

Lexington Public Schools  
146 Maple Street, Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

To: Dr. Paul Ash  
Members of the Lexington School Committee

From: Jane Hundley: K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator

RE: Summary of the Work of the K-5 Social Studies Review Committee (Year 4)

Date: June 1, 2015

---

On behalf of the Lexington Public Schools K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Review Committee, it is a privilege to report on the accomplishments in Year Four of the review cycle. This expert group, comprised of kindergarten through grade five classroom teachers, reading specialists, librarians and administrators, worked diligently to accomplish the objectives in the final year of the curriculum review. These educators are listed, along with their positions, in Appendix A. The 14 committee members collaborated as a vertical K-5 group to understand the expectations for teaching and learning as described in the *Massachusetts History and Social Science Curriculum Framework* (MA Framework). The committee also focused on specific goals from the *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy: Incorporating the Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* (MA Common Core). Additionally the committee incorporated the new standards from the National Council for the Social Studies; *College, Career, and Civic Life Framework for Social Studies State Standards* or better known as the *C3 Framework*.

In the final year of the K-5 committee, the members focused on editing and improving their new curricula as well as providing valuable professional learning experiences for their colleagues. The committee members convened in grade level groups for a combined total of 14 days during the summer of 2014. Monday afternoon social studies department meetings were held on October 20, December 15, and January 26 for all K-5 classroom teachers.

In this document and in the information that will be presented to you on June 9, 2015, the committee summarizes and highlights the accomplishments and findings of the elementary curriculum review committee for Year Four. The review committee extends their appreciation to the superintendent, school committee, and Carol Pilarski for supporting excellence in curriculum and instruction.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Mission Statement ..... 3

Year Four Goals ..... 4

K-5 Committee Accomplishments..... 5

Appendices

- A. Social Studies Curriculum Review Committee 2014-15
- B. K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Review Department Meetings 2014-15
- C. Sample Atlas Rubicon Kindergarten Unit
- D. *Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions*

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

*The primary purpose of the Lexington Public Schools' Social Studies Department is to foster curiosity and help to create life-long learners who make informed decisions as they actively engage as citizens in their local, national, and global communities.*

*The Social Studies encompass history, as well as civics, economics, geography, sociology, and psychology. Over the course of their journey through the Lexington Public Schools, students will engage in learning experiences that will help them understand the major events and trends in these domains that have shaped the modern world. Through these experiences, students will be able to connect the past with the present and gain insights. The K-12 curriculum is designed to help students discover the relevance of social studies to their own lives. This interdisciplinary approach allows students to use multiple lenses to develop a sophisticated and culturally literate understanding of the world.*

*Students' engagement with the social studies curriculum will provide them with the tools needed to navigate a competitive and complex global society. Students will develop 21st Century Skills that include using a wide variety of technologies and emphasize the importance of gathering, analyzing and evaluating evidence and information. With these skills, students will discover their own authentic voice, learn to think independently, work collaboratively, and communicate their ideas effectively.*

*The skills and understanding students will acquire from kindergarten through high school have wide applicability both in the classroom and throughout their lives. The social studies curriculum helps young people become socially responsible citizens of a culturally diverse democratic society in an increasingly interdependent world.*

## YEAR FOUR GOALS

During the first two years of the review, the committee built a strong foundation of knowledge from research and investigation in order to make informed curriculum changes. The committee's third year focused on continuing the curriculum adjustments and helping all teachers understand the many ways social studies is essential to our students. The final six months of the K-5 Review have allowed committee members to design and implement professional learning as well as continue the ongoing curriculum development process.

- **Promote and ensure vertical and horizontal alignment of district curriculum.**
  - Create, refine, and publish curriculum maps using the *Backwards Design* model.
  - Utilize Atlas curriculum mapping software when appropriate.
  - Make recommendations and purchase updated materials.
  
- **Keep the curriculum current with the local, state, and national standards while maintaining a distinct identity.**
  - Promote the integration of literacy and social studies.
  - Design units and lessons that reinforce global citizenship skills and build critical thinking.
  
- **Identify a professional learning program reflective of the Lexington Public Schools curriculum.**
  - Provide professional learning for K-5 teachers to gain a deeper understanding of social studies as well as their role in developing students who are engaged and compassionate citizens.
  - Demonstrate, utilize, and promote meaningful inquiry-based instructional strategies.
  
- **Analyze data to gauge the efficacy of the curriculum, assessment practices, and professional learning initiatives.**
  - Create, utilize, and refine common assessments and rubrics.
  - Collect and analyze exit slip data from K-5 department meetings. Plan future meetings and professional learning based on this information.

