

K–12 Curriculum Adoption Recommendation: English Language Arts & Social Studies

Date: May 6, 2026 Review Cycle: Year 3 Conclusion — Phase 5 to Phase 6 Transition Submitted by: Darin Doherty — Curriculum Coordinator

PURPOSE

This summary marks the conclusion of Year 3 of the SPPS curriculum review cycle and formally transitions the district from Phase 5 (Evaluation & Recommendation) to Phase 6 (Adoption & Implementation). The Curriculum Review Team presents final recommendations for K–12 instructional materials in both English Language Arts and Social Studies. Both subject reviews engaged classroom teachers across all grade bands, evaluated programs against Minnesota state standards and district priorities, and applied rubrics aligned to the MDE evaluation framework. The board is asked to approve the purchases and authorize contracts as described below.

SOCIAL STUDIES

REVIEW OVERVIEW

The Social Studies review concludes Year 3 of the SPPS 7-Phase Curriculum Review Process, completing Phase 5 and recommending adoption to enter Phase 6 for the 2026–2027 school year. The team evaluated programs for inquiry-based learning design, Minnesota standards alignment, cross-curricular literacy integration, accessibility, and technology integration.

SOCIAL STUDIES RECOMMENDATIONS

Grade Band	Program / Publisher	Key Rationale
2–5 & 7–8 (Core)	TCI — Social Studies Alive! / TCI Middle School	Active, inquiry-based learning moves beyond passive reading; cross-curricular literacy integration builds background knowledge essential for reading comprehension; differentiated reading levels, text-to-speech, vocabulary supports, and English/Spanish materials serve all learners; seamless Google Classroom LMS integration; comprehensive pacing guides and in-app professional development reduce planning time
Grade 6 (Exception)	Northern Lights (MN Historical Society) — Third Edition	Definitive resource for Minnesota state history (used by 99% of MN 6th graders); hundreds of primary sources, images, and narratives specific to MN; grants FREE student admission to MNHS historic sites and museums; explicitly aligned to MN 6th-grade standards for state history, geography, and government
K–1 (Core)	Junior Achievement (JA)	Core instructional program at K–1 for financial literacy, career readiness, and entrepreneurship; concise 45-minute sessions build foundational community and economic concepts aligned to TCI pacing
Grades 2–4 (Supplemental)	Junior Achievement (JA)	Continued supplemental integration alongside TCI core; JA modules (e.g., JA Our Community, JA Our Region) reinforce financial literacy and community readiness without displacing primary TCI instruction
Grade 9	Contemporary Human Geography (Pearson)	Visual approach with modular organization; interactive AI-powered study tools personalize learning; makes complex geographic concepts accessible
Grade 10	World History Interactive (Savvas)	Strong C3 Framework alignment; immersive Project Imagine role-play activities; magazine-style student edition enhances readability and engagement

Grade 11	United States History (McGraw Hill)	Inquiry-based approach with deep primary source analysis; Inquiry Journals link historical events to current events, fostering critical thinking and civic understanding
Grade 12	Teacher-Authored Curriculum	Continued use of successful locally-developed curriculum for U.S. Government and Economics

ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

REVIEW OVERVIEW

The ELA review was driven by the 2020 Minnesota ELA Standards transition (full implementation 2025–26) and the MN READ Act, which requires a shift from Balanced Literacy to Science of Reading-aligned instruction. Grade-band teacher teams reviewed programs using a simplified MDE rubric, met with curriculum representatives, and examined sample materials and digital platforms. The review replaces the current Fountas & Pinnell Balanced Literacy model at K–4.

ELA RECOMMENDATIONS

Grade Band	Program / Publisher	Key Rationale	Year-1 Cost
K–4	Amplify CKLA	Strongest MDE alignment to Science of Reading / MN READ Act; systematic phonics progression with decodables; coherent design linking phonics, vocabulary, knowledge, and writing; content-rich units reinforce science and social studies vocabulary; consistent K–4 instructional framework; 12 hours of professional development per grade band (in-person + virtual)	\$115,758
5–8	HMH Into Reading / Into Literature	Engaging, authentic texts across diverse genres and perspectives; clear MN standards alignment with spiraled skill progression; flexible pacing and text selection; strong vertical alignment Gr. 5–8; multiple assessment options; virtual training for 5th grade and 6–8 teams	\$127,323
9–12	CommonLit 360 PRO Plus	Integrates reading, writing, speaking, and listening in standards-aligned units; emphasizes complex text analysis and evidence-based writing; embeds structured student discourse; flexible leveled text sets support differentiation across course levels; strong ClassLink/Clever integration; dedicated professional learning and account support	\$6,850 (Yr 1)*

* CommonLit 360 renewal: Years 2–6 annual cost is \$20,400 (Pro) or \$35,100 (Pro Plus).

