



# K-12 SOCIAL STUDIES PROGRAM EVALUATION

2017-2018

Brighton Central School

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## K-12 Social Studies Program Evaluation Committee

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## **Introduction**

Program evaluation is a means of accessing and organizing information about student achievement and the role current curriculum and instructional practices play in supporting that achievement, the results of which play a key role in evaluating the effectiveness of a school. As a learning community concerned with continuous improvement, Brighton Central School District utilizes its program evaluation process to establish the impact of its instructional practices on the overall development of its students. More than an audit, the evaluation uses pertinent data to assess the ongoing efforts to improve student learning. Every five years educators representing a specific content area evaluate that area for grades K-12 to gain a comprehensive view of the district-wide scholastic program. In addition to the ongoing annual reviews at individual grade levels, this in-depth study helps the district in its continued efforts to improve instruction. The data used in this evaluative process reveal areas of success as well as areas in need of attention.

The current Social Studies program evaluation was initiated in the summer of 2017 and began with a review of the evaluation that was conducted during the 2010-2011 school year. Committee members felt that reviewing this previous work and updating the goals for the current program to meet state standards and expectations would result in the most comprehensive evaluation but still represent the work that was done previously. As with most evaluations, two separate dimensions were reviewed; the expectations for student achievement and the capacity of the organization to support the teachers who teach social studies.

## **Process**

The evaluation design was created with two objectives in mind:

- 1.) To evaluate the extent to which Brighton students achieve the goals of the K-12 Social Studies (SS) program and meet local, state, and national standards.
- 2.) To evaluate the extent to which the district supports student achievement through curriculum development, instructional practices and assessment alignment.

## ***Defining Program Goals and Outcomes for Student Achievement***

During its initial meeting the committee focused on defining the overall goals for student learning across all social studies courses K-12. These goals stemmed from both an analysis of the NYS Social Studies framework as well as the work that had been defined by the previous program evaluation. Attention toward continued relevancy and comprehensiveness was at the forefront of thinking by committee members. The following table summarizes each of the dimensions, their associated student learning goal and the individual learning targets, or indicators, developed for each.

Goals for BCSD Students in Social Studies	What are the essentials that students are expected to achieve across the curriculum?
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Students utilize a historical perspective and apply knowledge and skills to demonstrate their understanding of the interrelationship between where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.</li> <li>2. Students develop meaningful knowledge, values and skills in order to make informed decisions as active citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society and global community.</li> <li>3. Students identify, analyze, and address current social, political, and economic issues.</li> </ol>	<p><b><u>Content</u></b></p> <p><b><i>Students will master sufficient content as defined by:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The grade level Key Ideas outlined in the NYS Social Studies Framework</li> <li>2. Common definitions for social responsibility, global citizenship</li> <li>3. Their ability to apply their understanding to new situations.</li> <li>4. Current events in the context of historical events.</li> </ol> <hr/> <p><b><u>Skills</u></b></p> <p><b><i>Students will develop a proficiency to:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gather, interpret and use evidence</li> <li>2. Source resources based on context, point of view, audience, purpose in order to discriminate between relevant vs irrelevant information</li> <li>3. Interpret primary and secondary sources</li> <li>4. Engage in historical argument and intelligent discourse</li> <li>5. Utilize comparison and contextualization</li> <li>6. Use geography to reason</li> <li>7. Apply knowledge of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics and economic systems</li> <li>• Politics and political systems</li> </ul> </li> <li>8. Write persuasively and articulately</li> <li>9. Take notes and be able to self-select and regulate</li> <li>10. Work collaboratively</li> <li>11. Determine cause and effect relationships both chronologically and thematically</li> <li>12. Develop personal responsibility/ownership</li> <li>13. Be socially responsible and participate in the community (locally, nationally, internationally)</li> </ol>
	<p><b><u>Dispositions</u></b></p> <p><b><i>Students will develop proficiency to:</i></b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Develop an appreciation of history</li> <li>2. Demonstrate social responsibility</li> <li>3. Recognize and appreciate varying perspectives and</li> </ol>

