

The Mt. Lebanon Project: Partnering to Re-Envision the Teaching of World History

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THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY continues to yield unprecedented access to information, and as our ways and means of learning and communicating evolve, so too must our ideas about how we perceive and relate to one another. Education systems around the world share the responsibility of charting the course toward intellectual and civic-minded globalization, and many are doing so with great success. All teachers can and should contribute to this reconceptualization of identity and human interaction by engaging students in peace education and conflict resolution, by supporting students' development of empathy for their fellow human beings, and by facilitating students' consideration of the roles of the individual in the global community.¹ It is our position that history and social studies teachers bear unique responsibilities in the accomplishment of these goals, and that we should be working to blend rich and innovative creative thinking techniques with a concerted effort to de-centralize the West in our study of the past in middle school and high school social studies classrooms.

In terms of rich and innovative techniques, there has been a steadily expanding stream of scholarship in history education over the past two decades that has challenged traditional, teacher-centered,

“sit-and-get” lecturing techniques. Even in an era beset by teacher accountability and high stakes testing mandates, historical thinking, conflict resolution, document-based questioning, historiographical analysis, and inquiry-based projects have emerged (or re-emerged) as techniques that contribute to our collective knowledge and skills for engaging students in history that sticks. Citing and employing one or more of these dynamic approaches, social studies teachers and scholars alike have explored theoretical bases and practical ways and means for making real-world connections to content,² emphasizing narrative and scales of time,³ fostering inquiry by teaching historical complexity,⁴ and confronting hyper-nationalist or ideological history curriculum.⁵

Interestingly and somewhat simultaneously, this era of progressive development in social studies teaching and learning has also been marked by concerted calls for a paradigm shift related to the scope and focus of history education in our middle schools and high schools. In particular, these calls have challenged notions of the superiority of Eurocentric and Americentric grand narratives, and have invited us to equip students with knowledge and skills to decentralize the West and to perceive themselves as active and engaged citizens of the emerging global community.⁶ Of course, broad-scale implementation of these strategies and approaches depends largely on the receptivity of middle school and high school social studies teachers.

This shift took place in the academy decades ago; however, it has been slow to take hold in public schools. Scholars suggest at least three reasons for this. First, as with textbook adoption, most states review and revise their social studies standards only about once a decade. The process can be quite cumbersome, and usually involves a review of all standards from primary grades through high school. Meetings of state curriculum and framework review boards can also amount to a considerable expense for the state. Review committees are generally made up of teachers, social studies coordinators, social studies faculty, and state school board representatives from systems, districts, and universities across the state, all of which convene in a central location for several days. Furthermore, once the process has begun, is often steeped in local or state bureaucracy and political debate.⁷ As a result, progress comes slowly, and for one reason or another, the end product is oftentimes disappointingly similar in scope and design to the curriculum that preceded it.

Second, the “No Child Left Behind” era, initiated by the Act of 2002, so marginalized and compromised social studies at virtually every level of education, that even teachers who embraced these new and dynamic developments were limited in terms of their abilities to enact sustainable progress.⁸ As observed by veteran teacher and social studies expert Leigh Tanner, the “curriculum narrowing” that took place under NCLB limited time for social studies instruction in favor of remediation in mathematics and reading.⁹ Social studies researcher Kathleen Babini also specified that the implementation of NCLB resulted in an average daily increase of almost 150 minutes to instructional time for elementary math and language arts, while instructional time for social studies and science declined by 75 to 90 minutes.¹⁰ Babini went on to point out that the concern of social studies educators during that time was that NCLB included provisions for students to demonstrate mastery in all major academic subject areas except for social studies.¹¹ NCLB, along with the residual era of emphasis in math and reading, served to stunt the growth and evolution of history education for several years.¹²

Finally, in this extraordinarily polarized era, the history curriculum has become a football for ideologues across the political spectrum. Political and social liberals generally see the history classroom as an environment in which students should learn about progressive concepts such as social justice, equity, and global citizenship. This approach is exemplified in seminal works such as James Loewen’s *Lies My Teacher Told Me* (1996), Howard Zinn’s *A People’s History of the United States* (2005), and Ronald Takaki’s *A Different Mirror* (2008). Political and social conservatives, on the other hand, continue to prioritize historical grand narratives that promote U.S. patriotism and national identity. This ideological Americanism is, of course, founded on principles of cultural and societal supremacy, which have, at times, spilled over into the hyper-emotional arena of public debate. An extreme case of this traditionalist approach was exemplified in the 2013 documentary *The Revisionaries*, which followed a few Christian evangelical creationists who had been elected to the Texas State Board of Education. The film chronicled their plot to commandeer state-adopted science and history textbooks for the purpose of promoting their personal ideologies and political agendas.

