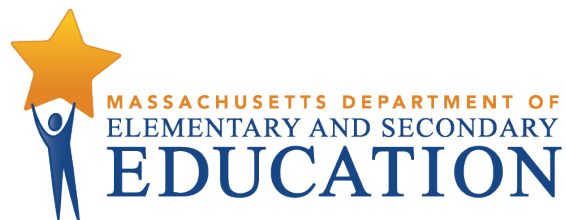


# Investigating History

## Design Specifications



**PRIMARY  
SOURCE**  
Educating global citizens



College of Education  
and Human Development



**Boston University** Wheelock College of Education  
& Human Development

## Introduction

In 2020, the [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education](#) (DESE) funded the creation of a comprehensive history and social science curriculum for grades 5-7, which was constructed by [Primary Source](#) in partnership with the [University of Massachusetts Boston](#) and [Boston University](#). The design team worked closely with the [DESE History/Social Science Team](#) and collaborated with Massachusetts teachers, educational leaders, and scholars at local institutions such as the Museum of Fine Arts, Harvard University's museums, the Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston University's African Studies Center and Center for the Study of Asia. This led to an open source curriculum that provides teachers with high quality, dynamic, and inclusive teaching materials that align with the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework. This Curriculum Design Specifications document outlines the design team's collective classroom vision, describing what history and social science learning should look like for all students, and describes its alignment with the latest research on teaching and learning in history and social science education.

## Guiding Principles

The Guiding Principles found in the 2018 Massachusetts [History and Social Science Curriculum Framework](#) provide a foundation for this curriculum project. They state that an effective history and social science education teaches students about the legacy of democratic government; incorporates diverse perspectives; teaches students to think historically; integrates knowledge from many fields of study; builds students' capacities for research, reasoning, making logical arguments, and thinking for themselves; increases students' content knowledge; incorporates the study of current events and news/media literacy; teaches students to use digital tools for research and presentation; and develops social and emotional skills. This project is specifically guided by the "Three Pillars" of the 2018 Framework, which comprise content standards, standards for history and social science practices, and literacy standards for history and social science.

**Pillar 1: Standards for History and Social Science Practice** encompass civic knowledge, dispositions, and skills and reflect the range of disciplinary skills often used by historians, political scientists, economists, geographers, and citizens. The seven practices encompass the processes of inquiry and research that are integral to a rich and robust social science curriculum and the foundation for active and responsible citizenship.

**Pillar 2: Content Standards** are designed to include this breadth of knowledge, not as isolated facts to be simply memorized, but as useable knowledge to be integrated into an understanding of the world. They build on the knowledge and skills learned in previous years and are organized to provide a coherent progression of knowledge about history, geography, civics, and economics to support students' capacity to read with understanding in the elementary and middle grades.

**Pillar 3: Literacy Standards for History and Social Science** outline how learning civics, geography, history, and economics is dependent on and contributes to strong literacy skills, containing standards for reading informational texts, writing, speaking, and listening. Effective history and social science instruction unites significant content with strong literacy practice.

## Vision for Learning

In building this curriculum, anchored in the 2018 Massachusetts History and Social Science Framework, the project team’s vision is centered in a stance that history and social science learning should be grounded in the practices of inquiry and investigation; support students’ meaning-making in culturally affirming and critical ways; deepen insight into human connections and develop historical empathy; and connect the past to the contemporary world.

The project team’s stance about history and social science learning, teaching, and professional growth are embodied in our design specifications, which explain how the vision laid out in the 2018 Framework can come to life in the classroom. They answer the question of how a curriculum can provide an effective history and social science education for every student. These design specifications are organized into two parts: a description of the desired **instructional methods** and specifications for the **curricular materials**. We view these parts as overlapping and interconnected; the instructional methods describe the underlying pedagogical concepts that guide the design of the curricular materials used by teachers.

## Instructional Methods

Our approach to instruction connects four essential concepts: inquiry and investigation, culturally affirming pedagogies, human connections, and current world and civic engagement. These four essential concepts cannot be separated, and no concept is more important than another; high-quality history and social science classrooms must focus on all four interconnected concepts continually and simultaneously.

