high school teachers reporting that they collaborate with teachers in other subject areas either weekly or monthly. In addition, secondary teachers were less likely than elementary teachers to report that they integrate other content areas into social studies instruction often (33 percent and 38 percent of middle school and high school teachers, respectively).

In our October 19 meeting, teachers using integrated curricular practices noted that one of the challenges teachers face is finding the time to develop the connections among subject materials when the effort required to develop lesson plans and teach subject-specific information is in itself a full-time job. This means that in APS at the moment, most integrated learning efforts are entirely subject to the motivation and creativity of the teaching staff.

While our informal research suggests that teachers and schools should be given the flexibility to develop integrated curriculum implementation models that best suit the different needs of their student populations, APS may be undervaluing the benefits of integrated learning in giving schools little guidance or support.

Instead, SSAC recommends that the Board instruct the Superintendent’s Office to develop specific guidance to school administrators supporting integrated learning at all levels; most notably to gather and provide current best practices from school administrators on how to provide both sufficient time and resources to teachers to facilitate integrated learning opportunities.

In order to make sure that this effort is systemic, manageable for school administrators and teachers, and can be tracked for accountability and feedback, SSAC members believe that a single-grade curriculum review is a logical first step. After much discussion, we recommend that this review be at the 4th, 5th, or 6th grade level.

Due in part—but not entirely—to SOL testing, upper-grade elementary school is when subject matter learning begins to become more rigid. But because core teachers are still teaching multiple subjects, and statistics from the Program Evaluation Report as noted above show teachers are more likely to already be using integrated learning techniques, 4th and 5th grades are potentially fertile ground for focusing initial efforts.

Alternatively, both our research into the benefits of integrated curriculum and the presentations from Kenmore and Jefferson Middle School staff, the reading class in 6th grade may well be a unique opportunity for teachers and students alike across APS to benefit from the development of integrated resources to facilitate their lesson plan development.

In either case, SSAC specifically recommends that this curriculum review include non-core subjects such as art and music, health and physical education, and foreign language study. Additionally, we believe that a representative of the local history initiative currently underway should participate in this review, as finding connections to Arlington’s history is another way to help bring relevance to the subject matter.

Budget Impact: The budget for this would be dependent on the manner of this review. If this review was conducted by departmental program supervisors or program specialists, the budget impact would be negligible as it would be a reorientation of staff time rather than additional staff time. We are concerned, however, that something of this sort may overload an already stretched program staff, and that there may be additional value in having this review conducted by the teachers who are themselves developing the lesson plans.

According to the Social Studies Office, last summer the average teacher working on curriculum was paid for 30 hours of work at \$30.00 per hour. Based on those numbers, we would recommend that a budget of \$7,000 for seven grade-specific teachers (Math, Social Studies, English, Science, Spanish, Health & Physical Education, and Arts & Music) to conduct this review.

ACI VOTE:	YES	NO	ABSTAINING
	14	0	0

Staff Response:

The Social Studies Office supports the integration of curriculum throughout all grade levels. Currently there are examples of solid curriculum integration but programs vary from school to school. The Social Studies Office would like to provide more opportunities for discussions within the Department of Instruction on how to integrate curriculum and would also like to strengthen current integrated programs with an aim of more consistency across the county. Additionally, the Social Studies Office would like to explore additional resources to support the curriculum integration. The Social Studies Office believes that guidance in developing a more integrated curriculum would be beneficial.

Update on Other Issues SSAC is Researching

New Local History Initiative: What does the “Glebe” in Glebe Elementary mean, and why is it a key to the 1st Amendment of the Constitution? How did the “tuckahoe” in Tuckahoe Elementary help the Powhatan as the Jamestown settlers suffered through

the Starving Time? Why are the grounds of HB Woodlawn a hallowed ground for the history of the Civil Rights movement?

Connecting our students to the history right in front of them is an essential way to both make its study relevant to them, and to connect them to their community. It is why SSAC is extremely pleased that the Social Studies Office is beginning work on an Arlington History Project, an integrated approach to bringing the rich history of Arlington County into schools and classrooms.

The Social Studies Office hopes to partner with other Department of Instruction Offices to provide teachers with sample lessons or units and the resources to create their own plans, and provide families with access to the resources that encourage them to learn about the communities they live and work in.