Another more recent example of this combative response to progressive history education was seen in early 2015 when

right-wing politicians in the Oklahoma House of Representatives sponsored a bill to bar state funds from being used for Advanced Placement History courses across the state. According to the bill's sponsors, these drastic measures were necessary because "the new AP framework developed by the College Board 'characterizes the U.S. as a nation of oppressors and exploiters' and 'shows what is bad about America.'"¹³ This bill, which garnered attention across the United States, was followed by similar efforts in Georgia and Kansas, where politicians echoed fears that the very foundations of American identity were being shaken by the College Board and liberal universities. Such fear mongering demonstrates just how contentious the study of the past can be,¹⁴ and as a result, progress comes slowly to the public secondary social studies classroom.

Despite these emergent debates, recent research on the planning and implementation of class activities related to historical thinking, conflict resolution, document-based questioning, historiographical analysis, and inquiry-based projects has bolstered the potential for measurable gains in students' higher order thinking, real-world connectedness, and engagement.¹⁵ Additionally, as mentioned earlier, there has been a great deal of recent research specifically focused on the promotion of new, connective approaches to teaching middle school and high school students about the history of the world.¹⁶

It is in this vein of dynamic progress that a partnership was formed between grades 7-12 social studies teachers and administrators in the Mt. Lebanon School District in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and experts in the Social Studies Education Program, Global Studies Center, and World History Center at the University of Pittsburgh, with the goal of creating a comprehensive, connective world history curriculum for grade 7 teachers and students. The purpose of this article is to detail the rather involved process of curriculum development by: 1) orienting the reader to the origins of the partnership; 2) summarizing the theoretical frameworks that informed curriculum development activities; 3) elaborating on the scope and sequence of the curriculum that was developed; 4) addressing challenges encountered by the curriculum development team throughout the partnership; 5) describing implementation of the curriculum and share data related impacts on students and teachers; and 6) suggesting next steps in the process.

Origins of the Partnership

In Fall 2013, we arranged a series of brainstorming meetings with Mt. Lebanon School District administrators and teachers to discuss the re-envisioning of the district's social studies course offerings, and to answer teachers' questions about scope and sequence of the proposed changes. There were three key reasons we selected the Mt. Lebanon School District (MTLSD) for this project. First, MTLSD is a nationally recognized, award-winning school system, regionally known for its commitment to strong social studies programs. We were confident that all participating teachers (100% highly qualified, according to Pennsylvania School Performance Profile data at <http://paschoolperformance.org>) possessed the skill sets and demonstrated the vision and flexibility necessary to operationalize what promised to be significant changes in the curriculum.

Secondly, it was our opinion that MTLSD is representative of a typical suburban school system found across the Midwest. In addition to seven elementary schools, the district is comprised of two middle schools and one high school that currently serve 2,932 students (Mellon Middle School student enrollment = 658, Jefferson Middle School student enrollment = 581, and Mt. Lebanon Senior High School student enrollment = 1,693). Demographically, these three schools are not as socioeconomically or culturally as diverse as those in neighboring districts. According to the Pennsylvania School Performance Profile, collectively, the student body of these three schools is 89.56% white ($n = 2,626$), 5% Asian ($n = 145$), about 2.32% Hispanic ($n = 68$), and 1.9% African American ($n = 55$). Additionally, 10.7% ($n = 313$) of students in these three schools are identified as economically disadvantaged, 1.5% ($n = 43$) are identified as English language learners, and 12.1% ($n = 355$) are receiving special education services. We understand these demographics limit how representative our findings are for all Pittsburgh-area schools. It should be noted, however, that the district's location (only a few miles from downtown Pittsburgh) and reputation for exceptional curriculum development and professional development support were conducive to the proposed design and scope of the pilot study.

Thirdly, MTLSD administrators were enthusiastic about the partnership. They arranged for us to meet, speak to, and collaborate

with social studies faculty at all three schools. They committed their support in the forms of release time and professional development hours for participating teachers, and some funding for necessary materials, resources, and supplies. As a result, MTLSD administrators, teachers, and University of Pittsburgh faculty were able to work together to plan curriculum development activities efficiently and effectively. As mentioned earlier, from our first series of meeting between university scholars and Mt. Lebanon teaching faculty, both parties expressed interest in and cited research that supports the movement away from typical Eurocentric, U.S.-centric, and Western Civilization-type frames. Both parties also conveyed a common interest in moving toward a more connective, truly global history of the world. Positive strides in these areas would invigorate the Mt. Lebanon history department, bring together high school teachers and university scholars, and further illuminate Mt. Lebanon as one of the most progressive schools in the region. “We’re a great school system,” one teacher opined, “and our community expects us to be leaders when it comes to stuff like this.”

