

PUP PRESS

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Principal
Katie May

District OKs Social Studies Initiative

We now have formal permission (the “waiver”) from Schools Superintendent Larry Nyland to blend our General Education and Highly Capable Cohort students for the Social Studies portion of our day. I want to be sure that everyone has a clear understanding of what will happen.

All of our students will continue to work with the same Districtwide Social Studies curriculum. In addition, we teach this

subject in part to prepare our students to:

- engage in respectful discourse with others who may have different beliefs,
- develop a respect for the values of a diverse and democratic society, and
- safeguard their rights and the rights of others.

Our staff believes that the best way to prepare our students for a diverse society is

The History Behind the Change

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to teach these skills not in separate classrooms, but in a diverse setting. We believe that Social Studies is as much about the process of learning to work together as it is about the content that we teach. Our students have much to teach and learn from each other – **all** have a richer and more rigorous experience when they are challenged to think critically about ideas that are different from their own.

There has been strong staff and parent support for this work. We have been in close communication with our families through each step of the process, through regular updates in our school newsletter, through Equity Action Team meetings which are open to everyone, and through my letters to the community. I have received many supportive emails from families about the equity work we are doing. As I discuss our equity work on school tours, a number of families – both Gen. Ed. and HCC, both white and families of color – have told me that they would not consider sending their child to TM except for the work we are doing in this area. They worry about the message we send to children when we separate students along color lines – albeit unintentionally.

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Students Leaving Early to be Marked ‘Tardy’

Students who arrive late to school *or leave early* will be marked tardy under a new District policy. Previously, parents and caregivers could pick up students before the normal dismissal time without any impact on their attendance records. However, schools will now record early departures in the same way as absences and tardies, with the same criteria for “excused” and “unexcused.”

Unplanned early dismissals for illness or injury are excused. Planned early dismissals for doctor or dentist appointments, religious, and special one-time events are excused when you submit a request to the Principal or Assistant Principal. Early dismissals due to short-term discipline are also excused. All other reasons are unexcused. Early dismissals will be noted on The Source and report cards as “tardies.”



Help Prevent Dismissal Confusion!

Staff are noticing at dismissal time that some students don’t know whether to take their bus or wait to be picked up by an adult. It is important that you have a clear schedule for how your child will be getting home each day.

If there is a change (i.e. your child is a bus rider but Grandma will be picking up that day) **please call the office (206-252-2800) in the morning.** If you email your child’s teacher in late afternoon, the message may not be read in time. Thank you for your help!

EVENT CALENDAR

Fri., Sept. 23: Day of Caring. Volunteers will paint & landscape. <http://bit.ly/TMDoC2016>

Mon., Sept. 26: Enrichment classes begin.

Tues., Sept. 27: Grades 1-3 Choir begins, 8:15 a.m., Music Room. Return registration form to Ms. French. See <http://bit.ly/ChoirReg16>.

Tues., Sept. 27: Picture Day. Forms were sent home last week; available at office, or pre-order at www.yuenluistudio.com (keyword: Thurgood Marshall).

Tues., Sept. 27: Grades K-1 Potluck, 5:30-7 p.m., Cafeteria. Bring food based on last name: **A-M** – Main Dish; **N-R** – Side or Salad; **S-Z** – Dessert. PTA will provide utensils, plates, refreshing water!

Wed., Sept. 28: Early dismissal, 1:45 p.m.

Thurs., Sept. 29: Grades 4-5 Choir begins, 8:15 a.m., Music Room. Return registration form to Ms. French. See <http://bit.ly/ChoirReg16>.

Thurs., Sept. 29: Coffee with Assistant Principal Sabrina Kovacs-Storlie, 9:15-10 a.m. Bring your questions!

→ Full year of events in the online calendar at www.tmlink.org – subscribe to it today!

TUTU'S PANTRY.

Week of Sept. 26: Grade 1 is asked to make a special effort to donate non-perishable foods. Bins are in the front hall. (*Donations welcomed from all.*)

Critically Needed: YOU!

Kid-wrangling volunteers are needed for:

- **Conflict Mediator Trainings** (Oct. 3-7, 8:15-9:30 a.m.): Help guide discussions, more.
- **Health Screenings** (Oct. 11-12).

