

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting**  
**Session 1- May 25, 2006**  
**Minutes**

Welcome to the Social Studies task force!

The purpose of our session today is to: discuss the elements of a professional learning community and how to form a community of learners, identify beliefs about Social Studies while sharing challenges and questions.

Our goals for today's session will be to: function as a professional learning community and build common knowledge in order to create a set of core belief statements about Social Studies. Essential Outcomes are standards made viable. A smaller committee of certified staff will convene in order to develop essential outcomes for Social Studies during the spring/summer of 2007.

- Attendees were asked to take time to provide written answers to the following questions:
  1. What are your beliefs about Social Studies instruction?
  2. What do you perceive are the social studies instructional beliefs of the staff in your building?
  3. What are the social studies instructional challenges you face?
  4. What do you perceive are the social studies instructional challenges other teachers in your building face?
  5. What does our district need to do to ensure success in social studies for all students?
  
- Individual groups then discussed their answers to the questions and shared with the whole group

***What are your beliefs about Social Studies instruction?***

- Essential understanding of big ideas instead of a list of topics
- Essential outcomes need to include the process
- Helping to make connections from present to past, present to future, etc. to build background knowledge
- Active participation through simulations, role-playing, dramatizations to get students involved
- Consistency in grade levels so all students are taught the same thing (not just learning about the teacher's passion)
- Need to be clear on the definition of "Social Studies".
- Need to ensure that social studies connects and supports the new literacy series

***What do you perceive are the social studies instructional beliefs of the staff in your building?***

- Staff is struggling with “it’s too vast, it’s too big”
- Social studies is optional
- Message being sent out that “you don’t have to teach science and social studies next year” (math and reading/writing are being taught)
- Next year’s areas of emphasis are literacy and math even at junior highs
- Social studies teachers need to ask what they can do to support the other core subjects
- Need to have a reason/value/purpose
- Need to figure out how to help kids
- Need to change the way things are said in order to provide support for other curricular areas
- Teachers know that social studies needs to be interactive but don’t know how to make it happen

***What are the social studies instructional challenges you face?***

- Time, struggling readers, making social studies relevant to students’ lives, motivating students
- Supplemental materials at grade level, textbook, teaching kids at their reading level
- Trying to fit it ALL in
- Resources, standards, what do they mean, what is most important
- Focus on outcomes rather than activities, need to make it exciting and engaging

***What do you perceive are the social studies instructional challenges other teachers in your building face?***

- Materials needed to teach units in bilingual classes
- Literacy challenges in all schools

***What does our district need to do to ensure success in social studies for all students?***

- Provide appropriate materials
- How do social studies and other subjects work together
- Provide framework for all learners
- Ensure that time is devoted and everyone understands
- Increase text, technology
- Scope and sequence
- Look at Literacy Essential Outcomes and ensure that social studies is aligned

**Next Meeting – September 21, 2006**

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting  
Session 2 – September 21, 2006  
Minutes**

Attendees were asked to take time to write down what they believe the key elements of social studies instruction are and to develop three focus questions for the panel members that will be attending the October 12<sup>th</sup> half day task force meeting.

Our goals for today will be to:

***Set the Vision***

- The task force will develop and write the social studies belief statement through research and discussion.
  - Essential outcomes will be developed by an additional committee consisting of members that will be elected by another application process. This committee will be convened after the belief statement has been written.

***Historical perspective***

- Dr. Mary Kay Marrello reviewed what was accomplished and put into place during the last social studies adoption (1998/1999) and how the social studies framework was developed.

***Our common beliefs about social studies instruction:***

- Reviewed what the task force submitted at the last meeting.

***What are the Key Elements of Social Studies?***

- The task force broke into groups and worked on putting into words what they thought were key elements of social studies.

***Focus Questions for Panel Members***

- The task force was asked to develop three questions for the panel of social studies experts that will be presenting at the October 12<sup>th</sup> task force meeting.

**Next Meeting:** October 12, 2006– Rauch Center – Room 11 – 1:00 p.m.

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting Minutes**  
**Session 3 – October 12, 2006**

***Overview of Key Elements of Social Studies***

- Dr. Sonya Whitaker had the task force review the Key Elements that were compiled from the September meeting in preparation for the panel discussion.

