**Talking Points for Inclusion of Social Studies in the Minnesota ESSA Plan**

Rationale for Well-Rounded Education Index:

• Time for social studies and science is a civil rights issue: Since 2001 when NCLB was approved, schools have increasingly seen a narrowing of curriculum, with subjects like science, social studies, and the arts receiving considerably less time and focus, particularly in elementary grades. (i) Higher-income students have significantly more background content knowledge by the time they start school compared to students from low-income backgrounds. (ii) This discrepancy creates an inequitable opportunity gap for students that limits their success in school, careers, and their ability to participate as citizens in our democracy. (iii)

• Well-rounded education meets ESSA’s intentions: Secretary King spoke many times during the initial phase of ESSA implementation about the great potential for the law to allow for a more well-rounded education that goes beyond reading and math to include civics, economics, geography, history, science, and the arts. (iv) By reducing the focus on Math and English testing, adding focused time for social studies in K-8 can send a strong signal to school leaders and the community that Minnesota embraces this approach. Among draft state plans, Louisiana has proposed an “Interests and Opportunities index” which might provide ideas for inclusion in our plan. (v)

• Content knowledge and skills support literacy: While the DCPS ELA/Literacy curriculum includes content-based unit themes, more specific time dedicated to standard-based instruction would more meaningfully build content knowledge and disciplinary literacy skills that support student success in literacy. Research suggests that as students move from decoding to reading comprehension, the role of background content knowledge plays an increasingly important role in their ability to make sense of complex text. Students spending more time on social studies, science, and the arts can lead to improvements in literacy as well.

• Historical thinking skills are increasingly necessary due to “fake news”: During the recent presidential campaign, voters have increasingly been exposed to “fake news” designed by partisans or to drive traffic as clickbait, especially as increasing numbers of people get their news primarily from social media. (vi) Recent research has shown that despite students being digital natives, the vast majority lack the skills to source, contextualize, and corroborate information. (vii) We must equip our students with the historical thinking and media literacy skills to be able to sort through misinformation so they can participate in our democracy as informed citizens.

• Schools have a civic mission: We believe in the civic mission of public education in the United States that created compulsory schooling to ensure an informed citizenry necessary to sustain our government as a democratic republic. Making explicit the need for time for social studies instruction in grades K-8 more directly supports this mission. Last year, Secretary of Education John King taught a 12th grade U.S. Government class at Coolidge High School to help make this point and gave speeches at the National Press Club and a keynote address at the 2016 National Council for the Social Studies arguing for “the importance of civic education as part of a well-rounded education.”

i Fitchett, Paul G., Tina L. Heafner, and Phillip Vanfossen. "An Analysis of Time Prioritization for Social Studies in Elementary School Classrooms." Journal of Curriculum and Instruction 8, no. 2 (2014): 7-35. http://www.joci.ecu.edu/index.php/JoCI/article/viewFile/v8n2p7/pdf

ii Marzano, Robert J. Building Background Knowledge for Academic Achievement: Research on What Works in Schools. ASCD, 2004.

iii Levinson, Meira. "The Civic Achievement Gap." The Center for Information & Research on Civic Learning & Engagement. January 2007. <http://civicyouth.org/PopUps/WorkingPapers/WP51Levinson.pdf>.

iv King, John B. "Hand-In-Hand: Well-Rounded Education and Civic Engagement." U.S. Department of Education. October 16, 2016. <https://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/hand-hand-well-rounded-educationand-civic-engagement>.

v "Louisiana Updates ESSA Framework to Raise Expectations, Fund Local Plans." Louisiana Department of Education. February 6, 2017. <http://www.louisianabelieves.com/newsroom/newsreleases/2017/02/06/louisiana-updates-essa-framework-to-raise-expectations-fund-local-plans>.

vi Gottfried, Jeffrey, and Elisa Shearer. "News Use Across Social Media Platforms 2016." Pew Research Center. May 26, 2016. http://www.journalism.org/2016/05/26/news-use-across-social-media-platforms- 2016/.

vii Breakstone, Joel, and Sam Wineburg. "Evaluating Information: The Cornerstone of Civic Online Reasoning." Stanford History Education Group. November 21, 16. <https://sheg.stanford.edu/upload/V3LessonPlans/Executive%20Summary%2011.21.16.pdf>.