

MEMORANDUM

TO: Arlington School Board

FROM: Social Studies Advisory Committee

DATE: March 30, 2011

SUBJECT: Non-recommending Year Report

Current Year Activities:

During the 2011-11 school year, the Social Studies Advisory Committee kept abreast of the activities of the Social Studies Office and conducted visits to social studies classes at the middle and high school level. The SSAC was updated on the following activities.

1. The APS Elementary Social Studies Curriculum, K-5, was revised to reflect the new 2008 Virginia Standards of Learning for History and Social Science. In the main, the revisions included more content in Virginia Studies at grade 4 and some reordering of content (i.e., Eleanor Roosevelt is now taught at grade 2).
2. K-12 APS Social Studies Curriculum is posted and accessible on the APS website. It includes guides, resources, literature and technology connections, pacing guides, and the State's Curriculum Framework for each grade.
3. New textbooks were implemented using a blended approach of digital and print resources. Twenty-two different textbooks were adopted across grades K-12. Directions for digital access were provided to parents, teachers, and students. These directions were translated into Spanish. The committee plans to have a panel discussion about the transition to digital resources with teachers early in the next school year.
4. Orientation to the new textbooks and digital resources was provided for teachers during the summer.
5. Test results for the 2010 SOL exams in History and Social Science were reviewed. Overall pass rates remain high at all grade levels (see attached). There remains an achievement gap for identified groups; the gap is narrowing as academic support is targeted to these groups. Since new SOL exams will be used this year and until the next revision, the SSAC will use new baseline data to measure student achievement in History and Social Science courses.
6. The SSAC reviewed elements of the "Test Taking Challenges Workshop" offered by the Social Studies Office to schools and parent groups. The workshop is an example of resources provided to staff and parents to meet the challenges of the new SOL exams. Other examples of review resources include "refrigerator" cards, concept maps, skills charts, vocabulary strategies, etc.
7. The implementation of the new graduation requirement in Economics and Personal Finance was discussed in light of possible action by the State legislature. At this time, this new requirement will go forward.

8. The SSAC reviewed the list of errors found in the adopted 4th grade Virginia Studies textbook. The Social Studies Office analyzed the errors and created corrections as well as correlations to SOL impacted by the errors. The SSAC was informed that the publisher would make corrections to the online textbook immediately and would provide a second edition of the corrected print text in July at no cost to the school system. For students without digital access, a temporary, black and white printed text was provided for home use. Additional teacher resources also were provided for 4th grade teachers. All the original print texts with errors were withdrawn from all schools.
9. Two SSAC members visited social studies classrooms at Kenmore, Swanson, Washington-Lee, Yorktown and Williamsburg. The SSAC anticipates additional visits in the future. In these classes committee members observed a variety of History Alive! teaching strategies being used. Some general observations follow.
 - Students are working collaboratively in small groups, followed by reporting back to the entire class
 - Teachers are working across departments. For example, the UN Security Council mock debate project at Swanson brings together the Social Studies and English departments
 - Students are being taught oral and written communication skills, the use of primary and secondary resources, analysis of facts to inform points of view, and how to recognize bias and propaganda
 - Students are learning how to research, present, and debate both sides of an issue
 - Students are engaged in active learning with primary source documents and learning tools such as newspaper articles, graphic organizers, and charts
 - Students are being challenged to use academic vocabulary and justify answers
 - Teachers display high energy and depth of content knowledge
 - Regular class periods seem short
10. The SSAC heard from the Gifted Services Advisory Committee regarding their recommendation to restore “intensified” classes in all core subjects at the middle and high school level. The SSAC deferred a decision as to whether to support this recommendation.

The SSAC thanks the staff of the Social Studies Office for their support.

Committee members:

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Staff Liaisons

Diana Hasuly-Ackman, Supervisor

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Arlington Public Schools Social Studies Office

Standards of Learning – All Students Percent Passing in History and Social Sciences 2010

Grade	Subject	Percentage
3	Social Studies, K-3	95
4	Virginia Studies	83
6	U.S. History to 1865	76
7	U.S. History: 1865 to Present	88
8	World Geography	87
9	World History: 1500 AD to the Present	96
10	World History: Beginnings to 1500AD	93
11	Virginia/U.S. History	95

March 8, 2011