### INQUIRY AND INVESTIGATION

#### What do we mean by inquiry and investigation?

In history and social science education, there has been an important shift toward inquiry-based learning. Decades of research shows that didactic methods of instruction rarely engage students in complex tasks that lead to deeper knowledge and understanding (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008). In contrast, there are significant benefits for students when classrooms are organized around “driving questions that lead students to encounter central concepts or principles, focused on a constructive investigation that involves inquiry and knowledge building, ... focusing on problems that occur in the real world and that people care about” (Darling-Hammond et al., 2008, p. 35).

Within social studies education, inquiry is often defined as “asking questions, gathering and evaluating relevant evidence, and reaching conclusions based on that evidence” (Barton & Levstik, 2004, p. 188). Inquiries involve developing questions and planning, applying disciplinary tools and concepts, evaluating sources and using evidence, and communicating conclusions and taking informed action (National Council for the Social Studies, 2013). Investigation, while related to inquiry, is a much broader concept that represents the processes that students engage in when they craft interpretations and arguments about the past or present based on rich and varied sources, artifacts, art, music, and stories (Jewett, 2007; Swan et al., 2008). Social studies teachers have long used questioning in their classroom; however, it is important to draw a distinction between the questions used to help scaffold students’ day-to-day investigations in the history and social science classroom and the questions that focus on the larger problems and issues found in and across the academic disciplines (Grant, 2013). In this curriculum, the *supporting questions* for each lesson cluster scaffold students’ specific investigations, while larger *essential questions* for the units aim at ultimately developing their enduring understandings—larger ideas about history and the social sciences and the wider world around them.

There is evidence that investigation and inquiry-based learning can help students develop historical and social science thinking (Barton & Avery, 2016; Lévesque, 2008; Wineburg, 2001). Moreover, inquiry-based learning can engage students in challenging and adding complexity to simplified historical narratives that often leave out the experiences and perspectives of non-dominant groups (Blevins et al., 2020; Blevins & Salinas, 2012; Crowley & King, 2018; Martell & Stevens, 2021; Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Salinas et al., 2012). Ultimately, an inquiry-based approach can help learning transcend the classroom. The skills and mindsets developed through

inquiry, when questions and sources are intentionally selected, can foster students' abilities to actively participate in democratic citizenship (Barton & Avery, 2016; Barton & Levstik, 2004; Hess, 2009; Journell, 2016; Lévesque, 2008) and to work to strengthen justice (Blevins et al., 2020; Blevins & Salinas, 2012; Crowley & King, 2018; Martell & Stevens, 2021; Salinas & Blevins, 2014; Salinas et al., 2012).

**In this curriculum, the instructional methods center inquiry-based learning and questioning that leads to investigations with authentic source materials.**

- Instructional materials support students in actively making sense of ideas (rather than simply reproducing others' ideas), drawing upon their own perspectives and experiences, as well as their sense of wonder and curiosity.
- Instructional materials ask students to develop focused questions or problem statements and conduct inquiries (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 2); Instructional materials expose students to different levels of questions: (i.e. factual questions, analytical questions [causal, explanatory, evaluative], universal questions), with some questions being asked at the individual lesson level (micro questions) and others being continuously asked across a unit or units (macro questions).
- Instructional materials ask students to organize information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 3).
- Instructional materials ask students to analyze the purpose and point of view of sources (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 4), requiring them to evaluate the credibility, accuracy, and relevance of sources (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 5).
- Instructional materials engage students in the process of argumentation, which involves making claims rooted in history and the social sciences; seeking, organizing, and weighing information and data from multiple primary and secondary sources; supporting claims with evidence; and explaining conclusions using valid reasoning and evidence (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 6).
- Instructional materials develop students' civic knowledge, skills, and dispositions (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 1) and capacity to take informed action, as appropriate (Standards for History and Social Science Practice 7).
- Curriculum units are built around essential questions that focus on enduring understandings and guide students' inquiry questions.
- Curriculum units involve inquiry cycles related to key disciplinary concepts that involve interpreting an event or exploring a problem, connecting the event or problem to prior knowledge, generating initial interpretations or stances, gathering evidence and constructing an argument, seeking new evidence and modifying that argument as appropriate, and developing questions that lead to further inquiry; throughout the unit, students have opportunities to do this work individually, in small groups, and as a full class.

