



## Overview of the Third Grade Content Area Calendar

This curricular calendar is meant as an invitation for you to join into an effort to pioneer state-of-the-art ideas for teaching CCSS aligned social studies units. The units described in this document are rich in both CCSS-aligned literacy and in content knowledge.

This is the third year in which the TCRWP has developed a content area calendar, and teachers who followed last year's iteration were tremendously excited by the work that students did and by the reception that their teaching received from Quality Reviewers, Danielson coaches and the like. So we approach this year's calendar with great enthusiasm. But we also approach this endeavor with humility and openness. Whereas our work in ELA literacy has been taught in hundreds of thousands of classrooms over thirty years--changing all the time, granted--the work described in these pages is far newer to us. The good news is that this also means that there is lots of room for trial and error, for discovery, for input from you that can change everything.

Before mapping out our proposed yearlong curriculum, we want give you an overview of the content we imagine you will be teaching across the entire year and describe the methods of teaching that we expect you will draw upon.

### *An Overview of Your Year Long Content*

We have scheduled six units, of varied length. You can bypass some of these, extend others, if you wish, although the do fit together in a coherent fashion. They were composed to align to the new social studies standards as well as the the CCSS. As you know, the overall subject is 'countries around the world.' We've grounded the units in specific countries so that we can provide help that is as specific and as supportive as possible. We aimed to choose countries that are different in terms of continents, cultures, climates and governments. We were torn between studying China or Japan, Brazil or Mexico (and of course there are other great options as well). We were also torn on the sequence of these studies. In the end, we decided to focus on Brazil because the Olympics will be there so it will be in the media and because it is such a rising power, and we decided to focus on China because we think most of our schools are already doing so and because there are lots of great books on the topic.

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We have designed the unit so that after focusing on the US, we turn our attention to Brazil and only afterwards to China because the way in which we have designed the units, children don't do as much independent reading of trade books during the first two units, and they do read more in the third unit. Our research suggested that there are fewer books for children available on Brazil than on China. Our bookshelves brim with books on China, and by the time the unit rolls around, we anticipate students will be learning from their reading. We realize that you may choose different countries to study based on your materials and your student population.

### **Methods of Teaching**

Know from the start that we are not thinking that your social studies classroom will be taught as a workshop with a minilesson at the start of each day, time for independent (and sometimes shared) work on projects of personal importance, and then ending with a share session. You will certainly transfer specific methods—both of teaching (like minilessons) and of learning (like accountable talk) and of reading/writing (like flash draft opinion writing) from reading and writing workshops into your social studies classroom, but we think the kids (and you) will welcome approaching social studies in a significantly different way.

We also will not forward a predictable template for how each of your content area units will progress. You will see recommendations throughout this document for how you might teach something as well as for the content you might teach, but we generally think that you can choose the method that works for you at that occasion and that your choices will need to take into account the resources and the time you have available, and also what works in your classroom (in your teaching and your students' learning.) That is, for example, although we might recommend that you use a method we refer to as 'a mini-lecture,' we know that if you like doing these and find they work with your kids, you'll do more of them. If you have stage fright and find the effort to give a mini-lecture isn't worth the time and stress it takes, then you'll use this method rarely. In a similar way, we expect you to draw from each of the teaching methods that will be in your palette:

1. mini-lecture, read aloud, seminar
2. centers
3. inquiry groups
4. reading workshop with partners or clubs
5. minilessons (or micro-lessons, like mid-workshop teaching points)

*Mini-lecture, read aloud, interactive (close) reading, seminar*

Although the curriculum is primarily an inquiry-based curriculum with strong literacy instruction embedded into it, you will see that we are zealous in our belief that knowledge enables learning. If you know something about kinds of trees, that knowledge can entirely change a walk in the woods from a mere ramble to a research project: why are there so many caterpillars on the larch, why do maples tend to occur along the edges of the forest...So you will see that this curriculum absolutely aims to provide students with knowledge which we know will enable them to be more active and successful as researchers.

The CCSS wisely advances the notion that students need to learn to gain knowledge from their own information reading. For too long, teachers have pre-digested textbook information and then, in long lectures that drone on and on, have stuffed the pap down students' throats as if they are baby birds. Students absolutely need to be their own agents of their learning, to see they can go out and learn about a subject.