SSAC noted in Recommendation #2 of this report that any integrated curriculum review should incorporate local history to the extent possible to help foster these community connections. We also believe that as this initiative continues its work, it should look for culturally and age-specific relevance, as well, to help enhance these connections for our diverse community of young learners. We therefore strongly support full and continued funding for this important new initiative.

SOL Revisions: In last year's non-recommending report, SSAC made public comment on proposed VDOE revisions to the Social Studies SOLs. The curriculum framework for the revised History and Social Science Standards is now available for public comment. This new curriculum framework reorganizes the elementary K-3 curriculum as well as implementing a K-12 skill-based focus. While the standards were approved last March, public comment on this framework will be accepted until December 21, 2015. The link for the framework and public comments can be found in the Superintendent's Memo #280-15 at the following link:

http://www.doe.virginia.gov/administrators/superintendents_memos/2015/280-15.shtml

SSAC members will review the updated revisions and comment. From our knowledge to date, we do believe the revisions do represent a step forward, particularly at the secondary level where the very recognition of skill-based learning rather than an exclusive focus on content retention is cause for some optimism.

Expansion of Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs): The expansion in PAT use continues to be a priority for the SSAC given their ability to promote "4Cs" skill building, which is a primary advantage of PATs, as noted throughout the Social Studies Program Evaluation Report. Indeed, the fact that the 3rd Grade PATs were available immediately upon the decision by VDOE to replace the SOL with a performance assessment (our 2013-2014 recommendation supported by ACI) made APS a model across the state.

We are pleased that the Social Studies Office is continuing to adjust the PATs to make them more flexible and effective for teachers at all levels. During the summer of 2016, the Social Studies Office added two additional performance assessments at Grade 3

and created leveled assessments at both Grade 6 and Grade 7 to more adequately meet the needs of the diverse learners in the classroom.

We expect to develop further recommendations in order to have this strategic focus become more ubiquitous within APS both for testing and as a teaching tool.

Developing Effective Digital & Online Courses for High School: As noted in last year's non-recommending report, the Economics and Personal Finance (EPF) course is evolving into a model program, offering a variety of options for students both during the regular school year and into the summer, while meeting multiple state requirements. The county-wide fully virtual EPF course has 29 students enrolled this school year, and this past summer 160 students enrolled in the county-wide virtual EPF course. Washington-Lee High School also offers a fully virtual EPF class for their students in addition to the blended course that still meets state requirements.

In addition, the Social Studies Office has expanded online instruction to include US/VA History. This past summer a small group of students participating in the pilot course successfully completed the requirements and passed the relevant SOL examination. There is a full pilot of that course ongoing this school year. In addition, all teachers of classroom US/VA History courses have been given access to the virtual materials of that course.

One thing learned from the changes made to EPF was the importance of making *differentiation* a priority consideration. For example, modifications were made to this year's course to ensure that ELL students were given sufficient staff and material support. For accelerated students, AP Economics and IB Economics have been developed as blended courses satisfying the state online requirement.

As we look to ensure the online learning experience helps meet the needs of students in our more traditional categories (language learners, special needs, gifted), we must also recognize that we may require a new outlook on differentiation; for some students who perform well in traditional classrooms might not necessarily immediately be as effective in online learning.

SSAC again urges the School Board to move forward with online learning with goals other than simply meeting the state requirement in mind. APS should consider developing a specific rationale and goals for each online course (e.g., to offer a course that otherwise would not be available, to offer additional capacity for a popular course), including identification of the intended student population (e.g., remediation, advancement, non-traditional students). Ideally, APS would also develop a set of best practices guidelines based on experience with online instruction.

We also want to continue our caution that as APS expands online offerings, students may be treating online courses as a "9th period," creating unnecessary pressure on our already high-achieving students.

We would, as always, like to thank the members of the School Board and Advisory Council on Instruction for their continued dedication to our children. We hope this report will help contribute something meaningful to all of our efforts toward building a community of lifelong learners in Arlington.

