



**Andrew J. Bott**  
Superintendent

**The Public Schools of Brookline**  
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September 24, 2018

Dear Brookline Families,

On November 14, 2017, Brookline Town Meeting voted in favor of Warrant Article 20 to establish that the second Monday of October would be commemorated as Indigenous Peoples Day in the Town of Brookline.

The Public Schools of Brookline (PSB) supported Warrant Article 20 because it is consistent with the district's long established efforts to ensure that our curriculum and learning expectations are more inclusive of the multiple perspectives and experiences that have typically been underrepresented in American education.

In 2009, the PSB's Social Studies department began rewriting the district's learning expectations for Social Studies. At that time, curriculum teams began developing new units about Native Americans for 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades that are now in use. Subsequently, in the spring of 2016, curriculum coordinators assessed curriculum materials for hidden bias or dubious inferences. At that time, our PK-8 Social Studies Coordinator Geoff Tegnell worked with teachers at each grade level to review our grade-level texts, atlases, and teacher resources in order to assess these materials for: 1) accuracy of information; 2) inclusion of multiple perspectives; and 3) stereotypes, bias, and questionable inferences.

This review found that some of our curriculum resources understated the consequences of exploration, settlement, and westward expansion on Native Americans. In addition, some of our materials provided inadequate information about modern Native Americans and about Native Americans of distinction. In response to these concerns, teacher teams revised curricula and identified instructional materials that are more equitable and inclusive. For example, PSB purchased texts for our 4<sup>th</sup> grade Exploration and Colonization unit that better convey the negative impact of European conquest of the Americas on indigenous peoples. With the support of Dr. Tegnell, Heath School teacher Karen Shashoua received a National Endowment for the Humanities grant to study the origins of Hopi culture at Mesa Verde, access artifacts, and develop curricular materials about modern Hopi life for 2<sup>nd</sup> grade teachers. The Social Studies department also added texts about Native American leaders for our 5<sup>th</sup> grade curriculum, such as The Life of Joseph Brant by Ryan Nagelhout.

In September of 2017 Dr. Tegnell shared resources with all Social Studies teachers on how to better include the perspectives of indigenous peoples regarding Christopher Columbus' exploration and exploitation. These resources included June Sark Heinrich's pedagogical guidelines, Native Americans: What Not to Teach; suggestions for books that represent the Native American perspective on Columbus; and Native American-oriented online lessons about Columbus' actions in the Caribbean. This outreach to Social Studies teachers also reminded them to approach teaching about Columbus and the Native Americans he encountered with developmentally appropriate pedagogy, an appreciation for the complexity of historical events, and by including the Native American experience of Columbus' "discovery" of the Americas and the consequences it had for them.

Over the past several months, Dr. Tegnell and educators in grades K-8 have developed specific lessons that are historically accurate, inclusive of multiple perspectives, and recognize the many contributions and accomplishments of indigenous peoples. As a part of the curriculum, and in accordance with the resolutions contained in Warrant Article 20, in particular over the next several weeks, your child will experience these new and powerful lessons.

As always, if you have any questions about these lessons please do not hesitate to speak with your child's teacher. You can always reach out to Dr. Tegnell directly at [geoff\\_tegnell@psbma.org](mailto:geoff_tegnell@psbma.org).

Sincerely,



Andrew J. Bott  
Superintendent



Nicole Gittens, Ed.D.  
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