Having said that, we also know that some carefully planned, brief, mini-lectures can go a long ways towards helping students develop the knowledge that enables them to approach their informational reading with enough of a frame-of-reference that they have 'hooks on which to hang' the new knowledge that they learn from their own reading.

We also think that by teaching students to learn from mini-lectures, you can teach them to learn from expository texts that are, in a sense, written-mini-lectures. The advantage of a mini-lecture is that you can construct that text to make sure that it supports your own students' learning. So if you want students to learn that when starting to read an expository text, one thinks, 'what's this text going to be about?' and 'how will this text probably go?' and it helps also to recall other similar texts (Ah yes, this is an overview of a country. So I'm expecting it will address the geography, the population, the defining features...) With this knowledge in hand, we can plan a minilecture that sets students up to do that work.

We differentiate mini-lectures from seminars. The former are lectures. They may last up to 15 minutes. When thinking about how a mini-lecture tends to go, think about the mini-lecture as resembling an interactive read aloud. When you are reading aloud, it is clear to kids that their job is to listen and digest and sometimes to take notes. In an interactive read aloud, the text that comes at students is a continuous text, and it is not punctuated by constant discussion. Children are exposed to the structure and coherence of the text.

On the other hand, we liken a mini-lecture to an interactive read aloud because during an interactive read aloud, you also make decisions to interrupt the continuous text in order to demonstrate or scaffold children in doing the mindwork that you hope listeners are doing. So when reading a bit of text that starts, ‘On the other hand...’ you might decide to set kids up to realize that the phrase ‘on the other hand’ is meant to cue people into the fact that the text has just turned a corner. So, reading those words, you might pause, you might go back and reread those words, and you might punctuate them with some gestures and intonation that highlight the turn the text has just taken. You might even tuck in a reminder, “You should be expecting that this is a new subtopic, so your notes should show that the text is turning to...”

Then, too, your interactive read aloud will contain places where you prompt kids to ‘turn and talk’ or to ‘stop and jot’ and the talking can be to a partner or to a small group (perhaps the kids are sitting with members of a center or an inquiry group.) So, too, your mini-lecture might embed some of those invitations into it at key points. You might ask kids to take note by sketching, by jotting boxes and bullets, or you may ask them to think about how they want to organize their notes and to use whatever method they choose for note-taking. This does not mean, however, that your minilecture is a free flowing chat.

Another method of teaching is a seminar. Imagine your class is studying China and someone who has lived in China agrees to be a guest speaker, coming with slides, and wanting to engage the children in discussion (Does anyone know what this slide shows?) We would refer to that as a seminar, and we’d teach children to use their accountable talk skills (developed during read-aloud discussions) to make sure that their contributions build on each other and are evidenced based (“I partly agree with so and so, and partly disagree. Because although I agree that the slide is showing one of China’s rivers, the town seems...”) Another way seminars may go is that can be taught by students who have become an “expert” on a certain aspect or topic. Usually a presentation is given often using pictures, charts, excerpts from books and even clips. It can involve a question and answer format that leads to discussions or it can be a presentation that is given and then children write down questions and ask them of the “expert.” The expert answers them.

The third way for you to provide children with information is for you to do some read aloud work. We suggest you watch the video tape on the TCRWP website of Kathleen Tolan’s read aloud of *Gorilla* or of *Freedom Summer* (which is fiction, but the way clubs are embedded in the read aloud is a helpful thing to see) to see ways in which you can make the read-alouds as instructional and interactive as possible. Neither of those is a perfect example of a close-reading read aloud (although they both do show ways to help students read more closely) and we have included a transcript of a close-reading read aloud.

Sometimes—perhaps once a week—you will want one of your read alouds to support this work (and that might occur within the reading workshop, the writing workshop, or your social studies class.)