Committee Members:

Ken Bernstein
Bob Carolla
Heidi Gibson
Scott Nathanson, Chair
Royce Sherlock
James Vizzard

Staff Liaisons:

Cathy Hix, Social Studies Supervisor
Diana Jordan, Social Studies Specialist

APPENDIX A

Notes & Responses from SSAC Integrated Learning Meeting, October 19, 2015

Integrated Learning @ APS: Thanks, Meeting Notes, Next Steps

10 messages

Scott Nathanson <snathanson17@gmail.com>

Thu, Oct 22, 2015 at 11:57
AM

To: Dora_Sue_Ted Black <dstblack@msn.com>, "Marinaccio, Louisa A. (HQ-TE000)" <louisa.a.marinaccio@nasa.gov>, tara.cassidy@apsva.us, aidanfionamom@yahoo.com, hanna.h.eun@gmail.com, policyinnovationva@gmail.com, acowen@cowendesigngroup.com, arnsbarger@mofo.com, jwrudman@gmail.com, cocuttier@gmail.com, bdowdcgo@aol.com, joshua.s.turner@gmail.com, janameltzer@yahoo.com, markhhill11@gmail.com, protik375@gmail.com, agguajardo@msn.com, robertsonlydia@gmail.com, Grant Miller <tkuklenski@mac.com>, donnaowens@verizon.net, paul.patterson@usuhs.edu, fhjackson@verizon.net, amy@victoryhoney.com, kate.graham@apsva.us, "Walkin, Karolina R" <walkinkr@state.gov>, jennnv@gmail.com, seomberg@gmail.com, cwingold@gmail.com, bob carolla <bobcarolla@yahoo.com>, Heidi Gibson <heidigibson@gmail.com>, "Hix, Cathy" <cathy.hix@apsva.us>, James Vizzard <james.vizzard@gmail.com>, Kenneth Bernstein <kber@earthlink.net>, Royce Sherlock <royce.sherlock@gmail.com>, acuellar@pobox.com
Cc: constance.skelton@apsva.us, emma.violand@apsva.us, "Smith, Ellen" <ellen.smith@apsva.us>, ajuengst@yahoo.com, megan.mccormick@apsva.us, "Stewart, Anne" <anner.stewart@apsva.us>

Hi everyone, thanks to all of you who were able to attend Monday's meeting. My apologies in advance for the longer message but we covered a lot of ground on Monday and it took me a while to try and get everything together.

I believe I have added everyone from the signup list to this message. I will not use this specific list beyond this point as I do not want to clog the email box of some of our speakers who were kind enough to participate, but thought I would include them on this first message in case there was anything I missed they felt was worth adding.

NOTE: If you "Reply All" to this, please remove all the people who are CCed on this message. This will keep our conversation from clogging the inbox of APS staff that were so kind as to give us their time.

While I know everyone is taking time out of their busy days for meetings like this, I want to especially thank Ellen Smith from Thomas Jefferson Middle, Amy Juengst and Megan McCormick from Kenmore, and Anne Stewart from Yorktown for

volunteering their time to talk about their experience integrating different subjects in a classroom setting. I found both their presentations and the discussion around it to be quite illuminating and raised a host of good questions for us to consider. My thanks also to Cathy Hix for getting us such a great group of teachers to listen to.

Below are my "notes" -- I in no way am trying to capture everything said, just what top-line ideas I found to be conveyed. I encourage others to chime in on what I missed or may have gotten wrong.

But before I do, I wanted to just convey a list of what I believe the top overall messages that came out of the meeting, and my suggested next steps.

Thanks all once again,

Scott

TOP LEVEL FINDINGS

- Integrated learning allows students to see, recognize, and create independent connections in their work that gives them the opportunity for more enduring understanding of both the content and value of their studies. In short, integrated learning makes learning *real* for students.
- Giving students the opportunity to create connections among subjects is a core objective for the School Board's "Teaching to the Whole Child" priority.
- There are numerous ways to create integrated learning opportunities. If Advisory Committees are to give recommendations in this regard, it should be less to advocate for specific models, but instead to have APS provide teachers the support, guidance, information, and space to make integrated learning a higher priority.
- Teachers seem to benefit from interdisciplinary planning. It helps them see their own subject in a different light and promotes creative thinking and new ways to connect and relate materials to their students.
- Integrated learning only has a chance for sustained success (rather than depending only on teachers' own initiative) with school administrators that make this issue a priority; providing the initiative, space, and time for both teachers and students to create connections.
- Looking at curriculum alignment/mapping could be a substantive first step-- getting a multidisciplinary group together to look at the standard curriculum and create a standing guide to subject matter connections that can serve as a foundation for integrated learning.
- While integrated learning is worthwhile, it should not become onerous. We do not want it to become such a sacred cow in itself that finding the connections in content becomes more important than the content itself.
- Advisory Councils would like to investigate more on what, over-and-above the priority on subject-focused SOLs that clearly stovepipe learning, are the key stumbling blocks to more integration. We heard from places where the

