# **The Social Studies Team’s Research Initiative**

# **By Kate Leslie**

# One of the initiatives that the Social Studies Literacy Team has been working on this year is to improve our students’ research skills. Every student from 9th – 11th grade is expected to write a thesis-driven research paper in history class each spring. Yet, many of our students lack mastery of crucial research skills such as how to perform keyword searches, analyze the credibility of sources, take notes for research, or organize information. Therefore, the Social Studies Literacy Team is making it our goal to explicitly teach more research skills over the course of the entire school year.

# In order to do this, members of the Literacy Team have revised their curriculum to incorporate small-scale research projects into nearly every unit of study. Each project is carefully designed to focus on teaching students a few new research skills. For example, Jennifer Frey created a research project on Supreme Court cases that was used to teach students how to cite sources correctly in bibliographies and parenthetical notation. Similarly, Caroline Cadel designed a civil rights project using LIFE magazine that helped her to teach her students how to analyze sources for bias and perspective.

The Social Studies Literacy Team is compiling a database of all of the research skills lessons that we develop so that we can share our work with our colleagues – both inside our department and throughout the school. This list is available on our Canvas website entitled “Social Studies - Reading Initiative.” We will shortly be making the page public to all teachers in the school.

One of the most exciting outcomes of our work on research is that the Social Studies Literacy Team has strengthened our collaboration with BHS librarians. Both Ann Collins and Shelley Mains are members of the Social Studies Literacy Team and therefore have been working closely with the teachers in the department to strength our instruction of key research skills. Both Ann and Shelley have been making frequent visits to our classrooms where they are delivering mini-lessons and working with students one-on-one. Their increased involvement in the teaching of research has meant that students are getting more assistance with research than ever before, and kids are more comfortable talking to librarians when they run into a problem.