

Office of the Superintendent of Schools
MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Rockville, Maryland

May 9, 2024

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Board of Education

From: Monique T. Felder, Interim Superintendent of Schools

Subject: Contract Approval for RFP No. 4904.1, Social Studies Grades Kindergarten–2 Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to ensuring that all students achieve at the highest levels and that they are prepared to succeed in postsecondary study, career, and community. Our student achievement data identifies significant gaps in performance for our Black/African American students, Hispanic/Latino students, students in poverty, as well as students receiving special education and English Language Development services. The pursuit of closing these gaps and improving educational outcomes for all students fuels MCPS' dedication to continuous improvement. Research suggests that using high-quality instructional materials may improve student learning better than other more well-known interventions. This evidence reinforces the sense of urgency to ensure that instructional materials and curriculum are of the highest quality and aligned to changing standards.

The goal of the MCPS elementary social studies curriculum is to create literate and well-informed citizens who actively participate in a democratic society. Beginning in kindergarten, MCPS students learn about democratic concepts within the context of community. Concepts such as roles, rights, rules, and freedom are explored. Students learn that roles are the specific jobs of members of a family and school community; rights are freedoms/feelings that we all are entitled to or deserve; and responsibilities are things we must do in order to allow everyone to have their rights. As students progress through elementary school, they apply concepts and knowledge of the past to solve real-world issues of the present. The students also examine multiple sources, including technology, primary and secondary source materials (the arts, film, oral histories, and a variety of texts) to research and investigate multiple perspectives, past and present. Upper elementary students study European Exploration and its impact on Native American Societies (Grade 4); and analyze roles and viewpoints of various groups such as enslaved Africans, free Blacks, Native Americans, and women during the American Revolution (Grade 5). The students then are taught to use literacy skills to make informed and evidence-based judgements about what happened in the past, consequences, and contemporary implications.

In response to the research in this area and the recommendations of staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs, MCPS issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) No. 4904.1, Elementary Social Studies Curriculum and Instructional Materials, to purchase externally created materials for an initial contract term of three years with three, one-year renewal options. RFP 4904.1 delineated requirements for the new curriculum and instructional materials which include

- antiracist and anti-biased content;
- social justice standards;
- taking informed action;
- social studies skills and processes;
- inquiry-based learning;
- translations: Chinese, French, and Spanish;
- scaffolds to support emergent multilingual learners and students with disabilities;
- curriculum alignment to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Social Studies Standards; and
- collaboration opportunities for local content.

A curriculum selection process was developed that included: extensive input and feedback from MCPS stakeholders in evaluating responses to RFP No. 4904.1, pre-vetting for mandatory requirements, reviewing materials using well-designed rubrics, attending vendor presentations, and conducting vendor interviews. The selection process identified Kindergarten through Grade 2 curriculum and instructional materials and professional development training that would best meet the needs of MCPS students and staff.

Social Studies Product Selection

MCPS has set the bar high for the adoption of a new K–2 social studies curriculum. The selected curriculum met the demand for mastery of social studies content knowledge and skills set forth by the College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards, MSDE Social Studies State Standards, MSDE’s social studies frameworks, and the Learning for Justice’s Social Justice Standards.

Inquiry Journeys, *inquirED*’s elementary social studies curriculum, was specifically designed to meet these rigorous requirements. Inquiry Journeys moves beyond the textbook, with digital units embedded with inquiry-based practices. Each detailed lesson plan aligns with the C3 Framework indicators for inquiry-based social studies and supports culturally responsive instruction with student-centered strategies, diverse sources, built-in assessment tools, differentiation strategies, bilingual student-facing resources, and facilitation tips.

Additionally, MSDE’s Social Studies State Standards are integrated into the curriculum and are accessible at the unit, module, and lesson levels. Finally, Inquiry Journeys prepares students to evaluate sources of information, develop disciplinary literacy skills, craft arguments based on evidence, and authentically apply their learning to take informed action.

WHEREAS, Board of Education Policy IFA, *Curriculum*, requires a review of curriculum content areas on five-year cycles; and

WHEREAS, In June 2022, the Maryland State Department of Education approved the adoption of the new Grades Kindergarten–5 standards for elementary social studies. To ensure alignment with the Maryland State Department of Education’s standards and continuity in Grades Kindergarten–2 social studies, staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instructional Programs recommended that Montgomery County Public Schools purchase an externally created curriculum and instructional materials; and

WHEREAS, In response to this recommendation, Montgomery County Public Schools issued Request for Proposal No. 4904.1, Social Studies Grades Kindergarten–2 Curriculum and Instructional Materials, to purchase an externally created curriculum and instructional materials for an initial contract term of three years with three, one-year renewal options; and

WHEREAS, A curriculum selection process was developed that included extensive input and feedback from Montgomery County Public Schools stakeholders, in evaluating the responses to Request for Proposal No. 4904.1, attending vendor presentations, reviewing digital and print vendor materials, and conducting vendor interviews; and

WHEREAS, Through the curriculum selection process, stakeholders identified certain Kindergarten through Grade 2 curriculum and instructional materials and professional development training that would best meet the needs of Montgomery County Public Schools students and staff; and

WHEREAS, Montgomery County Public Schools staff recommends the purchase of Inquiry Journeys, inquirED’s elementary social studies curriculum, for Grades Kindergarten–2 curriculum and instructional materials and professional development training; and

WHEREAS, A comprehensive rollout of the new curriculum and instructional materials has been designed so that each school will have an introduction to the materials and intensive professional learning in the summer, and full implementation in the fall; and

WHEREAS, All elementary students in Montgomery County Public Schools will receive high-quality instruction with new materials aligned with the Maryland State Department of Education social studies standards; now therefore be it

Resolved, That the Board of Education approve the purchase of inquirED’s Inquiry Journeys Social Studies Grades Kindergarten–2 Curriculum and Instructional Materials, and professional development training, based on estimated student counts for a cost not to exceed the total amount set forth for each contract year as noted:

Curriculum and Instructional Materials Cost			
Vendor	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
Inquiry Journeys Social Studies Curriculum	\$377,970.48	\$377,970.48	\$377,970.48