Throughout those early meetings between university scholars and teaching faculty, teachers expressed a genuine, deep-seeded interest in challenging current, oftentimes compartmentalized and/or patronizing, approaches to world history. Several teachers voiced an interest in shifting the paradigm away from the type of teacher-centered, Western Civilization-centric manner in which world history had been presented to them when they were in high school. One teacher opined: “As it is, world history is taught as several disconnected parts of the world. We teach India. We teach China. We teach Europe. And there is seldom any connection between them.” Another teacher added: “Just about everything we teach is from an Americentric point of view. Even when we study the ancient world, it seems we are building toward the U.S. Manifest Destiny story.” Many could relate to the very predictable and regimented curriculum they had inherited: Ancient Egypt, Ancient India, Ancient China, etc., each taught in a series of disconnected silos, and each then trumped in content and importance by Ancient Greece and Rome. We also observed that these disconnected narratives seem to be purposed to establish the foundation for eventual U.S. superiority.

It should be noted that multiple teachers also referenced the inquiry arc of the C3 Framework issued by the National Council for Social

Studies (NCSS) in 2013. Those teachers discussed the potential in creating a curriculum that could improve their collective effort to ready students for college, career, and civic life as outlined by C3. Teachers and university scholars agreed that a more connective approach to world history would benefit students in all three areas. A dynamic, global thrust emphasizing connectivity across time and space, much like that of the Big History Project, would ready students for the comprehensive approaches of many university instructors. This connective approach would also help students consider an ever-shrinking world increasingly dominated by international business and commerce. Finally, learning about history in more connective global contexts would help students develop foundational knowledge to help them perceive themselves as responsible and active members of a global community.

After preliminary planning meetings with MTLSD administrators and the social studies department, we decided the pilot project would best fit the year-long 7th grade “History of Western Cultures” course precisely because it is one year long (rather than one semester like many high school courses). A focus on 7th grade would provide participating teachers with adequate time to become familiar with the new curriculum and to make what would amount to sweeping changes in content, schedule, and assessment strategies. MTLSD administrators also agreed this design would optimize effectiveness and teacher buy-in.

The Team and the Timeline

The core curriculum development team was made up of four veteran social studies teachers (two from each of the MTLSD middle schools), one social studies curriculum and methods expert, one global studies expert, and two world history scholars. Teaching experience varied among participants. One of the four social studies teachers had more than fifteen years of classroom experience. Two others had been teaching between ten and fifteen years, and one of the teachers had been teaching less than five years. All participants had taught the 7th grade History of Western Cultures class or a world history equivalent for at least one year, and all were expected to teach the new curriculum. Additionally, the social studies methods expert taught world history on the middle and high school levels for

over ten years. Curriculum development activities were to adhere to the following timeline:

- Fall 2013: Brainstorming meetings between university faculty and MTLSD administrators
- Spring 2014: Needs assessment and brainstorming meetings between university faculty and MTLSD Social Studies Department
- Fall 2014-Spring 2015: Curriculum development activities
- Fall 2015-Spring 2016: Implementation of new curriculum
- Fall 2016: Evaluate pilot year and make adjustments

Theoretical Frameworks

We framed our approach to developing the new 7th grade curriculum on the work of noted world history scholars and educators Bob Bain and Lauren McArthur Harris. Bain served as a consultant throughout curriculum development phase of this project, met with teachers multiple times, advised them on conceptualization of such an all-encompassing project, and served as a knowledgeable resource for both theoretical and practical questions. Harris, together with Bain, authored an article entitled “Pedagogical Content Knowledge for World History Teachers: What is It? How Might Prospective Teachers Develop It?” that provided a theoretical framework for our project.

Specifically, the Harris and Bain article provided a basis for how participating teachers were to think about, organize, and make meaning of historical phenomena and events.¹⁷ Their study informed our discussions on how to present content to students effectively using a “pedagogical history lab” approach. Teachers liked the idea of beginning the course with a series of exercises intended to teach students how to think historically. As a result, the first nine weeks was designated for skills development.

Next, we recognized that the vast amount of content covered in the average world history textbook could prove problematic¹⁸ to our intense emphasis on skills development, so we sought to identify a limited set of these skills (as well as content themes) on which to focus during the course of the year. These themes were driven by our overarching goal to ask big questions and frame big problems for the purpose of developing and practicing historical thinking skills.

We also sought a consistent approach to enable students to find, evaluate, and use various forms of evidence to develop informed interpretations and to produce reasonable accounts. Most of the new 7th grade course would continue to focus on the ancient world, therefore, this component would be made up of a variety of primary, secondary, and other sources.

The University of Pittsburgh Global Studies Center graciously provided resources and materials for teachers' background studies. These useful materials included copies of *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity*, by David Christian (2011); *Panorama: A World History*, by Ross Dunn and Laura Mitchell (2015); and *A Compact History of Humankind: The History of the World in Big Eras*, by Burke, Christian, and Dunn (2012). Teachers also used online resources from the Alliance for Learning in World History (<http://www.alliance.pitt.edu>); World History for Us All (<http://worldhistoryforusall.sdsu.edu>); and the Big History Project (<https://school.bighistoryproject.com/bhplive>).