	<p>cultural diversities</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4. Engage in ongoing inquiry and become lifelong learners</li> <li>5. Exhibit grit &amp; perseverance</li> <li>6. Enter into situations considering bias/ skepticism/ open-mindedness/ Point of View/ perspective</li> <li>7. Develop empathy of varying perspectives and different cultures</li> </ol>
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***Defining Program Goals and Outcomes for Organizational Processes and Supports***

The second objective for this work was to evaluate the extent to which the district supports student achievement in social studies through curriculum development, instructional practices and assessment alignment. The purpose of this examination was to determine the extent to which organizational conditions align to established principles and indicators of high performing systems. Topics and areas for inquiry included:

Area	Areas of Inquiry
<b>Curriculum-</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are there systems in place for developing, implementing, and renewing curriculum?</li> <li>2. Are common units defined and utilized following an Understanding by Design (UbD) framework?</li> <li>3. Is there adequate professional development?</li> <li>4. Is the curriculum aligned to the NYS K-12 Social Studies Framework and does it reflect important 21st century skills and concepts as well as incorporate tenets of the Brighton Blueprint?</li> <li>5. Is curriculum culturally sensitive, reflecting multiple perspectives and views in order to promote equity?</li> <li>6. Do we have a system to look at the curriculum vertically?</li> <li>7. Is the curriculum made up of clearly defined learning targets which are prioritized for importance and relevance? What is the system in place to make sure everyone knows? Curr map/assessment audit?</li> <li>8. Are the resources being used aligned to the curriculum and unbiased?</li> <li>9. Is there consistency within courses (between different teachers instructing the same material/content)?</li> <li>10. Do teachers know what content comes around again in different grades – what should different (younger) grade levels focus on and what should/could they skim?</li> </ol>
<b>Instruction-</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do instructional practices reflect important 21st century pedagogies as outlined in the Brighton Blueprint?</li> </ol>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Is rigorous instruction for all as defined by BCSD created tools for instructional practice?</li> <li>3. Does instruction include opportunities for inquiry, problem solving and connections to authentic audiences?</li> <li>4. Is it sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all learners</li> <li>5. Does our instruction allow students to develop critical thinking, problem solving and creativity?</li> <li>6. Do we infuse technology in appropriate ways (Including opportunities to collaborate)?</li> <li>7. Is instruction driven by data and responsive to individual student need?</li> <li>8. Are there additional supports and opportunities for enrichment beyond initial instruction for students at all levels? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Does enrollment in these opportunities reflect the demographic make-up of BCSD? (higher level courses?)</li> <li>• Who takes advantage of these opportunities?</li> <li>• Who has the access to higher level courses?</li> </ul> </li> <li>9. Do our current scheduling practices at BHS allow us to maximize our students' learning?</li> </ol>
<b>Assessment-</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are assessments based on a process of gathering evidence about students' knowledge of, ability to use, and dispositions toward social studies?</li> <li>2. Is the assessment system balanced? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there opportunities for students to engage in alternative and/or performance based assessments?</li> </ul> </li> <li>3. Are common assessments developed and used for a variety of purposes within a course of study?</li> <li>4. Do we have a way to continually monitor student growth as a K-12 continuum and are they reflective of the learning progressions we expect of students K-12</li> </ol>

### Defining Data Sets

Once each of the dimensions was defined, decisions were made concerning which data elements would be the best measures for each of the areas. As stated earlier, it was the intent of the evaluation team to collect data from a variety of sources to better support any conclusions and subsequent recommendations that were developed. In addition to multiple data sets, the team also looked at multiple data types. Drawing from the work of Bernhardt (2004) and others, data reflected four main types; demographic, perception, achievement and process data. These data were both quantitative and qualitative in nature and were thought to thoroughly measure the indicators identified for each dimension. The following data sets were utilized during this evaluation.

