

Historians and Global Thinkers Middle School Sub-Committee
Discussion/Overview Notes

May 12, 2016

Bloedel Donovan Pavilion

8 AM – 3:30 PM

Attendees: Alysa Sachs, Cassidy Lovins, Kari VanHouten, Callie Hart, Glenda Everett, Minh Nguyen, Joe Wooding, Jeff Thran, Stephanie Strow, Dara Yost, Shelby Bruyn, Jim Zurcher, Katie Ruthford, Charisse Berner, Alex Giebelhaus, Bruce Mansfield, Keith Schacht.

Breaker Activity: What brings you here today?

- Responses varied: To help us land on curricular support for MS Social Studies; to learn from one another as to approach/themes for MS Social Studies; to help enhance our common approaches and work and develop our common ground; possibly find a culminating (common) public celebration of student learning; increase both self and peer accountability in student (relevant) student learning; some teachers are primarily Language Arts teaches and are looking for ideas for increased coherence for a core approach; what would a public facing district website look like for middle school social studies curriculum look like; better understand elementary, through middle and to high school Social Studies articulation;

Intent of this work over time:

- Beginning last year, the Historians and Global Thinkers Advisory, consisting of reps from each level, met to discuss our overarching picture of Social Studies education under the umbrella of The Bellingham Promise, and what district support would look like. Middle School emerged as the ideal level for focus with the intent of confirming our district scope and sequence, enhancing our pedagogical approach (deeper learning), explore what we believe should be common experiences for our middle school students.

Deeper Learning: Michael Fullan Ch. 10

- Discussion comments included: Breakthrough learning calls out the push and pull factors and pedagogies linked to deeper learning. The intent is to increase student ownership, engagement and personalization of their learning. The criteria of irresistibly engaging, elegantly efficient, tech ubiquitous and real-life problem solving are all lofty goals, but how to realistically achieve will take further discussion for practical implementation. Need to clarify and expand upon teacher as activator, not only a facilitator. It would be good to take a look at actual examples of what an ‘activator’ looks like. Teacher as proactive partner in learning. Fullan argues the learning goals should/could be centered around the Six C’s:

Character education- Honesty, self-confidence, empathy, health/well-being, etc...

Citizenship- Global knowledge, reciprocated cultural respect, etc...

Communication- Orally, in writing, listening and variety of digital tools...

Critical thinking/problem solving- Think critically, problem solving, decision making...

Collaboration- Teaming learn from/contribute to others, empathy, diversity...

Creativity and Collaboration- Economic and social entrepreneurialism, novel ideas...

Questions were raised in regard to the loose/tight between the more linear state guidelines and the overarching Six C's that align more closely with the outcomes of The Bellingham Promise. Are we stuck to the standards or do they provide the vehicle for deeper learning strategies?

Sovereign Nation Curriculum

- Since Time Immemorial: Teacher leaders lead us through the 'sacred place' activity, an activity to set the stage for Native American studies- among other things, an exercise in empathy. Facilitators share the back-story of the development of the national NA curriculum and recent house bill requiring school districts to enhance existing curriculum by embedding the STI curriculum. Also shared were some of the links and tools of the website. Several requested to have a follow-up 'training' where we have more time to explore and actually apply the resources into the classroom instruction.

In light of The Promise- what does this mean for Middle School Social Studies Education?

- 'Deeper Learning' and 1:1 (tech): Comments included:
 - Bringing it back to the article, I don't really know what "it" looks like. Are their video clips of what a 1:1 environment looks like?
 - Would Project Based Learning be considered 'transformative' in the context of deeper learning? If so, there are some video clips of student centered project based lessons available.
 - Pg. 278 talks about precision, specificity and clarity. This has been a problem for years. The confusion is on-going and little has changed over time.
 - We need strong PD as we move to a 1:1 environment. Some districts have deployed poorly and did not realize the outcomes they intended. Talked about Bill Palmer and his addition to our team.
 - Regarding facilitator or activator, looking for concrete examples and feedback.
 - Pg. 283 talks about the new pedagogy for deeper learning, but the link is broken. The (new) link is NPDL.ORG.
 - The project Based Learning Model puts us into more of a coaching role...
 - Again, it would be good to have some better examples of what 1:1 learning environment looks like.
 - To make some of the decisions we are making, we need access to the tech resource, digital inking, digital commentary and electronic portfolios. What does this teacher to teacher education across our system look like?
 - We need to establish touchstones as we develop new modalities; 1. Interpretation of multiple perspectives and data, 2. Change over Time, 3. Causation and, 4. Universal Patterns as guiding themes.
 - How about the Six C's? Could we use these and the promise as our guiding outcomes? How much do we need to focus on state reqs?
 - Need to move beyond the clinical or scientific. How can we impact students within social studies education? What do we want for them? How are we preparing them for the next step in high school?

- We should have a K-12 articulated understanding of what Social Studies Ed looks like in Bellingham schools.
- Should include, scope, sequence, skills and content: One stop shopping.

Grade Level Work-

- Using The Bellingham Promise and established standards as a guide, determine what our 6th, 7th and 8th grade Social Studies students should be able to know and do by the time they leave Middle School and move toward High School.
- Time was limited so no group was able to actually generate an actual template, but discussions revolved around shared culminating, public opportunities for our students city-wide, to increased attention to STI implementation and where it best and seamlessly fits, and the continued need for foundational curricular supports for day to day instruction. Several teachers also mentioned continued interest in the History Alive curriculum as a base curriculum.

Next Steps:

- Necessity for near future meeting to continue to collaborate, align, develop ways for students to demonstrate their deeper learning and to establish common curricular support. This presents a challenge with four weeks remaining of the school year. Possibility of a later June meeting- a feeler will be sent out to see what might work for participants to see if we can meet this spring.
- Teachers from both 6th and 8th grade have contacted me (after the meeting) expressing interest in pursuing History Alive curriculum. Currently looking at their on-line materials and will contact their rep to come and share their 'product'. May want to invite Social Studies Weekly for the same afternoon...
- Language Arts/Social Studies. We need to make room for dovetailing our work so both curriculum enhance and support each other.
- Contact vendors to send sample (including on-line) products for Middle School Social Studies. Set up a time for vendors to come in and speak with DTL reps. Set up time for presentations to our Middle School Social Studies teachers for consideration.
- Looking toward the possibility of "Pilot Classrooms" to vet, test and implement our different options for real-time review.