## CULTURALLY AFFIRMING PEDAGOGIES

### What do we mean by culturally affirming pedagogies?

In history and social science education, there has been an important acknowledgement that curricular materials have not affirmed the identities of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and Asian American students (Banks, 1994, 2002, 2004; Ladson-Billings, 2003, 2014; Paris & Alim, 2017), and in many cases, curriculum has caused harm to students by embedding and replicating racist ideas (Brown & Brown, 2010, 2011; Howard, 2003b; Ladson-Billings, 2003; Nelson & Pang, 2006). Students from other nondominant groups, including women, poor and working class students, immigrant students, queer students, and students with religious faiths other than Christianity have also experienced curriculum that is not affirming to their identities and may also cause harm by perpetuating oppression (Agarwal-Rangnath et al., 2016; Au, 2009; Martell & Stevens, 2021; Sleeter, 2011; Wade, 2007). When teaching is disconnected from students' cultural backgrounds, there are negative impacts on their academic achievement (Sleeter, 2011, 2012), as well as their development of civic skills and dispositions (Journell & Castro, 2011; Levinson, 2010). In contrast, when curriculum is connected to the backgrounds of students from nondominant groups, there is evidence of increased academic engagement, improved academic outcomes, and a better sense of self and increased agency within their communities (Sleeter, 2011, 2012). Moreover, there is strong evidence that students from dominant groups also benefit from culturally affirming curriculum because it increases their perceptions of racial and cultural commonalities and differences among groups, helps them better understand the role of race and racism in society, and leads to increased engagement in the content being studied (Sleeter, 2011, 2012).

Instead, history and social science curriculum must be humanizing (Brown, 2013; King, 2015) and culturally affirming (Oto & Chikkatur, 2019), which is an umbrella term that we used to describe the separate concepts of culturally responsive (Epstein et al., 2011; Gay, 1975, 1978, 2000; Muhammad, 2020; Warren, 2018), culturally relevant (Howard, 2003a; Ladson-Billings, 1995a, 1995b, 2001; Martell, 2013, 2018) and culturally sustaining (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Martell & Stevens, 2019; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014) pedagogies. Culturally affirming curriculum aims to increase students' academic success, nurture and support students' cultural competencies, develop students' sociopolitical and critical consciousness, and empower students to define, redefine, and sustain their own cultures (Ladson-Billings, 2014; Martell & Stevens, 2019; Oto & Chikkatur, 2019; Paris, 2012; Paris & Alim, 2014).

Students should understand the development of and ways that groups have resisted racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, heteronormativity and homophobia, and discrimination and violence toward Muslims, Jews, Sikhs, and other faiths. Curricular materials should not only present how individuals and groups faced oppression, but also show the agency of those groups by centering their narratives related to their communities' survival, resistance, joy, and excellence. The curriculum should center and amplify nondominant group's experiences in ways that are asset-based and avoid essentializing (Santiago, 2019; Santiago & Castro, 2019) and not frame their communities around otherness (Hong & Halvorsen, 2010; Osborn, 2017, 2018). Students should have opportunities to learn about their own cultures or "mirrors," but also other peoples' cultures, or "windows," in ways that are asset-based and affirming (Bishop, 1990;

Sibbett & Au, 2018), as it helps develop their own socioemotional learning, as well as their ability to participate in a multicultural society.