models seem to be a success, but would like to know more about places where integrated learning models are not the norm. This is a place where data could be extremely helpful.

- Teachers, be they younger and looking to prove themselves, or older and more set in their ways, can often look skeptically on collaboration, particularly across subjects, as something unproductive in a time-constrained environment. How can/should we create ways to motivate teachers to embrace more cross-curricular collaboration?
- From the examples set forth at the meeting, 6th Grade Reading (and Spanish?) remains an attractive area to focus initial initiatives to help promote and assess integrated learning initiatives to be less dependent on individual teachers.

NEXT STEPS

- If those in attendance, or other committee members would like to give their feedback, additions to this, please do over the next week. Prioritize what action items you would like to see come out of this discussion, be they draft recommendations, requests for data, or other specific conversations we might like to have with APS staff.
- Based on that feedback, I will draft and circulate a specific action agenda, potentially inclusive of strawperson recommendations, directly to relevant committee chairs (so we won't continue to use this larger list by November 6).

NOTES

Ellen Smith, Thomas Jefferson Middle

- Despite the need for 6th Grade Reading, finding redundancy with that class and standard English.
- Opportune staffing moment with retirements to consider a different model.
- IB Program at Thomas Jefferson focuses in on interdisciplinary approach.
- Thomas Jefferson reading class model is to have regular subject teachers in Social Studies, Math, Science, and English each teach the reading class for a quarter.
- Teachers generally love the fact it gives them more time with their kids.
- Math was originally the most resistant, but with some time came to see that "reading for math" was a specific and needed skill.
- Allows teachers the room to show how reading skills change and connect with particular subject matter.
- Standardized reading tests for 6th Graders has "jumped," but that is an anecdotal connection to the structure.
- Staffing has been an issue, as with increased time comes increased classroom responsibilities.
- Differentiation can also be more difficult, and time has been carved out outside of the reading class to help remedial readers.

Amy Juengst & Megan McCormick, Kenmore Middle

- Reading and curriculum integration centers around the 40 Book Challenge; 40 books in 7 different genres.
- A key has been to make sure that kids have the time to read, which has meant dedicating in-class time during different periods for reading.
- Promoting in-class "Book Talks" and ensuring that informational text and narrative text get "equal billing"
- Classes are of heterogeneous skill levels, making in-class differentiation and book choices extremely important.
- Co-planning is prioritized, with teachers from different subject areas involved in integrating both in Social Studies and Science
- Social Studies classes emphasize reading class strategies in class
- Block scheduling in 6th Grade allows for more in-depth integration and ensures independent reading time.
- Results have been excellent, with far higher than average improvement levels on Scholastic Reading Inventory testing
- Student feedback has been excellent, with kids noting that they enjoy the "challenge" aspect and that they are being pushed to read outside their comfort zone.

Anne Stewart, Yorktown High

- Using the 9th Grade Block with back-to-back English and Social Studies to create a "teaching partner" system.
- Yorktown administration allows teachers to work out student schedules to create blocks like these.
- Classroom is actually two classes together, so 54 students in a double-sized classroom.
- Anne had 3 different partners before her current one, and now has an amazing working relationship.
- The administration ensures joint planning time so that the teaching partners are working with each other to find curriculum connections--sometimes in places that are hard to find initially (ex: connecting imperialism in Social Studies with Lord of the Flies in English with a common thread of social justice).
- Students have responded by being far better able to see and make independent connections between the subjects.
- Also helps to allow English and Social studies to cover background (language, history) that allows the other teacher to launch into in-depth analysis more quickly.
- Block time also creates flexibility to "trade time" --extending one period for an additional 20-30 minutes to finish covering an important area, then ceding time back to the other subject later down the line.
- Limited selection of 9th Grade books to read for English limits potential interconnections and can turn kids off.