\* *Backwards Design* is an instructional design method advocated by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe. *Backwards Design* begins with the end goals for student learning in mind.

## **K-5 COMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

### **Overview**

The K-5 social studies program experienced tremendous change due to the thoughtful and diligent efforts of the review committee members. The Social Studies Curriculum Review, Year 1, revealed a K-5 program that was not aligned with current standards and was in need of consistency and clarity district-wide. The K-5 committee members, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the Social Studies program, conducted a staff survey in September 2011. The survey illuminated the complexity and depth of the issues around the curriculum.

- Lack of a K-5 district-wide leadership in Social Studies from 2007 - 2010
- Changing standards in social studies and literacy
- Absence of a detailed curriculum map tied to district-wide formative and summative assessments
- Need for consistency when selecting and purchasing grade appropriate materials
- Need for professional learning

During the committee's second year, the elementary members based their work on addressing these survey results through further research and making thoughtful curriculum changes. The work of the committee was also driven by the implementation of the new standards based report card. Committee members presented detailed workshops aimed at helping teachers understand the new document and the implications for their classroom instruction.

In Year Three, the K-5 committee members researched new content and instructional strategies, developed new curriculum resources, and provided professional learning for all elementary classroom teachers. Significant changes were made in first and second grades to ensure that these grade levels have clearly defined expectations and units. The Committee also worked to digest the Nation Council for the Social Studies' newly released standards, the *C3 Framework*. One of the major goals for the year was to align the *C3 Framework*, the *Common Core* and the Lexington Public Schools Social Studies Curriculum.

During Year Four of the K-5 curriculum review the committee focused on refinement of new units, adding and editing units in Atlas Rubicon, providing targeted professional learning for K-5 teachers, the integration of social studies with literacy, and continued use of the C3 Standards. October 20, December 15, and January 26 were professional learning afternoons for all K-5 teachers. (Appendix B)

### **C3 Framework**

As you recall from last year's report, The National Council for the Social Studies' *C3 Framework* is a synthesis of the concepts embedded in the study of social studies, skills from the Common Core, and the broad themes outlined by the National Council for the Social Studies. The C3 is not a list of content standards to be covered by students. The C3 Framework states:

*Now more than ever, students need the intellectual power to recognize societal problems; ask good questions and develop robust investigations into them; consider possible solutions and consequences; separate evidence-based claims from parochial opinions;*

*and communicate and act upon what they learn. And most importantly, they must possess the capability and commitment to repeat that process as long as necessary. (p. 6)*

The C3 Framework is organized into four broad categories or Dimensions:

- Dimension One: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries
- Dimension Two: Applying Disciplinary Concepts and Tools
  - Highlights the themes and concepts to be addressed in the core social studies areas of history, economics, geography, and civics
- Dimension Three: Evaluating Sources and Using Evidence
- Dimension Four: Communicating Conclusions and Taking Informed Action

Dimension One: Developing Questions and Planning Inquiries, has continued to be a key area of focus for the elementary units. This standard guides a great deal of the committee's ongoing work.

The remainder of this report highlights the changes and accomplishments at each grade level, describes the FY15 as well as ongoing professional learning topics, and outlines the ongoing work which is necessary in a dynamic, student-centered and standards-based curriculum. Some of the grade levels are combined as they had similar issues and solutions.

### **Kindergarten**

The challenges for the kindergarten review committee members centered on the need to make the content and skills explicit for teachers as well as integrating social studies and literacy. In the past four years, committee members looked carefully at the MA Framework and aligned lessons with age appropriate assessments. (Appendix C)

In the summer of 2014, committee members added a great deal of content to Atlas Rubicon (curriculum mapping tool). This included: assessments, essential questions, the Units of Study in Writing (to link literacy with social studies), and created a lesson plan on temporal order for use with the vocabulary on chronology. The four units at Kindergarten; *Self and Others, Families, Communities, United States National Holidays and Symbols* were updated with new lessons. *The Families Unit* is now linked to specific lessons in the LPS produced *Windows and Mirrors* curriculum. This is a powerful reminder that the process of curriculum development is ongoing and interconnected.

The Kindergarten professional learning in 2014-15 focused on the examination of new materials. Teachers discussed new lessons and shared their best instructional practices. Teachers' feedback from these meetings centered on the need for more information about culturally sensitive and inclusive instructional practices for the teaching of selected holidays. In the summer of 2015, a small group of kindergarten teachers will address this need. They will review the current research on teaching holidays and cultural traditions to young students and share their findings with colleagues in FY16.