**In this curriculum, the instructional methods are rooted in culturally affirming pedagogies that support the development of students' academic achievement, sociopolitical awareness, and cultural competence.**

- Instructional materials challenge the traditional presentation of history and the social science as a singular narrative from that of dominant groups; instead, instructional materials amplify non-dominant groups' experiences and include their voices within, or as a challenge to, mainstream narratives. Instructional materials explicitly include the experiences and agency of non-dominant groups, such as people of color, women, poor and working class, immigrant, queer people, and people with religious faiths other than Christianity.
- Instructional materials develop students' sociopolitical awareness, linked to civic dispositions, by examining issues of power, equity, and justice in the past and present, allowing them to make evidence-based arguments regarding important historical and current events.
- Instructional materials include multiple authentic sources and artifacts from different cultural, linguistic, and social groups that present a diversity of narratives; Instructional materials help students see how and why certain voices may be missing or marginalized in the historical and social science record.
- Instructional materials include sources and artifacts that do not essentialize groups or present groups as monolithic, but instead show the diversity, fluidity, and complexity found within groups.
- Instructional materials include opportunities for students to gain a deep understanding and appreciation for their cultures of origin (mirrors) and other cultures (windows) that goes beyond celebration and works toward cultural fluency.
- Instructional materials provide opportunities to critique social norms and values, and challenge the status quo and institutions that have created and maintained inequities throughout history and the present.
- Instructional materials provide opportunities for students to define and re-define their own cultures, while recognizing that all students belong to multiple cultural communities.
- Instructional materials bridge classroom learning to students' families and communities outside of school and encourages students to describe times and places in their world related to the history or social science concepts that they are learning.
- Instructional materials develop students' understanding of concepts such as race, ethnicity, culture, gender, gender identity, and sexual orientation, and facilitate teachers' and students' engagement in honest and informed academic discussions about prejudice, racism, and bigotry in the past and present.
- Curriculum units support students by including opportunities to deeply explore cultures beyond their current realm of familiarity, encountering both differences and connections and enlarging their sense of what is possible in human societies.
- Instructional materials provide flexibility and choice to students related to the process, content, and product of their learning, encouraging teachers to notice and leverage

students' diverse sensemaking contributions throughout the inquiry process, rather than expecting students to contribute in narrow or prescribed ways.

## HUMAN CONNECTIONS

### What do we mean by human connections?

There is a growing awareness that the history and social science classroom should foster stronger human connections (Blanchard et al., 1999; Johnson, 2006). Students must not only develop their academic knowledge, understanding, and skills, but have chances to develop their values and judgements about the past and present (Brooks, 2011; Cunningham, 2007, 2009; Endacott & Brooks, 2013). Furthermore, students should develop a sense of place within their communities (Danker, 2003, 2005; Martell & Stevens, 2021), while also gaining a respect and appreciation for others' communities and how their communities and other communities are inextricably linked (Blanchard et al., 1999). Simultaneously, students should be able to understand the interconnectedness of their local communities with other communities around the globe (Merryfield, 1998; Merryfield, 2002).

At the same time, some history or social science topics may evoke strong negative emotional responses from students, especially if they relate to inhumanity and violence; teachers must take special care when guiding students through these topics (Gross & Terra, 2018; Jones, 2020; van der Valk, 2018). Teachers must never avoid teaching "hard history" or confronting injustices in the present, but instead should approach this content in an honest yet age-appropriate way (Gross & Terra, 2018; Patterson & Shuttleworth, 2020; van der Valk, 2018). Teachers must also teach students to critically assess the consequences of human actions and choices and help them realize that people who experienced traumatic events in the past and present have agency and engage in acts of resistance (Gibbs & Papoi, 2020; Jones, 2020). Finally, teachers should center healing-informed pedagogies for those students who have experienced trauma in their own lives (Kokka, 2019; Stanton, 2019). A healing-centered approach views trauma as not solely an isolated individual experience, but something experienced collectively, positing that communities must have spaces to process and heal from historical and present trauma together.