A Connective World History Curriculum

During the 2014-2015 academic year, four participating MTLSD 7th grade teachers were given four full school days of release time to travel to the University of Pittsburgh, where they collaborated with experts in social studies curriculum and methods, global studies, and world history. Two of these workdays took place during the fall, and two during the spring, and each was designated for the collaborative development of one nine-week curriculum. Each collaboration day was the culmination of a period (generally a little over a month) during which participants were encouraged to brainstorm, develop content, and collect resources for the planned nine weeks. Each of these collaborative workdays generally comprised of a presentation by one or more of the experts, a subsequent question and answer session, curriculum development activities, and an online search for appropriate resources. Once the curriculum design for each of the nine weeks was developed, it was shared with participating teachers, who then reviewed it for accuracy and completeness.

By May, the team had completed the new curriculum and course, which they simply entitled "World History." The course was divided into the following four chronological periods:

World History

First 9 Weeks: 60,000 BCE - 2,000 BCE

OVERARCHING THEMES OF THE FIRST NINE WEEKS (Asking Big Questions & Framing Problems)

Introduction to human migration: Where did people move from or to during this time? Why would people want or need to move?

The geography of early civilizations: What role did physical geography play in the establishment of early civilizations?

Establishment, expansion, and evolution of civilizations: How did human beings learn to live all over the planet? What were the similar characteristics of early civilizations?



HISTORICAL THINKING & CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

- Understand and develop narrative explanations of history and the world.
- Identify quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources.
- Recognize and explore cause and effect relationships.
- Develop explanations and make arguments.

FIND, EVALUATE, AND USE EVIDENCE, DEVELOP INFORMED INTERPRETATIONS, AND PRODUCE REASONABLE ACCOUNTS

- Find and evaluate sources on global migration patterns.
- Locate early civilizations on a world map. Compare and contrast their physical locations and related characteristics.
- Describe, compare, and contrast early civilizations in terms of agrarian life, means of sustenance, and establishment of government.

Figure 1: *1st Nine Weeks – Establishment & Expansion of Civilizations (60,000 BCE-2,000 BCE)*

1st Nine Weeks – Establishment & Expansion of Civilizations (60,000 BCE-2,000 BCE)

2nd Nine Weeks – Emergence of Governments & Belief Systems (2,000 BCE-500 BCE)

3rd Nine Weeks – Age of Empires (500 BCE-650 CE)

4th Nine Weeks – Age of Global Interconnectivity (650 CE-1,400 CE)

These chronological divisions were the recommendations of contributing scholars from the World History Center at the University of Pittsburgh. Each nine weeks curriculum and associated subdivisions (content emphases and skills emphases) is included in the following pages.

1st Nine Weeks Establishment & Expansion of Civilizations (60,000 BCE-2,000 BCE)

According to the history scholars' rationale, while the 1st nine weeks covers a vast amount of time (60,000 BCE-2,000 BCE), such a timeframe allows teachers to emphasize skills development while establishing "Big History-like" connections relating to our common origins, motivations, and developments. These 1st nine weeks therefore center on an introduction to human migration, the emergence of agrarian society, geography (particularly of river valleys) of early civilizations, and the growth of these early civilizations. The curriculum for the 1st nine weeks is summarized in **Figure 1**.

In working with students to develop answers for these and similar questions, teachers emphasize particular skills development in understanding narrative, qualifying evidence, recognizing cause and effect relationships, developing historical explanations, and making historical arguments. Big questions, content foci, and skills emphases for the 1st nine weeks are outlined below.

1st Nine Weeks: Content Emphases

- 1.1. Introduction to human migration: Where did people move from/to during this time? Why would people want/need to move?
 - a. Describe human experiences during Neolithic times.
 - b. Describe the lives and experiences of hunter-gatherers.

- c. Discuss and analyze factors that impacted and/or caused human movement during this time.
 - d. Explore humans' abilities to adapt to new surroundings, climates, and environments.
- 1.2. River valleys – The geography of early civilizations: What role did physical geography play in the establishment of early civilizations?
 - a. Describe physical characteristics of river valleys around the world.
 - b. Demonstrate understanding of physical geography phenomena that create favorable environments for the development of civilizations.
 - c. Demonstrate skills related to spatial orientation of the world's river valleys and early civilizations.
 - d. Explain basic understandings of human/environment interaction during this time.
- 1.3. Establishment, expansion, and evolution of civilizations: How did human beings learn to live all over the planet? What were the similar characteristics of early civilizations (particularly in Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia [India], Southwest Asia, East Asia [China], and Mesoamerica)?
 - a. Explore early civilizations from around the world, investigate them in terms of government, stable food supply, social developments, types and specializations of labor, and emergence of culture.
 - b. Compare and contrast early civilizations in Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia (India), Southwest Asia, East Asia (China), and Mesoamerica.
 - c. Plot and explain movement of humans, ideas, and resources during this time.
 - d. Contemplate and discuss how these early civilizations relate to us today.

