

# Changes to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade Social Studies Curriculum

June 5, 2012

## Proposal:

Expand the English writing portfolio into an interdisciplinary Humanities portfolio that showcases student mastery of both the Common Core and the Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks.

This will require removing History Day from the Social Studies curriculum and moving it to a voluntary after school club.

# Rationale:

- 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy - includes the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects
- College and career ready *reading* requires an appreciation of
  - the kinds of evidence used in history and science
  - an understanding of domain-specific words and phrases
  - an attention to precise details
  - the capacity to evaluate intricate arguments, synthesize complex information, and follow detailed descriptions of events and concepts

# Common Core State Standards:

- College and career ready *writers*
  - take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately
  - use technology strategically when creating, refining, and collaborating on writing
  - are adept at gathering information, evaluating sources, and citing material accurately
  - report findings from their research and analysis of sources in a clear and cogent manner

*To meet these goals, students must devote significant time and effort to writing, producing numerous pieces over short and long time frames throughout the year.*

# Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework:

*USI.1* Explain the political and economic factors that contributed to the American Revolution.

- the impact on the colonies of the French and Indian War, including how the war led to an overhaul of British imperial policy from 1763 to 1775
- how freedom from European feudalism and aristocracy and the widespread ownership of property fostered individualism and contributed to the Revolution

# Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework:

*USI.41* Explain the policies and consequences of Reconstruction

- Presidential and Congressional Reconstruction
- the impeachment of President Johnson
- the 13th, 14th, and 15th Amendments
- the opposition of Southern whites to Reconstruction
- the accomplishments and failures of Radical Reconstruction
- the presidential election of 1876 and the end of Reconstruction
- the rise of Jim Crow laws
- the Supreme Court case, *Plessy v. Ferguson* (1896)

# History Day

- History Day is part of a national contest for which students create theme-based projects on an historical topic of their own choosing.
- Students conduct research, draw conclusions, develop an argument and then present their work in the form of a paper, exhibit, performance or documentary.
- On average students were spending 50 out of 180 class days and an additional month of homework time working on their History Day project.

# Modifications to History Day

- later start so students have stronger research and writing skills
- limited project topics to those directly related to the course so students would have a greater depth of historical knowledge on which to draw when choosing and analyzing their topic
- streamlined process to require fewer class days

# Proposal:

- fully teach and assess the reading, research and writing skills required by the Common Core
- expand the depth and breadth of student content knowledge designated by the Massachusetts Social Studies Frameworks

# Proposal:

- multiple additional opportunities to measure student growth in reading, writing and research throughout the year
- strengthen interdisciplinary connections - especially around reading and writing skills

## Examples of Social Studies assignments for the Humanities Portfolio

- **Propaganda Broadside:** *Students will create a broadside persuading colonists to support either the patriot or loyalist cause during the American Revolution. Students will use primary sources provided by instructors to research both perspectives.*
- **Government In Action:** *Students will search for modern day examples of the three branches of the federal government exercising their Constitutional authority. Students will summarize and analyze the contents of the article and then state how the government's actions are Constitutional powers.*

## Examples of Social Studies assignments for the Humanities Portfolio

- **Reform Project:** *Following a study of 19<sup>th</sup> century reform movements, students select a modern day issue that they believe needs to be reformed. Students conduct research and create a project of their choosing that uses tactics similar to those used by 19<sup>th</sup> century reformers in an attempt to persuade their classmates to take action.*
- **Civil War Photo Analysis:** *Students select a unique photograph from the Civil War era and conduct research focused around their photograph reflecting important aspects of the Civil War. Students then produce a creative or thesis-based writing assignment based on their research.*

# Proposal:

- create an after school academic club for students interested in competing in History Day