### **First and Second Grades**

The new social studies programs at first and second grades are excellent examples of diligent research, thoughtful planning, and targeted professional learning by the social studies committee. Due to the lack of consistency and outdated curricula, the committee members had an especially complicated task in developing three new units. The entirely new global community units were

researched and written by committee members, as there were no commercially produced units that met the LPS social studies standards.

In year three of the review process, all first grade teachers taught the new China unit and the second grade teachers taught the new India and Ghana units. Teaching these units required teachers to build their content knowledge about the countries by attending LPS workshops as well as individual research. In the fourth year of the review, committee members provided additional professional learning for these units. Many teachers elected to take courses about these countries through Primary Source and the Boston Children's Museum. Rachael Quebec, first grade teacher and committee member, received a grant from LEF to travel to China during April vacation for an intensive educator study tour. Ms. Quebec's learning will be shared with her district colleagues and first grade students.

The impact of the global community units goes beyond the individual first and second grade classrooms. Many of the elementary schools have periodic all-school meetings during which students' learning and classroom projects are highlighted. The second grade students at several schools have presented their learning about Ghana to the entire student body. The second graders used the unit's essential questions to teach the school community about Ghana's geography, schools, languages, culture, and history. This sharing demonstrates how the curriculum review process directly impacts students' learning and their development as global citizens.

### **Third and Fifth Grades**

Unlike first and second grades, the third and fifth grade programs saw little change in terms of content due to the review process. The curricula for these grade levels centers on early American history. Massachusetts' history with a special emphasis placed on Lexington and Lexingtonians in 1775 in third grade is the first time that students engage with historical events in a thoughtful and critical manner. The narrative of American history is taught again in fifth grade, at a more complex and deeper level, with a study of European exploration/settlement of North America, and proceeds through history to the end of the American Revolution. While the content did not change significantly, the review committee recognized that students need to be taught how to think about historical events through a critical lens using primary source documents and the inquiry process.

Engaging in the inquiry process and asking critical questions are skills that are expected for social studies, science, and all academic pursuits. In the third year of the curriculum review, Karen McCarthy, Science Curriculum Coordinator, and Jane Hundley conducted a workshop for all fifth grade teachers on questioning and the role it plays in the inquiry process in science and social studies. The questioning protocol (Question Formulation Technique-QFT), from the work of Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana, authors of *Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions* and co-founders of the Right Question Institute, is a powerful strategy that engages all students in the learning process.

After learning of the positive fifth grade response to the QFT, the third grade committee members attended a two-day workshop in July 2014 by the Right Question Institute with Jane Hundley and Karen McCarthy. The third grade teachers, Maureen McKenna and Alex Kuschel, used the QFT process with their students in September and shared it with their third and fourth

grade colleagues during the October 2014 social studies department meeting. In addition to teachers in grades 3-5 using the QFT strategy a number of teachers at all grade levels have taken the course through LPS professional learning, attended outside workshops, or implemented the strategy after reading the book or talking to a colleague.

This simple strategy creates an instructional shift from teacher-directed instruction to child-centered learning as groups of students develop, refine, and select their best questions that will guide their inquiries. As students learn to ask their own questions, they deepen their comprehension, build connections between ideas, and engage in their learning at a deeper level. Often it is the purview of teachers to draft questions that will spark student interest and creativity. The research of Rothstein and Santana shows that when students are involved in the question creation, they learn content knowledge as well as critical lifelong thinking skills. (Appendix D)

#### **Fourth Grade**

Since 1993 the Massachusetts fourth grade social studies standards have experienced two significant revisions. For several years in the mid-1990s the standards centered on ancient civilizations. Many school systems, Lexington included, bought materials and created units to meet these standards. In 2002, the DESE changed the standards again to the current framework that focuses on North American Geography and Immigration. As the curriculum review committee began in 2011, LPS fourth grade teachers were responsible for 26 social studies standards. In order to make the fourth grade curriculum more meaningful and cohesive the committee's work centered on selecting priority standards. The priority standards weave together numerous aspects of North America:

- Physical and political geography
- History, culture, and art of Mexico and Canada
- Immigration throughout American history

In order to support the fourth grade curriculum work, Lexington Education Foundation funded a New York City study tour to develop the immigration unit. The goal of the tour and unit is to show a progression of immigration from early American history to current day. While on the study tour, a small group of fourth grade teachers and the K-5 social studies coordinator researched and gathered information for the unit. This included photography of a thought-provoking immigration demonstration. Teachers toured many notable sites including the Statue of Liberty, Ellis Island, African Burial Ground National Historical Park, and explored the Tenement Museum. Upon their return, the teachers created curriculum for all LPS fourth grade. The study tour participants presented a draft of the curriculum to their colleagues in October and they will finalize the unit in June 2015.