1. H.S. Regents tests

- Overall achievement
- Thematic Essay
  1. *Breakdown by subgroups, similar schools comparisons*
- 2. AP Scores (longitudinal, comparisons)
- 3. Locally developed common tests, quizzes, midterms, finals, essays, rubrics
- 4. Surveys
  - Students
  - Teachers
- 5. Focus Groups:
  - Students
- 6. Curriculum map audits
- 7. A sampling of performance tasks from various Social Studies units based on a common rubric
- 8. Common Research Projects: Grade 6, Grade 7, Junior Research Paper, Econ Research Paper

## **Results and Conclusions for Student Achievement Goals**

### ***Dimension 1: Content***

#### ***Students will master sufficient content as defined by:***

1. The grade level Key Ideas outlined in the NYS Social Studies Framework
2. Common definitions for social responsibility, global citizenship
3. Their ability to apply their understanding to new situations.
4. Current events in the context of historical events.

In order to determine whether or not students were developing their knowledge, understanding and abilities to utilize history to explain the past as well as inform the future at a developmentally appropriate rate, numerous data sets were reviewed. When available, comparative data were used to establish context and relevancy of Brighton student performance. These comparative data were reviewed from a longitudinal perspective, between other similar educational institutions (Monroe County and New York State aggregate performances), and between subgroups within the Brighton student population. This analysis was done in an attempt to obtain a comprehensive look at student performance and achievement using multiple measures. Specifically, the following data sets were utilized:

- H.S. Regents tests (Global and US History):
- AP Scores (Psychology, European, Economics, Government and Politics, World History, US History)
- Student surveys



Unlike in previous program evaluations, there were no standardized data sets available for students in grades K-8. This lack of data is a result of the discontinuance of a New York State assessment for grades 5 and 8 and while there have been a few locally developed common assessments that are being used in some of the grades, there is no current standardization of data collection, thus making analysis of student performance for a given grade very difficult.

Analysis of the data sets that were available resulted in the following observations:

1. Brighton does very well on NYS tests, but we should look beyond just what the Regents tell us because the Regents are thought to be very low level.
  - US History Regents –
    - Average 96% passing; with ave. 82 passing at a mastery (85 or above) over the last five years.
    - Spec Ed passing at 80% over last five years;
    - Minimal difference between low income and not low income.
    - African Americans & Hispanics passing at an average rate of 87; the same group has about 60% at mastery
    - Roughly 80% get threes or higher on the thematic essays; same with the 78% on the DBQ over the past three years and %'s are rising.
  - AP US Exam - Average of 4.0 score for average of 90 students taking the class; average of 75% scoring 4 and above (over past five years)
  - Global –
    - Avg 92% passing over past five years; with 68% passing at mastery over past five years
    - Spec Ed at 72% over last five years;
    - African Americans passing at an ave rate of 75; Hispanics passing at an ave rate of 84; African American at mastery is 30 and Hispanic is 50
    - Roughly 65 get threes or higher on the thematic; same with the 75% on the DBQ over the past three years and %'s are rising.
  - AP Global Exam - Ave of 3.6 score for 100 students taking the class; average of 45% scoring 4 and above (over past five years)
2. Regarding student demographic makeup of our advanced courses:
  - AP US History - 50% less African Americans are taking the class than the number of AA in the class. The same is true for Hispanic students
  - AP Global - Until this year 0% Hispanic students and African American students took the class. This year there are eight black students and one Hispanic student.
  - In AP Euro, AP Gov Pol, AP Psych, data are similar to the AP US and AP Global History
3. It is difficult to determine whether or not our students demonstrate social responsibility and/or global citizenship without a common definition for each.
5. We have performance tasks aligned to standards in K-8 but do not know the depth of understanding that is expected of students which makes it difficult to determine whether or not students are achieving the goals we've defined for them.

