

## **Executive Summary: Textbooks to Support Planned Instructions**

### **Actions to Date:**

During the 2009-10 school year, the district's social studies teachers got together to examine our existing curricula. We reevaluated both our course sequence and our menu of electives and decided to make changes to both. The major change in the sequence was dropping Modern World History to ninth grade from eleventh, and moving U.S. History I and U.S. History II up a year. We then rewrote each of our courses to conform to the district's planned instruction format and to make improvements in the existing curricula. These planned instructions have already been Board approved.

Next we looked at textbooks. Each of the three large textbook companies that we considered came to the district to give presentations. Every social studies teacher in the district was invited to attend. Those who participated used rubrics to evaluate each company's products. The rubrics were created to keep teachers focused on what we deemed most important instead of all the "bells and whistles." Teachers then got together by grade level and talked through what had been presented. Readability was the overriding concern among teachers and proved to be the deciding factor when we chose one book or series over another. High school teachers also embraced the "Understanding By Design" model which has been incorporated into the Pearson texts. In the end we agreed that the Holt series is appropriate for grades six through nine, and Pearson's books meet the needs of grades ten through twelve. We did look at the transition from one textbook company to another, and we believe students will be able to make a fairly seamless transition; there are no huge gaps or overlaps in the materials presented.

The elementary teachers were included in the process as well. Grades K-3 will be developing their own materials over the next year, so the decision was made for grades 4-5 to wait until we have those materials completed so that the committee can consider the articulation and transition from grades K-3 to grade 4-5 and then from grades 4-5 to the middle level.

### **Highlighted changes:**

Our new sequence of required social studies classes for grades 6-12 is as follows:

- 6<sup>th</sup> – Geography (one semester of geography skills, one semester of world regions)
- 7<sup>th</sup> – Civics (one semester) and Pennsylvania Cultures (one semester)
- 8<sup>th</sup> – Ancient World History
- 9<sup>th</sup> – Modern World History
- 10<sup>th</sup> – U.S. History I
- 11<sup>th</sup> – U.S. History II
- 12<sup>th</sup> – Economics (one semester) and American Government (one semester)

This sequence reflects the belief that our world history instruction will be more effective in back-to-back years. We have also placed greater emphasis on geography, a perennial weakness, by teaching the subject during the entire sixth grade year and by incorporating more geography instruction into other courses.

## **Why New Textbooks Are Needed:**

Textbooks to support the revised social studies curriculum are needed now for many reasons. Chief among them is the impending implementation of the Common Core Standards, which will require a change in the sequence we teach our courses. Textbooks therefore need to be written at the appropriate grade levels. In addition, the textbooks we now have (copyright 2003) are showing serious wear, and some are too damaged even to be rebound. The textbooks we wish to order also include electronic texts that will work well with existing and evolving technology, and should lengthen the life of the texts because of on-line access for students. These e-texts will extend the life of the texts as well as allow for updates over time. The new teaching materials also reflect changes in teaching philosophy and are superior to what they have now. A final reason is that while history doesn't change per se, perceptions do change--as well as interpretations of events. History is always happening; today's events are tomorrow's history. Maps change, governments change -- we want our students to have access to current materials.

## **Electives:**

Before revising our electives, we surveyed our students. Based on the results of this survey, several electives have been added to the social studies curriculum, and some have been dropped. New courses are Forensic Psychology, Popular Culture, and History Through Film. Also, Military History has been restructured into two courses, which will provide students with more depth. It will be difficult if not impossible to teach some of our new courses without textbooks and materials.

## **Financial Implications:**

Money is budgeted in the textbook account to support these purchases for this year. The total purchase for grades 6-12 will be \$292,883 which includes elective courses. The quotes from the companies are attached. Both textbook companies are providing teacher materials and some supplemental items at no cost to the district. All textbooks selected for the required courses also include access to the electronic version.

## **Recommended Motions:**

That the Board of School Directors approves the purchase of social studies textbooks for grades 6-12.