#### **Social Studies and Literacy Integration: Grades Four and Five**

Research has clearly documented that the most effective and successful learning takes place when students understand the relationship that exists between and among subject matter disciplines. To that end, an exciting new development this year, which will continue into FY16, is the thoughtful integration of social studies and literacy. Teachers are seeking ways to create engaging and relevant units that promote student achievement. Throughout the summer of 2015, groups of teachers will analyze standards and materials to write lessons that create touchstones between curriculum areas around a common topic.



In fourth grade, the immigration study tour curriculum will be integrated with literacy as the Bridge School fourth grade teachers work with a literacy specialist and social studies coordinator to design a pilot project for FY16. Students will use historical fiction, content videos, primary source documents, and informational texts to learn about immigration throughout American's history in addition to valuable literacy skills such as synthesis and interpretation.

The Fiske fifth grade teachers and a literacy specialist will collaborate in August to plan an integrated unit with the *Exploration, Colonization, and Settlement* social studies unit and the literacy units of reading and writing nonfiction. Teachers will design project-based assessments and create a list of primary and secondary sources including videos, articles, and newspapers.

### **Conclusion**

The work of the review committee has been thoughtful and substantial during the committee's four years. Identifying what needed to be done was a complex process and the work now involves refining and promoting the extensive accomplishments through ongoing curriculum development and supporting new staff. As part of this ongoing work, which is necessary to sustain a vibrant social studies program, in FY16 the K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator and groups of teachers will focus their efforts on curriculum refinement, developing units integrated with literacy, professional learning, and developing common assessments. Due to the dynamic nature of curriculum and instruction, the review process in every subject area is on going and never completed. The K-5 Social Studies Curriculum Coordinator will continue to support all elementary staff as they strive to implement units and utilize best practices.

<b>APPENDIX A</b>		
<b>Social Studies Curriculum Review Committee, K-5</b>		
<b>2014-15</b>		
<b>Representative</b>	<b>School</b>	<b>Position</b>
Pilarski, Caroli	Central Office	Assist Sup Curriulum, Instruction, Prof Learning
Hundley, Jane	Central Office	K-5 Social Studies Coordinator
Webster Loof, Melinda	Bowman Elementary	Library Media Specialist
Allen, Lynnette	Bridge Elementary	Library Media Specialist
Button, Jean	Fiske Elementary	Kindergarten
Sheerin, Jennifer	Hastings Elementary	Kindergarten
Quebec, Rachael	Estabrook Elementary	Grade 1
Daly, Heather	Hastings Elementary	Grade 2
Royal, Amy	Estabrook Elementary	Grade 2
Kuschel, Alex	Bowman Elementary	Grade 3
McKenna, Maureen	Hastings Elementary	Grade 3
Taddeo, Andrea	Estabrook Elementary	Grade 4
Michael, Kim	Fiske Elementary	Grade 4
St. Onge, Caroline	Estabrook Elementary	Grade 5
<b>Special Project Members</b>		
Sarah Leveque	Bowman Elementary	Grades 1 and 3
Neil Taylor	Bowman Elementary	Grade 5