1st Nine Weeks: Historical Thinking Skills Emphases

S.1.1. Understanding and developing narrative explanations of history and the world:

- a. Explain how the Neolithic Revolution led to the development of agrarian societies.
- b. Explain how agrarian societies led to the development of complex civilizations.
- c. Explain and analyze how complex civilizations interacted with others to create a modern world.
- d. Describe the “story of us” (a general explanation of the origins of human civilization).

S.1.2. Identifying quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources:

- a. Summarize and compare how different historical sources are used to explain events during this time.
- b. Generate questions about multiple historical sources and their relationships to particular historical events and developments.
- c. Use information about a historical source, including the maker, date, place of origin, intended audience, and purpose to judge the extent to which the source is useful for studying a particular topic.
- d. Detect possible limitations in historical records and sources.

S.1.3. Recognizing and exploring cause and effect relationships:

- a. Explain probable causes and effects of migration and civil developments.
- b. Explain multiple causes and effects of migration and civil developments.
- c. Use evidence to develop claims about this time.



World History

Second 9 Weeks: 2,000 BCE - 500 BCE

SECOND NINE WEEKS OVERARCHING THEMES (Asking Big Questions & Framing Problems)

Movement of people, resources, and ideas: What developments in transportation and technology emerged during this time and how did these advances affect human communication and interaction?

The emergence of governments: How did people begin to govern themselves during this time? What characteristics of early government may be seen in today's world.

The emergence of belief systems: How did human beings begin trying to understand the nature of the universe and their world? How did religions emerge around the world?



HISTORICAL THINKING & CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Understanding and developing narrative explanations of history and the world.

Identifying quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources.

Recognizing and exploring cause and effect relationships.

Developing explanations and making arguments.

Recognizing perspective and frames of reference.

FINDING, EVALUATING & USING EVIDENCE, DEVELOPING INFORMED INTERPRETATIONS & PRODUCING

Finding and evaluating informational sources on technological developments and innovations.

Using various resources to identify and compare early forms of government, and to connect relevant characteristics to today.

Exploring, comparing, and contrasting early creation myths and religious practices. Describe relevant cultural similarities and differences that emerged during this time.

Figure 2: 2nd Nine Weeks – Emergence of Governments & Belief Systems (2,000 BCE-500 BCE)

S.1.4. Developing explanations and making arguments about the past:

- a. Use available resources to support evidence about migration and the establishment of civilizations.
- b. Make argument about why people migrated and established civilizations as they did.
- c. Explain how the study of these civilizations relates to today.

2nd Nine Weeks – Emergence of Governments & Belief Systems (2,000 BCE-500 BCE)

While the 2nd nine weeks covers considerably less chronological time (only about 1,500 years as opposed to more than 50,000 years), focus deepens considerably into the movement of people, resources, and ideas. Students begin to consider technological advances and means and modes of transportation that connected people from different regions. They also study the emergence of governments and similarities in belief systems. The 2nd nine weeks curriculum may be seen in **Figure 2**.

As students' investigative focus intensifies, so too does the complexity of the "big questions." During these nine weeks, teachers further engage students in finding and evaluating informational sources on these technological developments and innovations. They employ various resources to facilitate students' analysis of early forms of government, connecting relevant characteristics to today, and they compare and contrast early creation myths and religious practices. Big questions, content foci, and skills emphases for the 2nd nine weeks are outlined below.

2nd Nine Weeks: Content Emphases

- 2.1. Transportation – Movement of people, resources, and ideas: What developments in transportation emerged during this time and how did these advances affect human communication and interaction?
- a. Describe various developments and innovations in transportation that contributed to the movement of people and the exchange of resources and ideas.

- b. Describe how advances in transportation served to advance and connect civilizations.
- 2.2. The emergence of governments: How did people begin to govern themselves during this time? What characteristics of early government may be seen in today's world?
 - a. Describe the basic types of government that emerged from this time.
 - b. Infer how some characteristics of ancient governments are no longer practiced while others continue.
- 2.3. The emergence of belief systems: How did human beings begin trying to understand the nature of the universe and their world? How did religions emerge in Saharan and Sub-Saharan Africa, Southwest Asia, South Asia (India), East Asia (China), and Mesoamerica?
 - a. Investigate early creation myths and religious practices, and identify similarities and differences.
 - b. Describe various cultural traits and characteristics that emerged around the world during this time.

2nd Nine Weeks: Historical Thinking Skills Emphases

- S.2.1. Understanding and developing narrative explanations of history and the world:
 - a. Define key terms (including transportation, tool, technology) in context.
 - b. Explain how developments in transportation increased and expedited human movement and led to interaction between civilizations.
 - c. Explain how belief systems emerged during this time.
 - d. Explain and analyze how increasingly complex civilizations interacted with others to create a modern world.
 - e. Describe the “story of us” (a general explanation of the progress human civilization).

