

# BOSTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS



## OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Lee White  
Executive Director  
National Coalition for History  
400 A St., SE  
Washington, DC 20003

May 30, 2014

Dear Mr. White,

Thank you for writing and for inquiring about recent statements regarding our History and Social Studies Department. While there has been plenty of speculation on social media, there has not been a lot of clarity. I am grateful that you took the time to seek out information from us on behalf of your members.

K-12 history education has been, and will remain, a core part of instruction in the Boston Public Schools. In fact, the central office reorganization plan that led to this discussion was borne out of a clear and immediate need to support our schools more effectively as a District.

For many years our teachers and school leaders have rightly voiced concern that our Curriculum and Instruction Department is not well-aligned, neither internally nor with the needs of our students and schools. Despite many well-intentioned and talented people in our central office putting in one hundred and ten percent every day, our efforts did not always align in ways that supported the needs of our schools, teachers and students in the best way.

Fixing this disconnect is one of the challenges we have chosen to take on this year. Earlier this spring we reorganized our entire Curriculum and Instruction Department, which is a part of our central office. Part of this reorganization involves bringing the History and Social Studies, English Language Arts and World Languages Departments under a new Humanities umbrella. It is important to note that these departments are not combining. They will remain separate. Moving forward these three departments will be *collaborating* in more formalized ways than in the past.

Our students will continue to have History and Social Studies courses in school just as they do today, taught by highly-qualified History and Social Studies educators, just as today. Unlike in the past, however, our new structure will allow us to better coordinate the use of instructional materials throughout all subject areas. For example, we will improve our ability to support English teachers who wish to take advantage of historical lessons in their classes, and for History and Social Studies teachers who wish to take advantage of literature that frames an understanding of historical content.

We hope this letter helps provide some context and clarity about our approach. As every great History teacher knows, context matters – and researchers must gather as many facts as possible before settling on a narrative. We are glad you reached out to us, and we are even happier that there is an organization such as yours to advocate for the preservation and expansion of History instruction. We are committed to providing quality History and Social Studies instruction today and will continue to be in the future. Please continue to reach out if you have any other questions or suggestions for how we can ensure the birthplace of public education in the United States continues to educate all students about our past.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'John P. McDonough'.

John P. McDonough  
Interim Superintendent

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Eileen de los Reyes'.

Dr. Eileen de los Reyes  
Deputy Superintendent for Academics