**APPENDIX B: K-5 SOCIAL STUDIES CURRICULUM REVIEW DEPARTMENT MEETINGS 2014-15**

	Kindergarten	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5
<b>October 20, 2014</b>	No meeting due to Kindergarten conference	Share revised report card standards Discuss new resources on Atlas Rubicon including assessment options Discuss experiences with China unit and provide feedback	Professor Avinash Singh Presentation about modern India, focus on education and diversity	Jane Hundley and Karen McCarthy: share the Question Formulation Technique from, <i>Make Just One Change</i> by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana	Jane Hundley and Karen McCarthy share the Question Formulation Technique from, <i>Make Just One Change</i> by Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana	Share, discuss, and select a common assessment for explorer unit. Administer to students before December 15 meeting
<b>December 15, 2014</b>	Discuss changes to social studies curriculum  Examine ATLAS lessons and materials	Guest presenter, Todd Whitten. Discuss modern China and provide instructional strategies. Topics included family, economy, and education	Guest presenter from Primary Source, Julie Kenersen, share variety of instructional strategies for the new Ghana unit. Topics include art, music, and education	Discuss and explore a common assessment for a social studies unit. Look at student work.	Canada workshop Guest presenter: Betsy Arntzen from the Canadian Studies Outreach, Canadian-American Center University of Maine Use maps and literature to build student understanding about Canada	Discuss common assessments and calibrate rubric
<b>January 26, 2015</b>	Kindergarten Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee  Share best instructional practices	First Grade Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee Explore in detail and discuss <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lesson 3: Life of Children in China</li> <li>Lesson 4: Chinese Writing</li> <li>Lesson 5: Great Wall</li> <li>Final Projects and Assessments</li> </ul>	Second Grade Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee  Bridge school classroom teacher, JoHannah Katz: Share Ghana resources and instructional strategies	Third Grade Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee  Continue discussion of rubric for the Massachusetts Biography Unit	Fourth Grade Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee  Canada workshop by Betsy Arntzen. Use art to build student understanding of Canadian cultures	Fifth Grade Social Studies: Accomplishments of the Social Studies Review Committee  Use the Question Formulation Technique with primary source from the American Revolution

## APPENDIX C: Sample Atlas Rubicon Kindergarten Unit



### Unit Planner: United States National Holidays and Symbols Social Studies



K 

Monday, June  
1, 2015,  
12:31PM

District > 2014-2015 > Kindergarten > Social Studies > Social Studies K (D) > Week 1 -  
Week 39

Last Updated: [Monday, February 16, 2015](#) by Jennifer Sheerin

Allen, Lynette; Azeredo, Maria; Hundley, Jane; Kuschel, Alex; McKenna, Maureen; Sheerin, Jennifer; Swanton, Len; Webster Loof, Melinda

#### Standards

#### **MA: History and Social Science**

#### **MA: PreK - K**

#### **History Learning Standards**

With guidance from the teacher, students should be able to:

PreK-K.1 Identify and describe the events or people celebrated during United States national holidays and why we celebrate them. (H)

- a. Columbus Day
- b. Independence Day
- c. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- d. Presidents' Day
- e. Thanksgiving

PreK-K.7 Demonstrate understanding that there are important American symbols by identifying

- A. the American flag and its colors and shapes
- B. the melody of the national anthem
- C. the picture and name of the current president
- D. the words of the Pledge of Allegiance. (C)

#### **C3: C3 Framework for Social Studies**

#### **C3: By the End of Grade 2**

#### **Dimension 2 - Civics**

Processes, Rules and Laws

D2.Civ.14.K-2. Describe how people have tried to improve their communities over time.

#### **Dimension 2 - History**

Change, Continuity, and Context

D2.His.3.K-2. Generate questions about individuals and groups who have shaped a significant historical change.

*Copyright 2015 by Massachusetts Department of Education.*

#### Big Ideas

- There are specific symbols that represent the United States of America.

- There are national observances and events that signify important events in the United States of America.

### Essential Questions

- Why do we celebrate holidays?
- Why are symbols important?
- Why is it important to know about the past?

### Content (Students will know...)

- specific events or people associated with national holidays (i.e. Columbus Day, Independence Day, Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, Presidents' Day, and Thanksgiving)
- symbols associated with the United States of America (i.e. the American flag, the melody of the national anthem, the picture and name of the current president, and the words of the Pledge of Allegiance).

### Report Card Standard

### CIVICS AND GOVERNMENT

- Demonstrates an understanding that there are important American symbols by identifying: American flag, words of the Pledge of Allegiance, and the picture and name of the current president

### Essential Vocabulary

Symbol - something that you can see that stands for an idea or something that you can't see

Holiday - a day of celebration or observance usually when no work is done

Observance - a time or way that people follow certain traditions associated with a holiday

Celebrate - a gathering of people to mark a happy day or event

Pledge of Allegiance - a set of promises we make for our country usually done while saluting the American flag

Long Ago/Past - events that took place in the past

Now/Present - events that take place today

Future - events that have not yet taken place

### Skills (Students will be able to...)

#### [Bloom's Wheel](#)

- understand the importance of specific events, people, and symbols associated with national holidays in the United States of America

### Assessment

Reciting the Pledge of Allegiance

Pictorial models

Discussion

President Obama Assessment (see Link)



[Identify the Current President: Obama](#)

Report Card Standards

## HISTORY AND CULTURE

- Identifies stories, historical figures, and observances connected with the United States.
- Uses correctly words and phrases related to chronology and time (now, long ago, before, after, etc.)