- When students find connected concepts, it promotes far better enduring understanding of material.
- Wakefield has teaching teams, but Yorktown works more in the partnership mode.

COMMENTS

- Integrated learning does not guarantee quality. Teachers who execute the model and buy into the concept are even more important. Yorktown model has been successful with some teachers, not with others even with the same concept.
- Before SOLs, teaching was far more about making those connections and creating enduring understanding. Must find ways to make that a goal again.
- Being able to create a more flexible reading list for 9th graders could be a very good tool to help with integration. Cathy suggested the Amazon Digital Book Room as a possible option. Other ideas focusing on ebooks rather than hard copies, or looking less at novels and more at more cost-effective works such as short stories and poetry.
- Ensuring and enforcing silent reading time in school, while difficult for time-starved teachers, is essential to building reading at all levels.
- "Team Grading" can also help with collaboration. Creating a joint project where the writing quality is graded by one teacher, and the content another, is a great way of connecting teachers and allowing students to see the interconnections in their work.
- Some FLES schools have been working on an integrated learning model for Spanish, bringing concepts from regular class into language learning. Might this be a model for 6th Grade where Spanish/Reading are split? And could/should this integration for FLES be made more of a standard part of the curriculum?
- Is an "ILAC" worthy of consideration? A specific Advisory Committee committed to looking at integrated learning models and opportunities?

MEETING ATTENDANCE

(apologies in advance for spelling--reading others' handwriting not my specialty)

Scott Nathanson -- SSAC

Susan Omberg -- ELAAC

Amy Juengst -- Kenmore

Megan McCormick -- Kenmore

Ellen Smith -- Thomas Jefferson Middle

Anne Stewart -- Yorktown High

Catherine Ingold

Royce Sherlock -- SSAC

Alison Cuellar -- SAC

Tina Kuklenski -- SAC

Mary Van Dyke -- SAC

Cathy Hix -- SSAC
Judy Rudman -- ELAAC
Ted Black -- ACI co-chair
James Vizzard -- SSAC
Rick Jackson -- WLAC
Ken Bernstein -- SSAC
Heidi Gibson -- SSAC
Bob Carolla -- SSAC

RESPONSES

(edited to remove redundant text from responses)

Tina Kuklenski-Miller <tkuklenski@mac.com>
To: Scott Nathanson <snathanson17@gmail.com>

Fri, Oct 30, 2015 at 10:54 AM

Good morning Scott. Hopefully you received my last email thanking you for the great job you did on the minutes.

The following is a draft of part of the SAC recommending report, as it related to integrative learning. SAC will be discussing the report next Thursday night. We need to submit our report in a few weeks. Your feedback is most welcome.

Take care,
Tina

Royce Sherlock <royce.sherlock@gmail.com>

Sun, Nov 1, 2015 at 9:31 PM

Scott, thanks for the excellent summary of what we learned in our integrated learning meeting. I've added my suggestions in red below.

Royce (SSAC)

Suggested action items from Royce

Proposed Recommendation along the following lines -- (1) APS should prioritize integrated learning as an overarching principle, implemented (ideally) from the bottom up rather than the top down, with flexibility for each school to develop models that meet their students' needs, (2) APS should gather data on existing integrated learning models as well as discontinued/unsuccessful models (describe the models and examine outcomes, gather information on resources necessary to make successful programs work), (3) APS should provide professional development opportunities in integrated

learning, and (4) APS should encourage schools to identify opportunities for integrated learning and provide needed resources (such as common planning time).

Proposed Recommendation to make additional fiction and non-fiction reading resources available to facilitate integration.

Other. To answer Ted's question (per the school board), what does success look like? [I hope I remembered the question correctly!]

My vision of success in education is for students to inculcate the habits of lifelong learners (let's encourage curiosity, experimentation, and independent research), to have the confidence and learning skills to take on new challenges and adapt to changing circumstances, to participate productively in civic discourse. I realize I haven't included core academic competencies, which are certainly integral to success. And because I'm thinking of this in very broad, outcome-oriented terms, I haven't focused on the inputs to success. That would be a completely different list, certainly worth articulating.