### ***Centers***

We have developed a very particular image of centers. This image actually can be traced back to the use of centers during Australian choice time. Some schools organized choice time by ways-of-exploring, with one center for blocks, one for woodworking, and so forth. Students spent a cluster of days in a center—say three or four—and then would rotate to another center (not getting to all of them, necessarily.) Meanwhile the whole class knew about the sorts of work that a person could do, in, say, the block center, and that work changed over time. So at the start of a year, students just made stuff in blocks. Then they were taught that blocks are infinitely more powerful if the cluster of children working there talk ahead of time and agree on one shared enterprise that they will build, with different children taking on different roles or challenges (“We’ll make a zoo, and my job will be the bird and snake houses.) Then perhaps next, children were taught that the block area would be infinitely more rich if reading and writing were inserted into all parts of every endeavor (We can make a brochure of what’s in the zoo, with a map. We can make signs up beside the animal cages like ‘Don’t touch the...’)

So transfer that image to your social studies classroom, and imagine that whether your students are studying China then Brazil or studying Colonial America then Westward Expansion, they might go about learning by working in centers such as these: photograph centers, video centers, map center, paired text center, compare and contrast center, statistics center. Over time, as children progress through units of study, the centers themselves become more full of tools and ways of learning. For example, at some point in the photo center, the teacher will suggest that magnifying glasses can help, or that people find it helpful to sort photos and put them into plastic sleeves by groups, or that there is cool software for tagging photos. Over time, too, new prompts that are useful in the photo center will accumulate so that children will have lists of ‘early strings of prompts such as ‘I notice...this makes me think....I wonder why...’ They will also have strings of more advanced prompts, such as ‘I’m thinking this photo was taken to show...I think this because...’

Although children learn over time how one can learn from photographs or maps or paired texts or anything else, and over time, draw on their growing repertoire of ways to work within a center (with a resource,) teachers also include task cards in a center that direct the activities of the center. The tasks tend to follow a progression of work, so the first task in a

photo center on China might be, 'Sort the photos and words with your group. Think of how these go together.' The next task might be, 'Talk about why these photos go together, how the words go with the photographs, what you are learning about transportation and jobs in China. Think and talk also about the question, 'Where do people in China live and settle? Why might they make those choices?'

Teachers in a number of schools have worked with their staff developer and each other to contribute to a google.doc resource that contains many task cards and center resources, and we invite other schools to make the decision to participate in this project. This will require that you attend a conference day on this topic in and devote some of your time with a staff developer to working on this, as that is a way for us to help steer your contributions so they stand on the shoulders of as much of our previous learning as possible.

### ***Inquiry groups***

You will notice from the discussion above that centers are not topic based. That is, you may decide at some point that you want your students to each study a different country or colonial settlement or social issue etc, and you may therefore divide your class up into task forces/inquiry groups that are topical. Perhaps one group is studying Mexico, another Japan, another Ghana, etc. We assume that usually this will be towards the end of the year, when you are asking students to draw on all they have learned earlier to work with more independence. Perhaps you are asking them to use all they have learned from shared study of two nations to conduct their own nation study, one that travels along a similar progression. You may, in these inquiry groups, suggest that children essentially learn from the same repertoire of ways of learning that they've engaged with in centers. That is, one group might do a photo study of Mexico, then a map study of Mexico, then a paired text study of Mexico...

### ***Reading Workshop***

Minilessons: You will certainly choose to give minilessons on some days, and you can do a minilesson before dispersing the class into inquiry groups or centers (as well as within the days when your class functions as a reading workshop.) The minilessons will follow the same format as your reading and writing minilessons. We encourage you to make sure that your teaching points are transferable, as they always are in a reading or writing minilesson. That is, you would not want your minilesson to teach this: Today I want to teach you that China has lots of resources located along the Yangtze River. You can look at this map and see that there are mines.... Instead your teaching point might be: Today I want to teach you that when studying a country, it is helpful to not only think about the geography and the

resources separately, but to think about those in combination. You almost lie the geography map, the resource map, the population maps alongside each other and think about connections you see between them. For example, notice whether resources are near or not near to bodies of water, to mountains, to centers of population density.

### ***Standards***

**3.8** *Regions form and change as a result of unique physical and environmental conditions, economies, and cultures.*

These standards are important in these units:

**3.8.a** *Regions across the United States and around the world are defined by the specific culture, economic system, political system, and physical environment unique to that area.*

**3.8.b** *The physical characteristics of a region strongly influence the culture and lifestyle of the people who live there.*