## Suggested Instructional Strategies

### *Please note:*

1. *Holidays and national observances should and may be discussed as they occur within a school year, however they are intended to be explored as a "unit of study" in order for students to gain an understanding of the connection to the United States of America. Having the background knowledge and experience of observing national holiday or events will help children synthesize their information as the unit of study unfolds.\*\*\* PLEASE NOTE: Although **Columbus Day** is listed among holidays to teach about, **Explorers and Columbus** is covered extensively in 5th Grade - so kindergarten is **NOT** required to teach about this holiday.*
2. *This may be a time that children or teachers feel it is important to share additional holidays or cultural traditions. This additional information may allow children to have a broader perspective while also comparing the differences between and within observances (i.e. those that are directly connected to U.S. history versus those that are connected to other aspects of history, culture, geography).*

Reading of Classroom Literature and Discussion (big books/read alouds): Small group or whole group discussion

## Ideas For Integrating Social Studies Into writer's Workshop (aligned to Atlas writing Units 2014)

**September:** Lucy Calkins, Writing Units of Study

*TCRWP: A Curricular Plan for the Writing Workshop, Grade K*

- **Chapter 1, Launching the Writing Workshop**
- Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Narrative Writing: K, Lucy Calkins
- *Unit One: Launching the Writing Workshop*

**October:** Lucy Calkins, Writing Units of Study

*TCRWP: A Curricular Plan for the Writing Workshop Lucy Calkins, Grade K*

- **Unit 4 Writing Pattern Books To Read, Write and Teach**

**November/December:** Lucy Calkins, Writing Units of Study

- *TCRWP: A Curricular Plan for Writing, Grade K*
  - **Unit Two: Approximating Small Moment Story, p. 19**
  - **Unit Five: Raising the Quality of Small Moment Writing, p. 58** *Persuasive Writing of All Kinds*, Units of Study in Opinion, Information, and Persuasive: K, Lucy CalkinThe

**January/February:** *TCRWP: A Curricular Plan for Writing, Grade K Pattern Books with an Opinion*, page 55 Curricular Plan for The Writing Workshop:

**April/May:** *TCRWP: If...Then...Curriculum, Grade K With A Little Help From My Friends; Independent Writing Projects*

Across The Genres (PP.69-79)

**May/June:** *TCRWP: If...Then...Curriculum*, Grade K *Music in Our Hearts: Writing Songs and Poetry* (pp. 55 - 68)

*A Curricular Plan for the Reading Workshop, Grade K*

- Unit Six: Learning about Ourselves and Our World: Reading for Information , p. 89
  - Teacher examples and mini-lessons that focus on US symbols, stories, national observances
  - Stations during Reader's Workshop that focus on a unit-related topic

Writer's Workshop: Informational/Explanatory Unit

(Mini-lesson, independent work/conferencing, sharing)

- Unit focus: "How-To"/Procedural Books or All About/Informational Books (Teacher Example Writing that uses a focus of US symbols, stories, national observances)
- Mentor texts

## Resources

\* See "I Can" statements for classroom use and an "I Can" assessment grid based on RC standards - under "links"

Lexington 300th: Then and Now (transportation, classroom, teachers)

- Unit can be used concurrently to explore how specific aspects of Lexington have changed over time - links coming

Book Lists: *These are suggestions. School Library and alternative sources (e.g. Public Library, PTO, etc.) are great resources for literature ideas.*

**I Pledge of Allegiance** by Bill Martin and Michael Sampson **\*See attached resource in links - ideas for teaching about The Flag and The Pledge of Allegiance** (Hubbard's Cubbard)

**F is for Flag** by Wendy Cheyette Lewison

**L is for Liberty** by Wendy Cheyette Lewison

**Happy Birthday Martin Luther King** by Jean Marzollo

**Martin's Big Words** by Doreen Rappaport

U.S. Flag

Chart of the Pledge of Allegiance


Globes and Maps

## Supplemental Resources


See attached link for Star Spangled Banner:

Star Spangled Banner - music only (08) (see link)

Star Spangled Banner - words and music (16) (see link)

 [http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/the\\_pledge\\_of\\_allegiance.html](http://www.hubbardscupboard.org/the_pledge_of_allegiance.html)

 [08 Star Spangled Banner.m4a](#)

 [16 Star Spangled Banner.m4a](#)

 [I Can Social Studies Statements for Classrooms.docx](#)

 [SS GRID For Assessment Final.doc](#)


 [Thanksgiving Retelling Bracelet Instructions.doc](#)