## **Dimension 2: Skills**

### **Goal: Students will develop a proficiency to:**

1. Gather, interpret and use evidence
2. Source resources based on context, point of view, audience, purpose in order to discriminate between relevant vs irrelevant information
3. Interpret primary and secondary sources
4. Engage in historical argument and intelligent discourse
5. Utilize comparison and contextualization
6. Use geography to reason
7. Apply knowledge of:
  - Economics and economic systems
  - Politics and political systems
8. Write persuasively and articulately
9. Take notes and be able to self-select and regulate
10. Work collaboratively
11. Determine cause and effect relationships both chronologically and thematically
12. Develop personal responsibility/ownership
13. Be socially responsible and participate in the community (locally, nationally, internationally)

The purpose of this analysis was to determine the extent to which the social studies curriculum and instructional practices instilled values and skills in students to support their developing abilities to participate in the school, local, and global community as productive citizens. Data used to analyze this impact included:

1. H.S. Regents tests
  - Overall achievement
  - Thematic Essay
    1. *Breakdown by subgroups, similar schools comparisons*
2. AP Scores (longitudinal, comparisons)
3. Locally developed common tests, quizzes, midterms, finals, essays, rubrics
4. Curriculum map audits
5. Performance tasks from various Social Studies units based on a common rubric
6. Common research projects: Grade 6, Grade 7, Junior Research Paper, Econ Research Paper

Results and conclusions drawn for this dimension include the following:

1. Students are acquiring proficiency in gathering and interpreting evidence using primary and secondary sources as well as engaging in historical argument. In the analysis of the Regents exams we are outperforming the region.
2. Students are developing notetaking skills but there is a lack of consistency between and within grades as to what and how it's being taught. This area needs more discussion.

We don't have a standard reference point to refer to for kids like we now do with RADDE for constructed response in ELA.

3. We don't have data to measure whether or not students are developing personal responsibility and are socially responsible community participants.

Analysis specific to the 6-12 level:

4. We cannot draw conclusions about the level of student proficiency in gathering and interpreting evidence using primary and secondary sources as well as engaging in historical argument. We don't have a sense of the progression of any of the skills across the level. We also don't have a sense of the demands of sourcing.
5. The following skills/behaviors were noted in the nature of the assignments being given, but without a means of systematically collecting data, no conclusions can be drawn:
  - Notetaking and self-regulation
  - Determining cause and effect both chronologically and thematically
  - Engaging in historical argument
  - Write persuasively using geographical and historical contexts
6. The skills K-5 and 6-12 don't appear to be congruent. We don't have any sense of how these build across the grade levels.

### ***Dimension 3: Dispositional Thinking***

*Goal: Students will develop proficiency to:*

1. Develop an appreciation of history
2. Demonstrate social responsibility
3. Recognize and appreciate varying perspectives and cultural diversities
4. Engage in ongoing inquiry and become lifelong learners
5. Exhibit grit & perseverance
6. Enter into situations considering bias/ skepticism/ open-mindedness/ Point of View/ perspective
7. Develop empathy of varying perspectives and different cultures

Data used to analyze these behaviors included teacher and student surveys, student focus groups, and audits of existing curriculum maps.

Analysis of these behaviors was found to be very difficult. Not only can these dispositions be subjective in nature and thereby difficult to measure, we have no standardized means of defining and/or data collection for them. It is because of this that we tried to glean evidence of this type of thinking through our student focus group. It was decided by committee members that students from the senior class should be interviewed and asked about some of these dispositions. From anecdotal observations and conversations with students, the following conclusions were made:

1. Students believe we are getting at varying perspectives and cultural diversity; our state assessments may not address this and only one two of the seven assessments we looked at in 6-12 are addressing social responsibility and global citizenship. There are none at the K-5 level.
2. Brighton Day of Caring and the student walk out were opportunities to develop social responsibility and we had many students participate...we are providing opportunities to cultivate
3. There are a lot of service oriented clubs and many students participate although we don't capture participation formally
4. Students don't connect these dispositions to their social studies classes
5. Council Rock has emphasized Habits of Mind as a building.
6. Many of these dispositions are not exclusive to social studies - this is important not to lose
7. District star qualities reflect this type of dispositional thinking

### ***Dimension 3: The Work of the Organization***

The final goal area that was explored involved reviewing the organizational conditions that are in place to support the CTE program. In general, areas for this inquiry included the following:

1. Curriculum- Are there systems in place for developing, implementing and renewing curriculum? Is the curriculum aligned across the grade levels? Does the curriculum reflect the cultures of our students?
2. Instruction- Do instructional practices reflect important 21st century pedagogies as outlined in the Brighton Blueprint? Is instruction aligned with curricular goals? Is it culturally responsive?
3. Assessments: Are assessments based on a process of gathering evidence about students' knowledge of, ability to use, and dispositions toward social studies? Are there opportunities for students to engage in alternative and/or performance based assessments?

