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The Experiential Program for Preparing School Principals

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STANDARD 4: Learning and Instruction

Candidates who successfully complete a building-level educational leadership preparation program understand and demonstrate the capacity to promote the current and future success and well-being of each student and adult by applying the knowledge, skills, and commitments necessary to evaluate, develop, and implement coherent systems of curriculum, instruction, data systems, supports and assessment.

4.4 *Program completers understand and demonstrate the capacity to collaboratively evaluate, develop, and implement the school's curriculum, instruction, technology, data systems, and assessment practices in a coherent, equitable, and systematic manner.*

22. Curriculum and Instruction. Evaluate and analyze school's curriculum, instruction, technology, data and assessment practices and share improvement strategies with school leadership. (NELP 4.4)

Summary: During the 2021-2022 school year, the social studies curriculum was up for review and an evaluation was needed to determine if a new curriculum should be adopted. I requested to be a part of the review committee to advocate for a curriculum that portrays history accurately and equitably.

The committee began by brainstorming research-based criteria that was desired in the social studies curriculum. The highest priority items were inquiry based lessons and an inclusive view of history. Then, the committee looked at several curriculum kits provided by vendors to determine if they fit the needs of the district. This was done in grade level teams so that teachers could really identify positives and negatives of each curriculum.

Each grade level team then presented their top two preferred curriculum. The fourth and fifth grade teams' priority was different from the K-3 teams due to the nature of the content being addressed. Fourth and fifth grades teach Native Americans, explorers, and the Revolutionary War; some of the curriculum presented had culturally insensitive images and language. Because of this, I requested that we eliminate two of the curricula even though they were favorable for the younger grades. The primary grades agreed and we unanimously agreed upon our top two choices.

The vendor for the curriculum that is not currently implemented gave a presentation so that we could ask more questions about the nature of lessons and cultural representation. This curriculum became our top choice and will be trialed by teachers. I will collect feedback from teachers in my building and present it to the committee. After all buildings have presented their opinion, the committee will reach a consensus and present it to the school board.

Reflection: This has been a major undertaking. I did not realize how much work it would take before we even began looking at curriculum vendors! We looked at a lot of articles and research about teaching history in the 21st Century ensuring it is culturally responsive. I was impressed by the open discussions that we had as a committee about how to ensure authentic experiences but not place minority students in the position to speak for their entire race or group.

I additionally advocated for and requested training for classroom teachers so that there were procedures on how to handle the ugliness of history in an honest and age appropriate way. Many teachers expressed hesitance when being transparent about specific elements of history because the backlash received from families. I was proud to be a part of these conversations and help inform the central office representatives of what we need at the classroom level to feel comfortable teaching history.

It was also striking to me how insensitive some curricular materials were. There were many primary sources that depicted Native Americans as “savages” and African American slaves in dehumanizing ways. While primary sources are incredibly important to learning history, the modern day photos were mostly of white reenactors or white students. This was something that may have slipped through the cracks if the upper grades did not look through the curriculum with this lens. I realized the importance of not blindly choosing something that has flashy packaging, a good price, or even a good reputation. We as teachers and leaders need to do the hard work to ensure that our students are getting high-quality and culturally responsive materials they deserve.

Artifacts: [Here](#), [here](#), and [here](#) are links to annotated articles from the adoption process.

Process for Materials Review

- Select your grade level program to review. You will review your program alongside your colleagues at your table.
- Orient yourself to the program.
 - Use the front matter or brochure (if included) to understand the layout, design, and structure of the program
- Dig into one unit with the program
 - Identify a favorite social studies theme that you study in your grade level. Study that same unit across each program (may need to pick a different topic for Inquiry Journeys)
- Pay attention to the components we are looking for first
 - Record your evidence/thoughts on your grade level record sheet
 - Don't be distracted by program's bells and whistles - focus on what matters most to high quality social studies instruction
- Rank order your options based on your evidence. Be ready to support your thinking to the whole group.