BUDGET SUMMARY

ELA ADOPTION — YEAR 1

K–4 Amplify CKLA	\$115,758.24
5–8 HMH Into Reading / Into Literature	\$127,322.93
9–12 CommonLit 360 PRO Plus	\$6,850.00
Total ELA Year-1	\$249,931.17

SOCIAL STUDIES ADOPTION — YEAR 1

K–4 Junior Achievement (Core)	Absorbed — building budgets
Gr. 2–5, 7–8 TCI — Print + digital bundles (5-yr access)	\$79,352.35
Grade 6 Northern Lights — Updated classroom set	\$2,000.00
Grade 9 Contemporary Human Geography (Pearson) — 6-yr subscription + texts	\$13,958.35
Grade 10 World History Interactive (Savvas) — 6-yr subscription	\$11,150.00
Grade 11 United States History (McGraw Hill)	Absorbed — HS budget
Grade 12 Teacher-Authored Curriculum	Absorbed — HS budget
Total SS Year-1 Curriculum	\$106,460.70
Budget Request	

ALIGNMENT TO DISTRICT PRIORITIES

- Science of Reading / MN READ Act** — Amplify CKLA replaces Balanced Literacy with systematic, explicit phonics instruction at K–4.
- 2020 MN ELA Standards** — All three ELA programs are MDE-rated highly or partially aligned, supporting the 2025–26 full implementation deadline.
- Inquiry & critical thinking** — TCI (SS) and all ELA programs emphasize analysis, evidence-based writing, and student discourse over passive recall.
- Equity & access** — Programs include differentiated supports, diverse texts, multilingual materials (TCI: English/Spanish), and scaffolds for EL and SPED learners.
- Cross-curricular literacy** — Amplify CKLA units align directly to science and SS standards, bridging both adoptions and building shared vocabulary.
- Minnesota identity & heritage** — Northern Lights (Gr. 6) provides the definitive MN history resource, including MNHS site access for students.
- Technology integration** — TCI (Google Classroom), CommonLit (ClassLink/Clever), and Amplify (all-in-one digital platform) align with district LMS infrastructure.
- Professional development** — All programs include Year-1 PD; implementation timeline targets summer 2026 onboarding for Fall 2026 launch.

IMPLEMENTATION TIMELINE

Phase	Action
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May / June 2026	Board approval of curriculum model and materials; authorize contracts; assemble teacher teams for CIA Guidebook
Summer 2026	Initiate licensing, LMS integration (Canvas / Google Classroom) for TCI; ELA platform setup for Amplify, HMH, and CommonLit
August 2026	Staff professional development: TCI onboarding, Northern Lights Third Edition update review, ELA PD for all three grade bands
Fall 2026	Full classroom implementation K–12 for both Social Studies and ELA

Recommended Board Action: Approve the adoption of K–12 Social Studies and English Language Arts curriculum materials as described above. Authorize the Superintendent or designee to execute contracts with TCI (Teachers' Curriculum Institute), the Minnesota Historical Society (Northern Lights), Junior Achievement, Pearson, Savvas, McGraw Hill, Amplify Education, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH), and CommonLit. Approve ELA Year-1 expenditure of **\$249,931.17** and Social Studies Year-1 curriculum budget request of **\$106,460.70** (TCI print + digital bundles, Gr. 2–10) from the Curriculum & Instruction budget. K–1 Junior Achievement costs absorbed by building budgets; Grades 11–12 Social Studies costs absorbed by the high school budget. Northern Lights (Gr. 6) current subscription runs through 2031; \$2,000 reflects updated classroom set only.