

Social Studies Department Strengths and Growth Challenges based on Analysis of Student Work

Strengths:

1. Diverse course offerings
2. Highly qualified and dedicated professionals on staff
3. Teachers who are active in their fields and community activities (e.g., coaching, Close Up, etc.)
4. Depth as well as breadth in course content
5. Curriculum closely connected to current events and important life issues
6. Challenging curriculum open to any student willing to take on the challenge
7. Interdisciplinary focus
8. Tech savvy
9. Variety of teaching styles; variety of assessment approaches
10. Heterogeneous classrooms with minimal laning.

Growth Challenges:

1. Need to find more time to meet with teachers teaching the same assignment
2. Need to articulate and coordinate the curriculum sequence with the Middle Schools
3. Improve our teaching of research skills, especially in conjunction with technology and the Library
4. Improvement in enrollment for current electives
5. Better support for struggling students
6. Increase interdisciplinary activities within and outside of department
7. Stronger promotion of awareness of social issues

Revised Priorities in Expected Department Learning Results (EDLRs)

The department wishes to give higher priority to **effective use of technology** (especially in regard to building research skills) hence are moving this to a level 1 (from a previous level of 3). The department wishes to restore the **strong research skills** ESLR to a “1” level, feeling we had slipped to a “2” level in the past few years. All of the remaining five ESLRs have a priority of “1” as in the past.

ESLR #1 Demonstrates knowledge of key concepts, principles, facts and skills in the discipline.

The department felt that this was the core competence of the department. Sample assignments and assessments such as tests, essays, projects and research papers provide evidence. AP courses such as AP US history, AP economics and AP Psychology usually have more than half of their students score “5” on the exams and over 90% scoring above “3” (informally considered evidence of competence).

Subject/Course	Content Standard	Sample Assignment
World History	Describe the rise of industrial economies and their link to imperialism and colonialism (e.g., the role played by national security and strategic advantage; moral issues raised by the search for national hegemony, Social Darwinism, and the missionary impulse; material issues such as land, resources, and technology).	Thesis Statements
Government	Understand that the Bill of Rights limits the powers of the federal government and state governments.	Art projects (posters) relating to the Bill of Rights
US History	Students understand the meaning, implication, and impact of historical events and recognize that events could have taken other directions.	Counterfactual “What If” assignments
Economics	Students conduct cost-benefit analyses and apply basic economic indicators to analyze the aggregate economic behavior of the U.S. economy.	Students develop graphic displays of growth in GDP

ESLR #2 Effective communication through listening, and writing.

Subject/Course	Content Standard	Sample Assignment
World History	Compare the major ideas of philosophers and their effects on the democratic revolutions in England, the United States, France, and Latin America (e.g., John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Simón Bolívar,	Oral reports on the <i>Philosophes</i>

	Thomas Jefferson, James Madison).	
Government	Analyze the origin, development, and role of political parties, noting those occasional periods in which there was only one major party or were more than two major parties.	Develop political party platforms and give a presentation promoting the platform
US History	Discuss the significant domestic policy speeches of Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Carter, Reagan, Bush, and Clinton (e.g., with regard to education, civil rights, economic policy, environmental policy).	Read excerpts from famous speeches in class
Economics	Discuss the effects of changes in supply and/or demand on the relative scarcity, price, and quantity of particular products.	Student presentations of specific examples of goods and services

ESLR # 6 Critical and creative thinking to solve problems

Subject/Course	Content Standard	Sample Assignment
World History	Explain imperialism from the perspective of the colonizers and the colonized and the varied immediate and long-term responses by the people under colonial rule.	Short papers on selected topics
Government	Explain the controversies that have resulted over changing interpretations of civil rights, including those in <i>Plessy v. Ferguson</i> , <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i> , <i>Miranda v. Arizona</i> , <i>Regents of the University of California v. Bakke</i> , <i>Adarand Constructors, Inc. v. Pena</i> , and <i>United States v. Virginia (VMI)</i> .	Research paper on <i>Brown v. Board of Education</i>

US History	Discuss the decision to drop atomic bombs and the consequences...	Debate on the pro and con of the decision
Economics	Analyze how domestic and international competition in a market economy affects goods and services produced and the quality, quantity, and price of those products.	Essays

ESLR # 4 Ability to integrate knowledge among disciplines

Subject/Course	Content Standard	Sample Assignment
World History	Discuss the influence of World War I on literature, art, and intellectual life in the West (e.g., Pablo Picasso, the "lost generation" of Gertrude Stein, Ernest Hemingway).	Read selections from Hemingway novel.
Government	Analyze the influence of ancient Greek, Roman, English, and leading European political thinkers such as John Locke, Charles-Louis Montesquieu, Niccolò Machiavelli, and William Blackstone on the development of American government.	Read selections from Locke, Plato
US History	Discuss the expanding religious pluralism in the United States and California that resulted from large-scale immigration in the twentieth century.	Essays and class presentations
AP Psychology	No Standard	Projects integrating neuroscience and behavior