Data selected to evaluate these organizational supports were primarily drawn from the survey results of students and teachers as well as the focus group held with a representative group of seniors. Specific results include the following:

#### Curriculum:

1. While individual teachers engage in curriculum writing, more emphasis needs to be placed in supporting curriculum development for creating common units of study. In the survey responses, teachers lacked knowledge about the alignment of curriculum across grade levels and the degree to which it spirals. In addition, they were lacked knowledge about the potential bias that exists within our current curriculum.
2. The majority of the teachers and students thought they were able to study cultures. Although during the focus group, students remarked that the curriculum was Eurocentric and did not necessarily reflect the diverse cultures of our student body.

With US history across the levels we may need to look at the extent we are introducing other perspectives.

3. There is work to do around multiple perspectives and being culturally responsive including reviewing our resources.
4. There needs to be an increase in understanding among all teachers K-12 of the progressions of content and skill and how they are developed across grade levels.
5. Professional development is inadequate to allow teachers to address these needs.

#### Instruction:

1. We need to think about the balance between taking time to foster critical thinking and the coverage of content AND the appropriate balance given the new standards and Regents and preparing students for the future.
2. Our current scheduling practices may not maximize student learning, especially at K-5.
3. We appear to be differentiating instruction; what it looks like within and across each grade level may be different.
4. Technology integration is dependent on access to technology and teacher readiness and is highly variable at the younger grades.
5. Students appreciate opportunities to debate and discuss which is important to students when promoting critical thinking and problem solving. Opportunities to engage in these types of behaviors is variable between classrooms.

#### Assessment:

1. There is a need to look at the balance of assessments across the K-12 spectrum.
2. Assessment are not balanced – common assessments are not performance based at BHS. There are performance based tasks at K-5 but they are just starting and not fully developed
3. After defining the progression of content and skills taught at each level we need to relook at the assessments to see if they are aligned.

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this program evaluation was to determine the degree to which Brighton students are developing their abilities to become informed, productive citizens, capable of participating in a global community. In addition to understanding the role and impact of history on one's attitudes, beliefs and behaviors, the social studies curriculum strives to provide students with authentic opportunities to hone their skills including their abilities to gather and utilize information in order to form original ideas and opinions. The evaluation design as well as subsequent data analyses led to the conclusion that overall students are being successful on state and national exams, but when trying to evaluate achievement on our locally developed goals for social studies, lack of standardized data sets made it impossible to draw conclusions. As a result of the evaluation process, the following areas of strength and need were defined:

#### Areas of Strength:

1. Brighton does very well on NYS tests, but we should look beyond just what the Regents tell us because the Regents are thought to be very low level.
2. Our students AP scores are very high.
3. Our students are developing writing proficiency to complete thematic essays and DBQs. However, we need to be attentive to the new criteria/expectations to ensure that our students continue to do well in the new format.
4. Students are engaging in activities which promote civic responsibility.
5. Although students are developing social studies knowledge and skills, K-5 teachers feel that the lack of time dedicated to teaching social studies can impede a student's ability to develop higher order skills such as critical thinking.
6. We are increasing our awareness of our diversity and the need to provide equitable learning opportunities through curriculum, resource selection, and access to advanced coursework for all students and have begun to address those needs.