***Panel Discussion on Focus Questions – Special Presenters***

- Dr. Whitaker invited Marla Horwitz (Palatine District 15), Bobby Summers (Harper College) and Jeff Feucht (Elgin U-46) to answer the Focus Questions that were developed at the September 21<sup>st</sup> meeting.
- Focus Questions:
  - From your perspective, what are the key elements of social studies?
  - What are your organization’s core beliefs regarding social studies?
  - What do you believe to be the essential outcomes for social studies instruction?
  - What is the best way to teach social studies, given ELL students, IEP students, low motivated students/teachers and technology differentiation? (best practices)
  - What is the best method of assessment for students learning social studies? (i.e. are state standards adequate?)
  - How can we best prepare our students for the future in the area of social studies?
  - How do you keep social studies valued and fit everything in?
  - What are the current trends and resources that are proven successful across the country?

***Article Review – Future of Social Studies in Elementary Schools***

**Article 1: Social Studies Instruction and Assessment: Meeting the Needs of Students Learning English**

**Article 2: Social Studies for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Recommendations of the National Commission on Social Studies in the Schools**

- The task force was divided into groups according to their schools knowledge base to read various articles. Each group member picked out main points, key elements and then shared within their group. Each group presented to the task force what they thought the key elements were in the articles that they read.

***Wrap-Up***

- The purpose of today’s meeting was to streamline the key elements of social studies. The task force developed their key elements at the last meeting and gained new insight and confirmation by hearing opinions on key elements of social studies from the presenters and from the articles that were read and discussed.
- The task force would like to revisit the key elements at the next meeting to streamline and add new elements to the list before working on the “Core Belief Statement” for social studies.

**Next Meeting:** November 16, 2006 – Rauch Center – Room 11 – 3:30 p.m.

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting Minutes**  
**Session 4 – November 16, 2006**

***Review of Core Belief Statements***

- The task force read core belief statements articles from other school districts and discussed within their groups some of the key components included in core belief statements. The groups then came up with commonalities between the belief statements of the other schools and what they would like the social studies belief statement to look like.
  - Examples of Commonalities:
    - Life Long Learner
    - Diversity of students in curriculum
    - Essential Components
    - Stimulating curiosity
    - Engaged activities

***Review of previous accomplishments - Guiding Questions***

- Dr. Whitaker requested that the task force review the reflections from the speakers and articles that were discussed at the last meeting along with the articles from today and using the guiding questions to plug in all the reflections into the Key Element category that it pertains to.
  - The guiding questions were:
    - Within the framework of developing a core belief statement, is there anything that confirms what has been identified as a Key Element?
    - Is there anything that conflicts with what we have identified or believe should be considered as a Key Element?
    - Is there any information that offers a new perspective that should be considered?
    - Please make note of elements that should be combined or removed from the list of Key Elements.

***Wrap-Up***

- The task force discussed that the Social Studies Belief Statement should be general but the objectives should be specific. The task force is still working on ways to streamline the key elements of social studies by using the articles from previous meetings as well as input from the speakers at our last meeting.

***Next Step***

- The Social Studies Design Team will be meeting on Thursday, January 4<sup>th</sup> to begin planning for the next meeting.

**Next Meeting:** January 18, 2007 – Rauch Center – Room 11 – 3:30 p.m.

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting Minutes**  
**Session 5 – January 18, 2007**

***Core Belief Statements***

- The task reviewed the commonalities that were discussed at the November meeting. The task force then split up into 3 teams and began writing a rough draft of the Social Studies Core Belief Statement. The teams used the following guidelines:
  - Why Statement – Make case for Social Studies
  - Belief Statement –
  - How (Collaboration, Skills and Strategies – Best Practices)

***Next Step***

- The Social Studies Design Team will meet to review the statements that were developed at the task force meeting. The design team will take all three versions and create one version for final review which will be done by the Social Sciences Task Force.

**Next Meeting:** February 22, 2007 – Rauch Center – Room 11 – 3:30 p.m.

**Social Studies Task Force Meeting Minutes**  
**Session 6 – February 22, 2007**

***Core Belief Statements***

- The tentative Social Studies Core Belief Statement will be used to guide the writing of the Essential Outcomes for Social Science.

***Social Science Core Belief Statement***

We believe the social sciences are essential to the development of active global citizens in an ever changing society. Students' mastery of the essential outcomes is supported through best practice. By addressing the five themes of the social sciences (history, geography, political systems, social systems and economics) we support the development of the skills necessary to become independent learners and fostering cultural appreciation and global awareness.

***Next Step***

- The writing of Essential Outcome for Social Science