Frederick Jackson <fhjackson@verizon.net>

Mon, Nov 2, 2015 at 7:32 PM

Thank you, Scott, for your thorough and very helpful notes and, especially, comments, and also Royce for your suggested additions and emendations. I thought the meeting was a rich one, with several very important points raised and possibilities explored.

I would only add that much recent practice in both first language and second language instruction has included content-based thematic focuses to encourage learners to explore and reinforce non-linguistic content, and such a model is one good way of integrating acquisition of knowledge and skills. As I mentioned at the meeting, APS language immersion programs are very much content-based, and in some elementary FLES schools, Spanish instruction also focuses on themes from science, math and social studies, simultaneously reinforcing content from other classes.

Thanks again, Scott, for arranging the meeting and inviting us.

Rick

Frederick Jackson, Ph.D.

Chair, Citizens' World Language Advisory Committee

Arlington Public Schools

fhjackson@verizon.net

Donna Owens <donnaowens@verizon.net>

Tue, Nov 3, 2015 at 9:38 AM

Scott - Sorry for coming so late to the game on this very valuable initiative. I'm the current ASEAC (SpEd) Advisory Chair. I was not able to attend your meeting, but I'm thrilled that you are orchestrating virtual feedback with such detailed notes of the discussion. I only have a few comments for consideration that might be considered only gratuitous, but wanted to risk mentioning them anyway. I've used PURPLE font and inserted where appropriate.

Results [Royce] from the 40-book challenge (?) have been excellent, with far higher than average improvement levels on Scholastic Reading Inventory testing (Donna - I know our SRI FAIL scores in all Middle Schools across the county have been higher than their corresponding Reading SOL scores. The most recent SRI data that I have (Feb 2015) indicate that 19% of our MS student are 1 year below grade level in Reading Comprehension and 13% of our MS students are 2 or more years below grade level in their Reading Comprehension. So essentially, 32% of our MS students are flagged as comprehending below grade in their reading skills by the SRI testing. But there could be many underlying causes for reading failure. Does it stem from a decoding issue, language/vocabulary acquisition, fluency, or comprehension? Yes, the 40 book challenge, efforts to teach reading comprehension strategies, having a diverse range (lexile-level) and high interest library available, and having more independent reading time will have some positive affect for students on students that struggle with comprehension, but APS needs to dig deeper to determine the root cause for reading failure (which may require more than the SRI and Reading SOL), and ensure that our MS students are getting the necessary targeted instruction to become proficient readers. The majority (and I really mean more than 68%) of our secondary students should be 'reading to learn' vs 'learning to read'. If we are not targeting the specific reading weakness when we have data that indicates 32% of our MS students are not comprehending what they are reading on grade level, we should think about what we are doing to prioritize that effort, so that we can ensure that more of our students can benefit from all of the wonderful integrated learning opportunities that this forum is discussing. From the bullet point above "Differentiation can also be more difficult, and time has been carved out outside of the reading class to help remedial readers." What percentage of our students are considered 'remedial readers' and are missing other opportunities in content classes, because we now need to 'carve out time outside of reading class'? All of our APS MS need reading improvement based on what I'm reviewing from the Feb '15 SRI school-by-school data, but can the Kenmore reps tell us their most recent SRI scores?

Wakefield has teaching teams, but Yorktown works more in the partnership mode. (Donna - I have a son that was in Anne's and Tracey's block Eng/History class several years ago, and I also have a daughter in their class this year. I just wanted to reinforce

Anne's points that yes, there are significant student benefit from this 'partnering' model. It really works extremely well, especially when the personalities fit and the teaching styles compliment each other and everyone is working towards the same goal. Both of my children have IEPs for dyslexia, and with the co-teaching model (Gen Ed and Sp Ed teachers in the room) and two subjects being taught in one block, there is so much flexibility and support in the room for these students. I just wanted to make sure that I was reiterating the value that I can see as a parent for using reading, writing and thinking skills that are being taught through the English class, while also using the content areas of History. Comparing and contrasting fiction text (as Anne points out with Lord of the Flies) with the nonfiction text of of Imperialism in History, for example, is something my son really, really understood on a much deeper level, after having the content presented in the way that Anne and Tracey teach it to their students. It really takes a philosophical idea and make it real.)

