



Listen & Learn Session Response

Social Studies

Session Date: 22 September 2022

Response Date: 27 October 2022

Recently, the CFBISD Teaching and Learning Department conducted a Listen & Learn session focused on social studies. During this session social studies staff and teachers were asked to share strengths, areas for growth and recommendations for improvement. Thank you to those in attendance for volunteering your time and valuable feedback. Following the session, all feedback was carefully reviewed and synthesized into five key takeaways detailed below.

Takeaways


[Teacher of the Month Nomination Form](#)

Takeaway 1: Social studies teachers feel well supported.

Celebrations: Teachers from Kinder through 5th who know Daniel Derasaugh think he's "awesome." "He is so helpful and informative." He understands the delicate "social studies balance." The downside—there's only one Daniel, and they wish there were more of him!

Areas for Growth: There are communication gaps. Some teachers have never met Daniel and are unsure who to contact when they have questions. The social studies department does not have an accurate list of social studies teachers on each campus.

Action Steps:

- 1) Share the Elementary Social Studies page on the [Social Studies Department Website](#) at the October 27th Leadership Meeting.
- 2) ~~Proposal to designate a social studies teacher (perhaps 5th grade) as the campus liaison to improve social studies communication across the district. With principal approval the teachers would have the [following responsibilities](#).~~
- 3) Ask principals to update the names and teaching assignments for ALL social studies teachers on each campus on the  Master - Teacher List by School 2022-23 at the October 27th Leadership Meeting.
- 4) Invite all social studies teachers to Daniel's Elementary Google Classroom after the lists are updated.

Takeaway 2: Teachers would like more flexible professional development opportunities.

Areas for Growth: Social studies teachers are often required to attend professional development for other content areas they teach and are unable to attend social studies training at the beginning of the year or on district half-days. They are often tutoring on Monday afternoons and would like Social Studies Mondays training to be offered virtually. Teachers are also interested in other professional development opportunities available outside the district.

Action Steps

- 1) Share the professional development opportunities available on the [Elementary Social Studies website page](#) at the October 27th Leadership meeting. Navigate through the PD available.
- 2) Remind teachers and campus leaders that the [social studies overview](#) offered at the beginning of the year is linked on the Social Studies Website and ALWAYS available asynchronously.
- 3) Make Social Studies Mondays trainings virtual to improve attendance.

Takeaway 3: Overall the social studies curriculum is accessible and well laid out, though there is not enough time to teach it thoroughly.

Celebrations: Teachers said the curriculum is well laid out and accessible. In the primary grades the beginning of year aligns well with routines and procedures. There are strong components of interactive inquiry in 4th and 5th grades, such as Crime Scene Investigations, but the inquiry takes time that is not always available.

Areas for Growth: Teachers would like more active learning at the younger grade levels, as well as more See Saw assessments. Some assessments early in the year are not developmentally appropriate in the younger grade levels. They are interested in unit study and unit previews, and more options for teachers who are in a time crunch. 4th grade teachers whose curriculum uses TCM (Teacher Created Materials) would love to have resources a little more like TCI, including interactive notebooks.

Clarifications: Some teachers mentioned that TCI (Teachers Curriculum Institute) is a little hard to navigate. We've discovered there are some misconceptions about the role of TCI. It is strictly a teacher resource. Curriculum writers have consolidated the most essential learning and pulled the components together in the lessons. Trying to navigate through it without the benefit of the beginning of the overview can be tricky (see Takeaway #2, Action Step 2). Teachers are not always aware of the resources available at each grade level, including word walls and vocabulary support.

Action Step & Timelines (if applicable): If applicable provide action steps and timeline

- 1) Daniel is creating short video/unit overviews that briefly preview the units and talk through resources available. The previews will be linked in the UbD overview.
- 2) Daniel is also setting up a time to meet with Stephanie Stephens, our social studies DLS, Kara Richardson or Lupita Solorzano, to get trained on See Saw.
- 3) Share the updated [Elementary Global Docs](#) page and the resources available at the October 27th Leadership Meeting.

Takeaway 4: Teachers expressed interest in more social studies and language arts integration.

Area for Growth: There is a strong desire from both teachers and principals for more integration of social studies and language arts.

Clarification: Although some skills practiced in language arts and social studies classrooms are similar, and it's easier in self-contained classrooms to make social studies connections due to strategic planning and the natural ebb and flow of the classroom, integration is not as easy as it might appear. For example, in the past, the two content areas have collaborated on MiniQs in 4th and 5th grade and we continue that collaboration in 5th grade language arts classes. Both elementary and middle schools incorporated social studies content into the summer school curriculum last year. And after attending the Teachers College Knowledge Building Institute last spring, this year 4th grade language arts classes are researching [Native Americans in Texas/European Explorers/Texas Revolution](#). Although this research should take place in a social studies class, when discussing the possibility of placing a language arts knowledge-building unit into social studies, we could not guarantee that students would have dedicated time in social studies to complete the unit. To borrow a line from *Your Students, My Students, Our Students*, "'Show me your master schedule, and I'll tell you what your values are.'"

It's critical to maintain the integrity of both content areas, integrating in meaningful ways to build the content and skills of both disciplines equally. The language arts curriculum has a comprehensive plan developed around mentor texts to build students' knowledge and skills. There's not time built into the language arts curriculum, nor resources identified to replace mentor texts aligned to the social studies scope and sequence that would also build the language arts skills students need. Social studies readings interspersed exclusively in language arts would introduce students to scattered, isolated topics or events at best, rather than providing in-depth cohesive, contextualized learning through a social studies lens from each of the social studies strands as they apply at each grade level—including history, geography, economics, citizenship, government, and innovation. On the other hand, in a perfect world where all students have dedicated time in social studies classes, students using reading language arts strategies to understand social studies concepts and content is a real-world application of language arts knowledge and skills.

Takeaway 5: There are teachers without textbooks and other social studies resources.

Area for Growth: There are specific resources for each grade level, and a specific number of TCI textbooks for each grade. Unfortunately, some classrooms are without textbooks, and they are difficult to find due to inconsistent storage practices across campuses.

Action Step & Timelines

- 1) Locate all missing social studies textbooks and put them in classrooms by clarifying the steps and identifying who is responsible for that work on each campus:
 - a) Provide [K-5 social studies classroom resources](#) link.
 - b) Identify the person on campus responsible for textbooks.
 - c) Look in book room, grade level pod storage area, or former teacher's classrooms
 - d) If short books, contact Cindy Nietubicz.

** This document does not address every strength, areas for improvement or suggestion for improvement presented during the session; however, does address the most common and prevalent comments shared during the session.*

Topics discussed or addressed in the meeting, not listed above include:

- *Desire for current events connections*
- *Specific feedback on 4th grade curriculum*