 [Retelling Sheet for Thanksgiving 2.pdf](#)

 [Retelling mini-visual for kids color](#)


 [Visual for Retelling Bracelet Pilgrims Journey - Thanksgiving.doc](#)

 [http://www.pebblego.com/content/choose\\_product.php](http://www.pebblego.com/content/choose_product.php)

 [Image of Abraham Lincoln.doc](#)

 [Image of George Washington.doc](#)

 [Image of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.doc](#)

 [MartinLutherKingPoem:Song Freedom.pdf](#)

 [MLK Song 1.JPG](#)

 [MLK- student's dream poem.docx](#)

 [MartinLutherKingJrFree.pdf](#)

[<< Previous Year](#)



*I learned that asking questions is the best way to know what's going on.*

*I learned that asking questions can just be as important as a teacher asking question.*

*The way it made me feel was smart because I was asking good questions and giving good answers.*

Volume 27, Number 5  
September/October 2011

## Teaching Students to Ask Their Own Questions

One small change can yield big results  
By Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana

Students in Hayley Dupuy's sixth-grade science class at the Jane Lathrop Stanford Middle School in Palo Alto, Calif., are beginning a unit on plate tectonics. In small groups, they are producing their own questions, quickly, one after another: What are plate tectonics? How fast do plates move? Why do plates move? Do plates affect temperature? What animals can sense the plates moving? They raise questions "that we never would have thought of if we started to answer the first question we asked," says one of the students. "And just when you think you already know the question you want to focus on, you realize: 'Oh, wow, here's this other question that is so much better, and that's really what you need to think about.'"

Far from Palo Alto, in the Roxbury neighborhood of Boston, Mass., Sharif Muhammad's students at the Boston Day and Evening Academy (BDEA) have a strikingly similar experience. Many of them had transferred to BDEA for various reasons from other schools and had not always experienced much success as students. But working individually, they find that formulating their own questions engages them in a new way. One of the students observes: "When you ask the question, you feel like it's your job to get the answer, and you want to figure it out."

These two students—one in Palo Alto, the other in Roxbury—are discovering something that may seem obvious: When students know how to ask their own questions, they take greater ownership of their learning, deepen comprehension, and make new connections and discoveries on their own. However, this skill is rarely, if ever, deliberately taught to students from kindergarten through high school. Typically, questions are seen as the province of teachers, who spend years figuring out how to craft questions and fine-tune them to stimulate students' curiosity or engage them more effectively. We have found that teaching students to ask their own questions can accomplish these same goals while teaching a critical lifelong skill.

### The Question Formulation Technique

Dupuy, Muhammad, and many other teachers are using a step-by-step process that we and our colleagues at the Right Question Institute have developed called the Question Formulation Technique (QFT). This technique helps students learn how to produce their own questions, improve them, and strategize on how to use them (see sidebar "Question Formulation Technique").

---

## Question Formulation Technique

### Produce Your Questions

*Four essential rules for producing your own questions:*

- Ask as many questions as you can.
- Do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer the questions.
- Write down every question exactly as it is stated.
- Change any statement into a question.

### Improve Your Questions

- Categorize the questions as closed- or open-ended.
- Name the advantages and disadvantages of each type of question.
- Change questions from one type to another.

### Prioritize the Questions

- Choose your three most important questions.
- Why did you choose these three as the most important?

### Next Steps

- How are you going to use your questions?

© The Right Question Institute. Used with permission.

---

The origins of the QFT can be traced back 20 years to a dropout prevention program for the city of Lawrence, Mass., that was funded by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. As we worked together to increase parent involvement in education, we heard parents state the same problem over and over again: “We’re not going to the schools because we don’t even know what to ask.” Eventually, this problem led us to create a simple but powerful process that has been used effectively in a wide range of fields across the country and beyond. In health care, for example, research funded by the National Institutes of Health has shown that the QFT produces dramatic increases in levels of patient activation and improved patient-provider communication. In the classroom, teachers have seen how the same process manages to develop students’ divergent (brainstorming), convergent (categorizing and prioritizing), and metacognitive (reflective) thinking abilities in a very short period of time.

Teachers can use the QFT at different points: to introduce students to a new unit, to assess students’ knowledge to see what they need to understand better, and even to conclude a unit to see how students can, with new knowledge, set a fresh learning agenda for themselves. The technique can be used for all ages.

Students have used the QFT to develop science experiments, create their own research projects, begin research on a teacher-assigned topic, prepare to write an essay, analyze a word problem, think more deeply about a challenging reading assignment, prepare an interview, or simply get themselves “unstuck.”