Being able to create a more flexible reading list for 9th graders could be a very good tool to help with integration. Cathy suggested the Amazon Digital Book Room as a possible option. Other ideas focusing on ebooks (Donna - 1/2 of our HS students have an APS issued device that is equipped to download digital books (eAudiobooks and ebooks) and 2/3 of our MS students also have APS issued devices with the same capabilities through APS Library Media Services and the Arlington County Public Library. This is a BIG opportunity to explore becoming more prevalent and to use these (very expensive) devices as another educational tool by downloading books!) rather than hard copies, or looking less at novels and more at more cost-effective works such as short stories and poetry.

Arnsbarger, Linda A. <Arnsbarger@mofo.com>

Tue, Nov 3, 2015 at 1:04 PM

Hi, all,

I want to echo Donna's concerns. We need to be careful about targeting the 6th grade Reading class simply because of a perception that it is not necessary because our high flyers don't need reading instruction any more. As Donna noted, a third of all 6th graders are reading below grade level, some well below grade level. This year 53% of Jefferson 6th graders and 51% of Kenmore 6th graders scored below grade level on the SRI (reading). These numbers improve by 8th grade, but not nearly enough for these students to be ready for high school (38% of Jefferson 8th graders and 45% of Kenmore 8th graders are reading below grade level). Overall, across all high schools, about a quarter of student are entering 9th grade reading below grade level. This suggests that a huge percentage of our 6th graders (and 7th and 8th) still need structured reading instruction. In the past, the 6th grade Reading class has been relatively unstructured, failing to either identify and target specific student needs or to move reading instruction out of fiction to address the more challenging

demands of reading in the content areas. I would hope that any efforts at integration in any grade level would develop a strong curriculum that focuses on intensive instruction in reading and writing skills within the framework of content area materials. I think it is also important that the teachers be trained to provide such instruction, as well as to meet the needs of struggling learners. In the end, we want our students to graduate with strong skills in thinking, reflection, and communication rather than encyclopedic knowledge.

One of the Comments below calls for silent reading as essential to building reading at all levels. The research suggests that silent reading as it is currently practiced in the classroom builds reading skills only in students who are already good readers. There is insufficient evidence supporting the use of large amounts of classroom time on silent reading as it is typically practiced. Essentially silent reading time (as practiced today) is a break for the teacher from teaching, a break for good readers to spend some relaxing time with a book, and a break for poor readers from doing anything. There is no accountability or monitoring. For struggling readers in particular, actual instruction, scaffolding, and teacher monitoring is required for these students to develop proficiency in silent reading (select appropriate texts, stay focused, monitor comprehension). Research suggests that the amount of teacher support required to learn effective silent reading is extensive, and significant professional development is needed to ensure effective independent silent reading practices in the classroom.

Linda

Co-chair, English Language Arts

bdowdcgo@aol.com <bdowdcgo@aol.com>

Tue, Nov 3, 2015 at 8:15 PM

This discussion reinforces the opinion of the Gifted Services Advisory Committee (GSAC) that the current 6th grade Reading model is broken. At the opposite end of the spectrum, an almost equal number (28%) of our MS students are identified gifted and the current Reading curriculum is not a good fit for these children. This is partly why our number one recommendation to ACI last year was to bring back intensified courses in middle school. A child who is reading at 11th/12th grade or college level has different instructional needs. While some gifted children may still require instruction in reading strategies, they can move at a very rapid pace with much more complex material. We need teacher training for delivering advanced curriculum, as well.

More generally, GSAC supports integrated learning as long as it does not detract from differentiating instruction for *all* learners. We are reluctant to support yet another layer of training requirements and planning time when it seems we are not doing a good job of differentiation for either struggling or advanced learners.

Beth Dowd
GSAC Co-chair

APPENDIX B
Curriculum Integration Research: Michigan DoE



Appendix B
Integration_Research.1

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/Integration_Research_document_v9.10.14_469022_7.pdf

APPENDIX C
Integrated Curriculum, Ontario Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

https://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/WW_Integrated_Curriculum.pdf



Appendix C
Integrated_Curriculum