S.2.2. Identifying quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources:

- a. Explore and consider various sources in the development of understanding of transportation innovations of the time.
- b. Investigate various sources to describe early forms of government.
- c. Compare and contrast various emerging religions.

S.2.3. Recognizing and exploring cause and effect relationships:

- a. Explain probable causes and effects of exchange of resources and ideas.
- b. Explain multiple causes and effects of the development of governments.
- c. Use evidence to develop claims about beliefs of the day for the origins of the earth and nature of human existence.

S.2.4. Developing explanations and making arguments about the past:

- a. Use available resources to support evidence about societal advancements that resulted from increased transportation.
- b. Explain how governments emerged simultaneously around the world.
- c. Make argument about why people developed beliefs and belief systems as they did.
- d. Explain how the study of these civilizations relates to today.

S.2.5. Recognizing perspective and frames of reference:

- a. Analyze primary and secondary informational sources for evidence of perspective.
- b. Compare and contrast early belief structures and historical explanations of the earth's origin and nature.



World History

Third 9 Weeks: 500 BCE - 650 CE

THIRD NINE WEEKS OVERARCHING THEMES (Asking Big Questions & Framing Problems)

Age of Empires: How did various civilizations rise and fall during this time? How did empires around the world create culture through language, commerce, currency, architecture, technology, and belief systems?

Establishment of Modern Governments: What are some common and distinct characteristics or qualities of governments and leaders during this time? What qualities were valued by those in power? What made leaders successful? How do the governments and leaders of this time compare and contrast to those of today?

Establishment of Modern Belief Systems: What are some common and distinct characteristics or qualities of religions that emerged during this time? How were various religions related, and what impact did interconnection and collaboration have upon their development? How do the religions of this time compare and contrast to those of today?



HISTORICAL THINKING & CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Finding and evaluating informational sources on the emergence and development of empires, systems of government, and belief systems.

Identifying and tracing the growth of empires on a world map, comparing and contrasting their physical locations and related characteristics.

Finding and evaluating informational sources on various leaders of the time.

Identifying and tracing the growth of belief systems on a world map, comparing and contrasting their characteristics.

FINDING, EVALUATING & USING EVIDENCE, DEVELOPING INFORMED INTERPRETATIONS & PRODUCING

Understanding and developing narrative and biographical explanations of history and the world.

Identifying quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources.

Recognizing and exploring cause and effect relationships.

Developing explanations and making arguments about emerging modern governments and religions.

Figure 3: *3rd Nine Weeks – Age of Empires (500 BCE-650 CE)*

- c. Compare and contrast modern interpretations of ancient governmental ideas and designs.
- d. Understand presentism and how it impacts our views of the past.

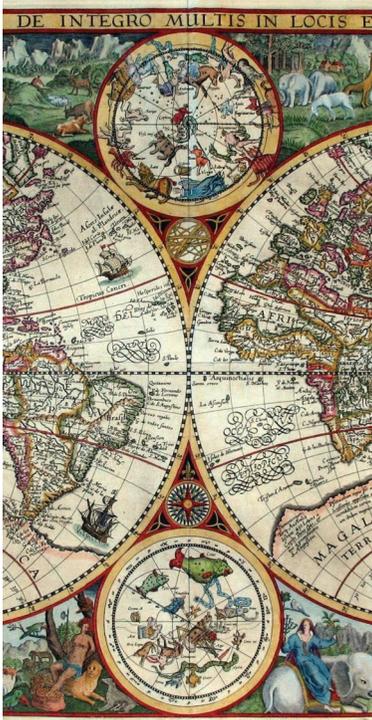
3rd Nine Weeks – Age of Empires (500 BCE-650 CE)

The third nine weeks includes study of the further development of world religions and their impacts on trade, transportation, commerce, and exchange of ideas. At this point in the year, many of the skills students have learned in the 1st and 2nd nine weeks are reinforced with similar (although deeper) investigations. **Figure 3** features the 3rd nine weeks curriculum.

As complexities of students' investigative study continue to intensify, teachers work to further development students' abilities to recognize cause and effect relationships and to make connective associations between culture, language, commerce, currency, architecture, technology, and belief systems. Teachers also facilitate students' evaluation of various passages of related text. They employ various resources to facilitate students' analysis of civilization growth as a result of empire expansion, and for the first time in the year, they analyze and evaluate the contributions of various individuals during this time. The 3rd nine weeks' content emphases are outlined below.

