



Edwardsville School District to Implement New K-5 Social Studies Curriculum

by Sydney Sinks, News Reporter
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EDWARDSVILLE - The Edwardsville Community Unit School District #7 (ECUSD7) Board of Education has approved the purchase of materials for a new K-5 social studies curriculum.

At their meeting last night, Aug. 28, board members listened to a presentation by Tara Fox, Director of Curriculum and Instruction. Fox outlined the new social studies curriculum for K-5 classes and how it will meet Illinois standards for inquiry-based social studies education.

“We wanted to make sure with our new curriculum that we have a holistic approach to social studies education in District #7, and make sure that we’re building upon those skills as we move throughout,” Fox said. “So a child who enters our district in kindergarten and exits in 12th grade, what does that look like in the social studies program?”

The school district began reevaluating the social studies curriculum a few years ago, but this process was paused due to the COVID-19 pandemic. When conversations resumed, a committee was formed to decide what should be prioritized. They also worked with Dr. Alex Cuenca and Dr. Lauren Ray from Indiana University.

“Our elementary and high school teachers who are a part of that social studies committee established, essentially, what does social studies look like in District #7?” Fox said.

The committee decided that social studies education must “be student-centered,” “examine the relationships among and between diverse groups of people,” and “help students learn about and engage the society that they currently inhabit and the society they wish to inhabit in the future.”

Committee members also considered educational standards from the Illinois State Board of Education. Illinois requires social studies curriculums to be “inquiry-based culturally responsive,” and they must also include multi-modal sources and be anchored to standards and assessments.

To that end, the new curriculum will use the elementary themes outlined by the Illinois State Board of Education. These themes address the curriculum’s focus at each grade level.

“We use those to create those compelling questions for each of our units,” Fox said. “A big part of our social studies curriculum is that it’s inquiry-based. So we establish an inquiry to have that compelling question, and then the students do a level of research that is appropriate for their grade level...and then they come together with a conclusion.”

For example, kindergarten teachers will follow the theme “My Social World” and encourage students to answer questions like, “How can we make school a great place for everyone?” Fox explained that the goal is for students to ask questions, talk together and develop a response instead of the teacher simply telling them the answer.

Each grade level will also take a field trip that corresponds to their social studies lessons. Superintendent Dr. Patrick Shelton called this “experiential learning.” There are plans for students to visit Springfield, Cahokia Mounds and other nearby historic sites.

“The committee intentionally embedded experiences for students,” Shelton added.

Fox said they hope to start training teachers on the new curriculum in January, so that the district will be ready to implement it at the start of the 2024–2025 school year. After Fox’s presentation, ECUSD7 board members voted unanimously to approve the purchase of new materials for the social studies curriculum, totaling \$246,208.59