Info/signups: www.tmlink.org/volunteering

Social Studies

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This year our teacher's Professional Learning Communities will revolve around Social Studies learning. Our PLCs meet weekly and will be examining not just the state's Social Studies standards, but also the Framework for 21st Century skills and Common Core Standards related to Social Studies. Each grade-level team will determine the essential skills for their grade and design common assessments. As they review student data from assessments, they will design interventions for students who need more support and re-teaching, and for students who need enrichment. Our teachers are skilled in differentiation, as there is a wide range of ability in each of our classes, whether they serve HCC or General Education students.

The approval of our waiver means that each grade will mix classes 3 times per week for 30-45 minutes (depending on grade level). We want to support all our students in this endeavor and so we will be creating norms and charters for our Social Studies groups in line with our RULER Program. Teachers will collaborate to create structures for "Accountable Talk" – teaching students to respectfully disagree with, to challenge, and to build on each other's ideas. These skills benefit all of our students and will support them in mixed groups as well as when they are with their respective cohorts.

We have created a Social Studies Steering Committee with staff and parents from the HCC and Gen. Ed. programs. It will meet monthly to review our process and progress and create a plan to respond to any concerns or unintended negative consequences that arise. These stakeholders will help to ensure that this plan benefits all of our students.

Our plan to evaluate the results of the change to our Social Studies Program is to look at several types of data:

1. Feelings of belonging and self-efficacy as measured by our student climate survey and shorter surveys based on climate-survey questions and given to students each trimester;
2. Academic outcomes – we will be carefully monitoring student progress on our assessments from our baseline classroom based assessments to our SBA scores in English Language Arts;
3. Attendance data – knowing that our students who feel a strong sense of engagement with school are less likely to be absent; and
4. Parent Survey data as we solicit parent feedback about our progress.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts!



Sound of Things to Come

Music Teacher Kelsey French leads returning members of the Choir at the first Friday Assembly of the year. To join Choir, use the signup form sent home this week!
Info: www.tmlink.org/

How Initiative Evolved

Why did Thurgood Marshall embark on the Social Studies initiative? Here is some history from Principal Katie May.

Imagine being 8 years old and seeing that African-American students at your school are together in one classroom and white students are in the classroom across the hall. Imagine being the parent or teacher of that 8-year-old and trying to answer the question "why?" What impact might that have on your beliefs about your own capability if the students across the hall are known to be "highly capable?"

Thurgood Marshall is a unique elementary school, with three programs in one building. The PEACE Academy serves students who need a great deal of academic and adaptive support throughout the day. General Education serves nearby neighborhood students who are almost entirely students of color, with about 40% qualifying for ELL services, and about 70% qualifying for Free/Reduced Price Lunch. Our Highly Capable Cohort (about 2/3 of our enrollment) serves students who are mostly white and Asian, largely from middle- to upper-income families. Our demographics make us a microcosm of Seattle, and the differences are highlighted by the division of the programs.

When I became Principal of TM in 2014, our staff was ready to make changes to enable our school to become one learning community, while serving the needs of each program. We started a school "equity team" and participated in the first District Race and Equity cohort. We

began to meet regularly to review and address disproportionality in our discipline and to look at ways to help our students get to know each other across programs. The following year, in 2015, Schools Superintendent Larry Nyland stated that eliminating the opportunity gap is THE educational issue of our time and he challenged schools to find ways to do better.

The staff believes that each of our children are capable of excellence. We know that their mindset truly does impact their achievement. *To us, equity is making sure that each of our children has access to a rigorous and enriching education, regardless of the program they are enrolled in.* We see the disparity between the achievement scores of our students of color and white students and we see the disproportionality in our discipline and we know we can and must do better.

Our staff began equity work to look at our own practices. We read Carol Dweck's "Mindset" together as a school community, and then followed up by reading "Blindspot: The Hidden Biases of Good People." Our parents began to ask how they could get involved and our Staff Race and Equity Team became Equity Action Teams comprised of staff, parents and even a couple students. Everyone agreed we should find ways to better connect as a community and to give our students experiences in working together.

The idea of blending students together for Social Studies was raised at one of our Equity Meetings. We are excited that we can now implement this plan.