3rd Nine Weeks: Content Emphases

- 3.1. Age of Empires: How did various civilizations rise and fall during this time? How did empires around the world create culture through language, commerce, currency, architecture, technology, and belief systems?
 - a. Analyze the causes and effects of thriving and declining civilizations.
 - b. Analyze the relationships between culture, language, commerce, currency, architecture, technology, and belief systems.
- 3.2. Establishment of Modern Governments: What are some common and distinct characteristics or qualities of governments



World History

Fourth 9 Weeks: 650 BCE - 1400 CE

FOURTH NINE WEEKS OVERARCHING THEMES (Asking Big Questions & Framing Problems)

Global Interconnectivity: What trade and transportation technologies emerged and led to interconnectivity of economies, governments, cultures, and beliefs systems around the world? What historical events and eras emerged from and/or contributed to these developments, and how did these events and eras impact various civilizations around the world? What groups and individuals can be examined to compare and contrast these advancements and their implications in various parts of the world?



HISTORICAL THINKING & CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS

Understanding and developing narrative and biographical explanations of history and the world.

Identifying quality evidence by evaluating primary, secondary, and other sources.

Recognizing and exploring cause and effect relationships.

Developing explanations and making arguments about emerging modern economies and cultures.

FINDING, EVALUATING & USING EVIDENCE, DEVELOPING INFORMED INTERPRETATIONS & PRODUCING

Finding and evaluating informational sources on the emergence and development of trade and transportation technologies.

Identifying and tracing the growth of economic systems and cultures on a world map, comparing and contrasting their patterns of development and related characteristics.

Finding and evaluating informational sources on various groups and individuals of the time.

Figure 4: *4th Nine Weeks – Age of Global Interconnectivity (650 CE-1,400 CE)*

and leaders during this time? What qualities were valued by those in power? What made leaders successful? How do the governments and leaders of this time compare and contrast to those of today?

- a. Distinguish between various types of government.
- b. Compare and contrast leaders from different civilizations at the time.
- c. Describe how those early forms of government have influenced governments of today.

3.3. Establishment of Modern Belief Systems: What are some common and distinct characteristics or qualities of religions that emerged during this time? How were various religions related, and what impact did interconnection and collaboration have upon their development? How do the religions of this time compare and contrast to those of today?

- a. Distinguish between various types of belief.
- b. Compare and contrast elements of belief structures at the time, including text.
- c. Describe how those early forms of religion have influenced beliefs of today.

4th Nine Weeks – Age of Global Interconnectivity (650 CE-1,400 CE)

The 4th nine weeks is not only comprised of a bank of new content, but it is also a culmination of previous content and skills students have learned throughout the year. Unlike previous nine weeks periods, however, teachers' primary focus is on facilitating students' synthesis of overarching themes of the course under the inclusive title "Global Interconnectivity." The 4th nine weeks curriculum is summarized in **Figure 4**.

Along with new content and intensified practice and development of historical thinking skills, the 4th nine weeks provides students with opportunities to: 1) connect what they have learned across chronological space; 2) connect progress and historical phenomena across cultures around the world; 3) construct meaning across both

community and individual levels; and 4) hypothesize how those advancements and other phenomena would impact later generations and times. The 4th nine weeks' content emphases are outlined below.

4th Nine Weeks: Content Emphases

- 4.1. Global Interconnectivity: What trade and transportation technologies emerged and led to interconnectivity of economies, governments, cultures, and beliefs systems around the world? What historical events and eras emerged from and/or contributed to these developments, and how did these events and eras impact various civilizations around the world? What groups and individuals can be examined to compare and contrast these advancements and their implications in various parts of the world?
- a. Interrelate trade and transportation advances in various societies around the world.
 - b. Explain how advances in transportation led to greater interconnectivity between peoples.
 - c. Compare and contrast the contributions of various individuals and groups who impacted the global community in positive and negative ways.
 - b. Appraise the advances of people at this time and consider how those advances have impacted today.

Implementation

Over the course of the 2014-2015 academic year, participating teachers and the social studies curriculum specialist devoted no less than forty-five face-to-face hours to identifying and reviewing recent research, collaborating on curriculum development, and identifying necessary resources and materials for implementation of the World History course. Face-to-face time was also enriched by the global studies expert and world history scholars, each of whom provided critical guidance to curriculum development and recommended resources. The global studies expert even secured funds to purchase some of these resources for teachers. Among those valuable resources were copies of *A Compact History of Humankind*:

The History of the World in Big Eras (Burke, Christian, and Dunn, 2012); *This Fleeting World: A Short History of Humanity* (Christian, 2015); and *Panorama: A World History* (Dunn and Mitchell, 2015).

In terms of curriculum and pedagogical efficacy, teachers, university scholars, and MTLSD administrators agreed that the products of our collaborative efforts were comprehensive, and that our goals were both achievable and sustainable. Measures were put in place to gauge these sentiments. Teachers are implementing the World History curriculum during the 2015-2016 academic year, and while they are expected to cover the curriculum as outlined in each corresponding nine-week period, we purposefully left the manners in which they do this to each individual. One critical component of the team and developmental process was validating and drawing upon the pedagogical expertise of participating teachers. While we all came together to outline the curriculum and craft a schedule for the academic year, we all knew success hinged on the buy-in of our participating teachers.

