

**6th Grade I &S: Minnesota Studies 2015-2016****Students, Parents & Guardians,**

Hi! My name is Tom Parks and I will be leading you on a journey of Minnesota Studies. Minnesota Studies is basically US History through the lens of Minnesota, with an added look at economics, government/civics and geography. It's a fun class, and an interesting subject. I am passionate about it and I think that will be pretty obvious. Throughout this course guide, I will try my best to guide you on how to be successful in this class.

There are a lot of reasons to study history but my favorites are these: it's nice to know who we were before as a state in order to get a better sense of who we want to be in the future (and not let bad history repeat itself). History can teach us more about what it's like to be a good human being because basically we are studying people and the good or bad choices that they've made. History is everywhere (video games, movies, TV shows, art, etc.) and it's nice to understand more about the historical references we see everywhere all around us.

There will be a lot of risk taking in this class because we will sometimes be very silly, like when we make soap. I will usually cold call on you (call students randomly rather than just waiting for kids to raise their hands), which means you will sometimes have to trick your brain and heart into being braver than it is. I will sometimes give you a lot of freedom, like weeks when you can develop your own research questions and create your own projects in order to demonstrate what you've learned, and I am trusting you to not take advantage of that freedom by going crazy! There will also be times when I expect you to be very mature, serious and respectful when having class seminars and discussions about some very troubling aspects of Minnesota's History involving issues such as genocide, war, racism, environmental destruction, etc. It can be tough to switch back and forth between silly and serious, but I'm asking you to do that too. Finally, I am asking you to stay organized. I'll talk more about this later, but do not underestimate how hard it can be to go from having a few classes in 5<sup>th</sup> grade to having nine in 6<sup>th</sup>. Take organization seriously; assume it will be difficult, and set aside a half-hour a week (or more) just to organize your papers and locker.

<b><u>Timeline</u></b>	<b><u>Unit title</u></b>	<b><u>Statement of Inquiry</u></b>
September	Who are we?	Who are you? Who is a Minnesotan?
October - November	Pre European Contact	Who were the Anishinabe and Dakota? What was the fur trade? How did MN become a state? What does it mean to be fair and ethical in our dealings with other people?
December - January	Dakota War & Civil War	How as MN involved in the Civil War? What was the Dakota War? What values would you be willing to risk your life for?
February - March	Industrial Minnesota	Which change during the Industrial Age had the greatest impact on Minnesota's people, land, or resources? How do changes bring about positive and negative consequences?
April	Great Depression - WWII	What happened in MN after World War I? What was the Great Depression? What was the New Deal? How do we make choices with our resources? How was MN involved in World War II?
May	Modern Minnesota	What was the Civil Rights Movement in Minnesota and how were Minnesotans involved? Under what circumstances would you be willing to give up some of your rights?

**WHAT YOU NEED**

Every day you will need: a pencil, some kind of notebook, a folder dedicated just for this class and your planner!

**ASSESSMENTS**

There are six assessments in this course (one assessment per unit). They are open note (so keep your class materials, organize them, and take notes!). You can also retake them as many times as you want until you earn the score you want. I will even give you a week in class to retake it (some students will be doing independent projects during this time depending on how the assessment goes). All of my assessments are graded on a rubric that will make it very clear what you need to do to pass. Does this seem really easy to you? Too easy? It's not. They are *not* multiple choice – they are long assessments often involving essay type questions. More importantly they will ask you to prove that you can think through complicated topics of history, connect events and show a deeper understanding. That said, I am on your side and want you to be successful. I am here to help, and I will know that I did my job well if every student is proficient in my class. I don't want students to fail. But we are partners and you may need to ask for help. Asking for help is not a sign of weakness – it's a sign of strength. I try to predict your needs if I think you are confused, but don't assume that I can read your mind. If you don't understand something, let me know.

**STANDARDS BASED GRADING (SBG)**

The idea behind Standards Based Grading is that basic letter grades can be confusing and don't really say a lot about what a student actually knows. Standards Based Grading is rubric based and teachers grade each standard individually. Standards Based Grading can also communicate to your parents and I which standards you need some help with and which standards you have mastered; basic letter grades don't go into that much detail. I will check your homework and classwork with the understanding that these things are practice for the assessment, but ultimately the assessment is where you demonstrate whether or not you know the material that we are learning. The numbers we use for Standards Based grading are below, along with a super general sample rubric. But here's what you should understand first: these numbers do not correspond with and have nothing to do with letter grades. They don't translate. A typical 6<sup>th</sup> grader would get a 3 on a standard. A 6<sup>th</sup> grader who is performing at a 7<sup>th</sup> grade level (or above) would get a 4. A 4 is not an A. 4s are rare.

<b>4 Exemplary</b>	<b>3 Proficient</b>	<b>2 Partially proficient</b>	<b>1 Not proficient</b>
Wow! Exceeds criteria Sophisticated understanding Most effective Above grade level	On target Complete Few/no errors Meets criteria Adequately developed/supported Mastery level Satisfactory skills	Almost there Errors detract from mastery Progressing Meets some criteria Partially developed Partially supported Partial understanding Not yet masters	Keep trying! Not accurate Inappropriate Does not meet criteria Minimally developed/supported Inadequate or incomplete Beginning level mastery

**WORK HELP**

Email me for basic questions. If you ask me in class to do something or explain something later, I may forget. Schedule lunch help with me in advance – I can be available but need advanced notice. Most days I will stay after school for about an hour.

\*\*I have read this through my student and understand how to support them in being successful in your class\*\*

**SIGNATURE:** \_\_\_\_\_

*Research shows one of the best ways to help a student succeed is to help them feel supported at school as well as at home.  
Therefore I make it one of my highest priorities to be in touch with you throughout the school year as necessary.*

**What is the best way to reach you?** \_\_\_\_\_