

SOCIAL STUDIES MEETING MINUTES

JANUARY 13, 2005

Members Present: Laurie Walters, Pam Kalliche, Joan Berland, Patti Sinnott, John Cahill, Marvin Kreps

The Social Studies Vertical Team began by reviewing the Assessment Survey according to Grade Level. All of the Elementary grades were represented except grade 2 which needed more time to complete. Middle School was not represented due to the Grade 8 ELA State Testing.

Kindergarten: Time is needed to pull units together. The grade needs materials. The only resources available at this time are the maps and globes, trade books, and library materials. As many as 9 students can be absent from the classroom due to pull out services (STIR, OT, speech, ect.) all teachers indicated Social Studies is taught 1-3 times/week. This time is shared with ELA, and Science. If the teacher is presenting a subject in depth, it may be taught for the entire week, in order to maintain a sense of continuity. Social Studies is often taught in the afternoon, to allow the mornings for ELA, and Math which are of higher priority. One of the greatest obstacles to consistent teaching is the high rate of pull-outs from each classroom. The numbers are highest in the classrooms with inclusion students. STIR can involve 3-6 students/class for 4-5 days each week. Each STIR session lasts 20 min. For approximately 8 weeks beginning mid-Oct., no instruction is given these students due to testing. The students who are often pulled from class for testing and other programs are often the students who need classroom instruction the most. Also, when teachers are out of the classroom to assist in testing, the quality of teaching is contingent on the skills of the substitute.

Primarily, the issues facing Kindergarten are:

- Time to work units, and plan lessons
- Scheduling of AIS, OT/PT, STIR, ESL pull-outs
- Quarterly assessments by AIS team and Instructor
- Loss of instruction time in general
- Shared instruction time between Science and Social Studies

Grade 1: There is a shortage of materials. They use globes and maps, field trips, Scholastic News, teacher purchased resource books, and trade books. They feel the library is not considered a great resource for the lower of grades. The teachers utilize photocopies in lieu of a class text. The needs expressed were videos, computer programs (map skills) possibly resources on the history of Rhinebeck which are age appropriate. Time spent on Social Studies varies. ELA is done in the morning, since it is a priority. Afternoon is used for projects. The class sizes vary daily and weekly. The variables are the same for entire K-5. The quarterly assessment is a big drain on class teaching time. The assessment tools utilized are teacher observation, projects, and class work. Teachers discussed the possibility of having 5 consistent units created over the summer (Backpack Activities). These units will include non-fiction, and fictional journal writing, poetry, Venn diagrams, activities logs, cassette recorder for dictated journal entries, and parent feedback opportunities. Can we create a wish list to submit to library for parent donations at the end of the year? Explore the possibility for integrated instruction with ELA.

Issues facing Grade 1:

- Scheduling problems are the same as K
- Planning time as a grade level
- Universally allocated funds for supplies
- Knowledge of available resources – materials fair would be great opportunity
- Lack of materials and time planning lessons – planning time is done at special time

Grade 2: The Second Grade was not completely represented due to the fact that the surveys were not completed in time for this meeting. The group present agreed, however, that the entire K-3 grades have no text books, and do not feel this would be a worthwhile investment. Currently they work with the globes and maps purchased over the summer. The teachers assess the students through classroom activities. The group wondered if it were possible to incorporate a workbook that is started in the 2nd grade, with all the teachers working on the same units, and ending

at the same time. When the school year ended, these workbooks would then be sent to the 3rd grade teachers who would then pick up and start working where the previous year left off. This would create more consistency in teaching, and make better use of the consumable text.

Grade 3: As a grade level, they are not in need of text books; however, they would like more time to plan consistent units from month to month. The teachers make or purchase much of the materials themselves and expressed an interest in learning more about outside resources that may be available. They schedule between 1.5-2hrs/week on social studies. Actual time spent on subject amounts to about 1hr. The number of pull-outs significantly impacts teaching time. Joan Berland commented that there is no lack of motivation with the students; they love social studies

Grade 4: Teachers work with a text book and resource pack as well as work book. Publishers of materials currently are HBJ, and Scott Foresman. They would like to look into literature with computer programs and CD's of texts that tie in with it. Grade 4 spends about 2.5hrs on social studies. They have about 98-100% of students present when they teach it. No students are pulled out. They use unit tests progress reports and worksheets as assessment tools.

Grade 5: Teachers have texts, but no workbooks. There is no set time for social studies. They have from 70-100% of students in the class at any given time. The teachers cover and use the same material, using a cart to exchange it between classes. They are aligned with the curriculum. They feel the need for more teaching time. Currently, they spend about 1 ½- 3hrs on social studies per week.

Middle School: Matthew Grande was not present to represent BMS due to the fact that he was proctoring an ELA Assessment for grade 8.

High School: John Cahill indicated one of the biggest challenges for students and teachers in the area of Social Studies is the lack of writing skills. Reading deficiencies are apparent as well. Data Based Questions cannot be properly written, or their ideas supported due to this weakness. Bob Sloan indicated an overall lack of understanding of world geography. Maps are utilized in the classroom, but are not easily accessible. A portable projector such as an "Elmo" would enhance the learning experience tremendously. Research into a PTSO Maxi grant will be done. The 11th grade regents scores are as follows:

- 2- 55-64%
- 3- 65-84%
- 4- 85-100%

Mr. Boucher's regents results are as follows:

2001-2002:	80.5 average grade
2002-2003:	77.0
2003-2004:	78.5 regents social studies
	75.7 non-regents

Marvin indicated the monies needed to provide for their programs may be available. However, the teachers need to clearly identify their needs, and justify these needs to the District.

The high school teachers indicated time to prepare lessons is not an issue, since they are an isolated subject. They do need more visual aides. They also feel the students are lacking in the knowledge of test format in general (DBQs, instructed response, etc.)

Overall summary of program K-12

The program is lacking in standardized expectation that are enforced continuously from K-12. Material needs should be coordinated so that what is taught from one year to the next is built upon. The reading and writing component of the assignments, and tests are lacking across the board. These two skills must be integrated into the social studies lessons somehow, and enforced consistently from grade to grade. Priorities need to be set as to what is essential to know and increase the value of social studies lessons in the elementary classrooms. The development of standard vocabulary as it relates to the prioritized curriculum and state assessment is necessary.

The team emphasized how the maps and globes have enhanced the classrooms at CLS, and would like to look into acquiring a set of scaled maps of territories of the USA . The amount of students who miss instruction due to AIS, OT/PT, speech, chorus, expo, whale watch, computer, band, field trips, etc. should be evaluated.

Goals:

- Assess the volume of material required by the prioritized curriculum as it relates to the time allowed for teaching it.
- Research outside sources for materials. Plan a book fair
- Look into universally allocated funds to purchase supplies
- PTSO grants
- Standardized vocabulary by grade
- Materials inventory and wish list
- Integrate ELA with Social Studies
- Find school with Best Practice and Integrated Curriculum across all disciplines for observation
- Contact Heidi Hayes Jacobs on how to integrate curriculum
- Set priorities regarding essential knowledge
- Research variables that inhibit consistent teaching
- Acquire assessment scores before next meeting
- Teacher observation to create list of areas of need