The QFT has six key steps:

*Step 1: Teachers Design a Question Focus.* The Question Focus, or QFocus, is a prompt that can be presented in the form of a statement or a visual or aural aid to focus and attract student attention

and quickly stimulate the formation of questions. The QFocus is different from many traditional prompts because it is not a teacher's question. It serves, instead, as the focus for student questions so students can, on their own, identify and explore a wide range of themes and ideas. For example, after studying the causes of the 1804 Haitian revolution, one teacher presented this QFocus: "Once we were slaves. Now we are free." The students began asking questions about what changed and what stayed the same after the revolution.

*Step 2: Students Produce Questions.* Students use a set of rules that provide a clear protocol for producing questions without assistance from the teacher. The four rules are: ask as many questions as you can; do not stop to discuss, judge, or answer any of the questions; write down every question exactly as it was stated; and change any statements into questions. Before students start generating their questions, the teacher introduces the rules and asks the students to think about and discuss possible challenges in following them. Once the students get to work, the rules provide a firm structure for an open-ended thinking process. Students are able to generate questions and think more broadly than they would have if they had not been guided by the rules.

*Step 3: Students Improve Their Questions.* Students then improve their questions by analyzing the differences between open- and closed-ended questions and by practicing changing one type to the other. The teacher begins this step by introducing definitions of closed- and open-ended questions. The students use the definitions to categorize the list of questions they have just produced into one of the two categories. Then, the teacher leads them through a discussion of the advantages and disadvantages of both kinds of questions. To conclude this step, the teacher asks the students to change at least one open-ended question into a closed-ended one, and vice versa, which leads students to think about how the phrasing of a question can affect the depth, quality, and value of the information they will obtain.

*Step 4: Students Prioritize Their Questions.* The teacher, with the lesson plan in mind, offers criteria or guidelines for the selection of priority questions. In an introduction to a unit, the instruction may be, "Choose the three questions you most want to explore further." When designing a science experiment, it may be, "Choose three testable questions." An essay related to a work of fiction may require that students select "three questions related to the key themes we've identified in this piece." During this phase, students move from thinking divergently to thinking convergently, zero in on the locus of their inquiry, and plan concrete action steps for getting information they need to complete the lesson or task.

*Step 5: Students and Teachers Decide on Next Steps.* At this stage, students and teachers work together to decide how to use the questions. One teacher, for example, presented all the groups' priority questions to the entire class the next day during a "Do Now" exercise and asked them to rank their top three questions. Eventually, the class and the teacher agreed on this question for their Socratic Seminar discussion: "How do poverty and injustice lead to violence in *A Tale of Two Cities*?"

*Step 6: Students Reflect on What They Have Learned.* The teacher reviews the steps and provides students with an opportunity to review what they have learned by producing, improving, and prioritizing their questions. Making the QFT completely transparent helps students see what they have done and how it contributed to their thinking and learning. They can internalize the process and then apply it in many other settings.

When teachers deploy the QFT in their classes, they notice three important changes in classroom culture and practices. Teachers tell us that using the QFT consistently increases participation in group and peer learning processes, improves classroom management, and enhances their efforts to

address inequities in education. As teachers see this happen again and again, they realize that their traditional practice of welcoming questions is not the same as deliberately teaching the skill of question formulation. Or, as one teacher put it: "I would often ask my students, 'Do you have any questions,' but, of course, I didn't get much back from them." In his seven years of teaching, Muhammad also encouraged his Roxbury students to ask questions but had seen just how difficult that could be for them. After using the six-step process outlined above, he was struck by "how the students went farther, deeper, and asked questions more quickly than ever before."

### **One Significant Change**

For teachers, using the QFT requires one small but significant shift in practice: Students will be asking all the questions. A teacher's role is simply to facilitate that process. This is a significant change for students as well. It may take a minimum of 45 minutes for students to go through all the steps the first time it is introduced in a classroom; but as they gain experience using the QFT, teachers find that the students can run through the process very quickly, in 10 to 15 minutes, even when working in groups.

The QFT provides a deliberate way to help students cultivate a skill that is fundamentally important for all learning. Teaching this skill in every classroom can help successful students to go deeper in their thinking and encourage struggling students to develop a new thirst for learning. Their questions will have much to teach us.

*Dan Rothstein and Luz Santana, codirectors of the Right Question Institute, are the authors of the forthcoming book [Make Just One Change: Teach Students to Ask Their Own Questions](#) to be published in September 2011 by Harvard Education Press.*