Far too often students are put in the position to learn information that serves little to no relevance to their lives outside of the classroom. They are forced to take in information that does not help them lead a fulfilling life in their homes and community. They have little to understanding of the real issues they will face long after their formal education is over. The first solution is to teach students of their civic responsibility to be articulate and educated voters in all elections that have an impact on their overall well-being. However, before they can understand the importance of casting their ballot once they reach the legal age, they must understand why it is so important. For that reason I am introducing a curriculum that will focus on the achievement of all American citizens, primarily the African American achievement of the Civil Rights Voting Act of 1964. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, voter turnout among 18-29 year old citizens has been on a downward turn (File, 2012). Young adults are often times most affected by laws and elections and yet they are not using their right to vote to make their voices heard. This new curriculum will reinforce the history of African Americans receiving an unequivocal right to vote.

Students must first understand all of the struggles that had to be overcome in order to secure the right to vote for all American citizens, they need to understand the impact or various constitutional amendments and learn to decipher between actual and intended language. This particular curriculum will start with the creation of the Emancipation Proclamation in the mid 1800’s and will end with the Civil Right Voting Act. Students will have the opportunity to identify the major change agents from 1863-1964, and have a cohesive understanding of the role they played in achieving equal rights. Students will also have the opportunity to see the triumphs and struggles of African Americans throughout the passage of time. After learning of the multitude of laws, both legal and illegal that were enacted and overturned students will have a better understanding of why their opinions and ballots hold such great responsibility. Although this unit is written for students well below the legal voting age, it is imperative that they have the understanding of their parents and guardians responsibilities as citizens of their community. Allowing students the chance to see an unabridged version of their history will encourage them to take their right to vote seriously and work harder to protect and participate in an activity that 50 years ago was considered illegal. According to The Journal of Social Issues, less wealthy African Americans are among the lowest rates of voters (Harder & Krosnick, 2008), and working in a Title I setting, they are primarily coming from homes in that demographic. It is time to change the course of history, battles were fought and won, and now is not the time to let all of the hard work of great men and women go to waste.

The purpose of this new Social Studies unit is to allow students the opportunity to see how much has changed within a short period of time, it is also the goal of this new unit to reinforce the importance of participating in civic duties on an annual basis. After completing this unit, students will have a greater understanding of the history of their right to vote and will, ideally become more active in all elections, whether local, state or national. They will take the right to vote seriously and will work harder to be more informed citizens so they can make decisions that will change their world for the better.

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