Regarding assessment of the effectiveness of the World History curriculum, the team is utilizing a pre-test/post-test to gauge its immediate impact. In addition to this data, we have asked teachers to reflect upon how they introduce, teach, and assess each component throughout the year. Teachers will submit their notes and be interviewed near the end of the academic year. In the meantime, the open-ended pre-test, which is included below, was administered to students at the beginning of the 2015-2016 academic year. It includes the following questions:

1. List and describe three characteristics that are present in all civilizations.
2. List and describe the four types of government.
3. How has geography impacted the development of civilizations?
4. List three ancient religions and describe how they have impacted systems of belief today.
5. Why do we study primary sources such as photographs, artifacts, or written text?
6. List three river valleys where early civilizations developed.

7. What was your favorite history lesson we had this year? Tell me why you liked it so much.
8. What was your least favorite history lesson we had this year? Tell me why you didn't like it.
9. Tell me the history of the world in one paragraph (ten sentences or less).

Students will receive this list again near the end of the academic year.

Challenges and Next Steps

Over the course of the year, the World History curriculum development team encountered several challenges that should be noted. Of course, the release time was valuable, and all participants agree that although we could not have completed curriculum development activities without it, it still was not enough time to adequately exhaust all resources. Curriculum development is hard work, and it is made harder when members of the team must divide their attention between creating a new product and successfully and effectively teaching the old one.

Of course, funding was also an issue. Aside from the gracious support of the University of Pittsburgh Global Studies Center, which is not to be discounted, there was little or no funding for this project. In fact, it should be noted that all team members devoted their time to this project with knowledge that there would be no significant funds to assure implementation or compensation for development work. The Pitt Global Studies Center provided funds for teachers' release time, visits to campus, resources, and materials. They recognized the critical value of our work, and we could not have developed this curriculum without their financial and moral support.

In addition to time and funding challenges, we were confronted with unknown expectations at the district level. Participating teachers were apprehensive about how the curriculum would be received by MTLSD administrators, and on numerous occasions, they voiced concerns about the language included in the curriculum, how it would appear in the classroom, who would be evaluating their teaching of it, and when those evaluations would occur. Would MTLSD administrators see the finished product as a new set of assessable standards? Would they require a standard assessment

to be developed and implemented as well? These and related questions increased as we neared the end of curriculum development activities. Indeed, administrators were interested in compelling the team to develop an accompanying set of formative and summative assessments, however, such tools have not been created to date.

Looking forward, we are enthusiastic about next steps of this project. Of course, we will continue to seek funding to expand the project. We will monitor the implementation of the curriculum throughout the 2015-2016 academic year by way of classroom observations, teachers' reflections, and peer (participating teachers) discussions. These data along with the pre-test/post-test will be analyzed, reported, and used to make necessary adjustments to the World History curriculum.

Conclusion

As mentioned earlier, curriculum development is hard work, and as our experience detailed, future activities will be prefaced by several questions: What can we learn from a year of implementation? When and how will effectiveness be assessed? How will changes be recommended and made? What measures of support from administrators and scholars will be available in coming years, and how sustainable is this curriculum? These and similar questions will guide us. For now, we will monitor the implementation of our curriculum. In doing so, we plan to focus on not only observable successes, but also areas of challenge and need for continued growth.

In a larger social context, all project participants recognize the value of what we came together to accomplish, and we see the value of our contribution for history and social studies education in general. We agree that social studies teachers bear unique responsibilities in the reconceptualization of identity and human interaction. We value peace education and conflict resolution, we support and facilitate the development of students' empathy for their fellow human beings, and we promote study of the roles and responsibilities of groups and individuals in the global community. We believe one way to promote these agendas and to create positive change in history education is to decentralize the West in our study of the past in middle school and high school social studies classrooms. We feel our curriculum is a step in the right direction.

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SHERIFF SAL



AT THE STAGE COACH DEPOT, IN RED DOG, AS SHERIFF SAL AWAITS THE MORNING STAGE...

BUT, SAL, YOU **MUST** QUIT THE SHERIFF JOB! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS! ESPECIALLY NOW, WITH THAT BANDIT RAWHIDE PETERS AND HIS GANG TERRORIZING THE TERRITORY!

DON'T WORRY, FLASH! I CAN TAKE CARE OF MYSELF... **AND** PETERS, TOO!

I LOVE YOU, SAL, AND I WOULDN'T WANT ANYTHING TO HAPPEN! PETERS IS DANGEROUS! PLEASE QUIT!

OH! FLASH, I-- **LOOK!** HERE COMES THE STAGE, AND SOMETHING SEEMS TO BE WRONG!!