#### Areas of Need:

1. Current professional development is inadequate. It needs to better align to what the teachers want.
2. We don't have a systematic way to review curriculum across grades. There needs to be more collaboration.
3. There is a need for more common units of study across K-12 which will result in better alignment between K-5 and 6-12 in relation to content acquisition and skill development.
4. We need to make sure that the taught curriculum and the written curriculum are the same.
5. Assessments need to be balanced between performance based and other types of assessments.
6. There is a need to increase access to APs for more students. This work is currently being done and we need to continually monitor enrollment and performance to make sure we're providing access to all of those students who would benefit.

#### Recommendations

1. Commit to ongoing discussions about the balance between the content that's taught and the higher order skills we want students to accomplish. Students reported learning more from debates and classroom discussions than didactic pedagogical practices.
2. Continue developing culturally sensitive curriculum and adopting resources that are unbiased and comprehensive to all marginalized groups.
3. Develop assessments that are balanced between performance based and other types of assessments.
4. Find ways to provide opportunities to collaborate within/across grades and buildings in order to ensure the alignment and progression of skills across grade levels (ie. Note taking, skills in writing & sourcing (use new Regents tests and scaffold backwards).
5. Build a stronger connection between all social studies courses and community. Develop a sense of student agency that helps students know what it means to be actively involved in being a global citizen.
6. Develop PD based upon identified needs. (adapt to the demands of the new standards).

7. Evaluate contact time for SS K-12 in order to maximize opportunities for students.
8. Continue to develop curriculum and assessments that are actually implemented.

### **Limitations**

One of the primary limitations of this social studies program evaluation was noted in the lack of standardized data sets. Early plans for data collection included use of common assessment data, analysis of student writing and project samples which could be used to measure social studies process skills. Implementation of the data collection plan was difficult for many of the planned data sets as the information was either not available, or not in a standardized format which could be compared. Creation of common expectations along with the creation of common data collection methods will enhance the ability to conduct these analyses in future evaluations.

## **Principles of the Instructional Effectiveness of Schools of Quality**

### **I. Curriculum**

- **Develops a Quality Curriculum**

The curriculum is based on clearly defined standards for student learning and is focused on supporting and challenging all students to excel in their learning.

- **Ensures Effective Implementation and Articulation of the Curriculum**

The curriculum implementation plan ensures the alignment of teaching strategies and learning activities, instructional support and resources, and assessments of student learning with the curriculum. The coordination and articulation of the curriculum leads to a shared vision for student learning held by teachers at each grade level, and parents and community members.

- **Evaluates and Renews the Curriculum**

There is a systematic process in place for monitoring, evaluating and renewing the curriculum that reflects a commitment to continuous improvement.

### **II. Instruction Design**

- **Aligns Instruction with the Goals and Expectations for Student Learning**

Instructional strategies and learning activities are aligned with the goals and expectations for student learning.

- **Employs Data-Driven Instruction Decision Making**

The instructional and assessment functions of the teaching process are integrated to support data-driven instructional decision making.

- **Actively Engages Students in their Learning**

Students' engagement in their learning is maximized by employing effective classroom management and organizational strategies, by establishing a positive academic learning climate, and by emphasizing both essential knowledge and skills for student learning and higher order thinking skills.

- **Expands Instructional Support for Student Learning**

Students are provided with a variety of opportunities to receive additional assistance to improve their learning, beyond initial classroom instruction.

### **III. Assessment**

- **Clearly Defines the Expectations for Student Learning to be Assessed**

Assessments of student learning are aligned with clearly specified and appropriate achievement expectations.

- **Establishes the Purpose of the Assessment**

Assessments arise from and are specifically designed to serve instructional purposes specified by the users of the results of the assessments.

- **Selects the Appropriate Method of Assessment**



Assessments are developed using a method that can accurately reflect the intended goals for student achievement and serve the intended purpose.

- **Collects a Comprehensive and Representative Sample of Student Achievement**

The student learning assessment system provides for the collection of a comprehensive and representative sample of student performance that is sufficient in scope to permit confident conclusions about student achievement and yield generalizable results.

- **Develops Fair Assessments and Avoids Bias and Distortion**

Assessments are designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner that eliminates any source of bias or distortion which might interfere with the accuracy of results.

## References

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