Students should have opportunities to engage in regular perspective-taking activities (Foster & Yeager, 1998; Foster et al., 2001; Gehlbach et al., 2008), which can lead to the development of historical empathy (Brooks, 2009, 2011; Cunningham, 2007, 2009; Endacott, 2014; Endacott & Brooks, 2013; Kohlmeier, 2006), civic empathy (Andolina & Conklin, in press; Mirra, 2018), geographic empathy (Gregg & Leinhardt, 1994; James, 1962), and economic empathy (Obeng-Odoom, 2019; Shanks, 2019). Whether students are examining the past or present, their thinking should be like the reduction of a puzzle, "rendering of the strange and unintelligible down to the recognizable and comprehensible" (Shemilt, 1987, p. 44). Students achieve this by a balance of "imaginative speculation" and "methodical investigation" (Portal, 1987), where they not only learn to use the tools of historians and social scientists, but also have chances to wonder about, and develop an emotional connection to, other people in the past and present. Students develop empathy through considering circumstances that other people faced in the past or present and by considering how people's complex perspectives and values influenced their decisions

(Cunningham, 2007, 2009). Students also should have opportunities to engage in conversations across political and ideological differences (Journell, 2016; Hess, 2009). At the same time, any perspective-taking activities must be careful to not have students simulate or imagine being oppressed, enslaved, or racially segregated, as this can be a form of curricular violence, which can cause intellectual and emotional harm to students (An, in press; Bery, 2014; Drake, 2008; King & Woodson, 2017).

Learning from and through narratives is an important component of human connections in the history and social sciences. Yet, we also know that there is a long history of prioritizing narratives from dominant groups and using documents and artifacts from groups with social power (Ender, 2019; Howard, 2003b; King, 2016; King & Woodson, 2017). As such, it is essential that students are exposed to narratives and cross-cultural storytelling from non-dominant groups in order to help them understand diverse worldviews and perspectives (Asimeng-Boahene, 2010; Ender, 2019; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002).

### **In this curriculum, the instructional methods deepen insight into human connections through affective dimensions of study and through historical empathy.**

- Instructional materials build students' historical empathy and ask them to entertain the perspectives held by people in the past and present, while also avoiding misapplication that could lead to the justification or validation of oppression.
- Instructional materials engage students with the affective dimensions of historical and social science study through exposure to sources and experiences that prompt their sense of wonder and emotional connection, and engage their imagination.
- Instructional materials support students in confronting difficult histories and making honest and critical assessments of the positive and detrimental consequences of human actions and choices.
- Instructional materials include narratives and cross-cultural storytelling in order to help students understand diverse worldviews and perspectives.
- Instructional materials engage students in social and emotional learning through asking them to engage in dialogue and collaboration with diverse peers across lines of difference.

## **CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AND RELEVANCE TO CURRENT WORLD**

### **What do we mean by civic engagement and current world relevance?**

The 2018 History and Social Science Framework states that “the primary purpose of a history and social science education is to prepare students to have the knowledge and skills to become thoughtful and active participants in a democratic society and a complex world.” History and social science education should prepare students to civically engage locally, nationally, and globally, and their learning should be rooted in understanding the current world. History and social science curriculum should help students develop democratic citizenship skills related to civic participation and justice (Westheimer, 2015; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). It should also

nurture reflective patriotism, leading students into neither excessive cynicism or excessive adulation about the past (Educating for American Democracy, 2021).

Students should have opportunities to develop their civic skills and dispositions, which can be done through the practice of problem solving in social studies (Newmann, 1987; Sewell et al., 2002). The history and social science curriculum should engage students in contributing to and reimagining our democracy; the core of this concept is their ability to practice taking informed civic action (Levinson & Levine, 2013). As they develop in their ability to take informed action, it requires that they interact with others within many different local, national, and global arenas, as well as deliberate on what levels of government and which methods are most effective in enacting civic change (Grant, 2013).

Moreover, students should be given opportunities to draw connections between the past and their present world (van Straaten et al., 2016, 2019), understand the role that people organized in movements and engaged in social activism had in enacting change in history and today (Martell & Stevens, 2021; Tyson, 2003), and have regular practice analyzing and evaluating current policies and actions and imagining the policies of the future (Blevins & LeCompte, 2015; Levinson, 2014).

The curriculum should also not treat history as a constant progression of continual improvement (VanSledright, 2008; VanSledright & Afflerbach, 2000), as it gives students a false sense that society is predetermined to change for the better on its own (Martell & Stevens, 2021). Rather, citizens must understand that history is not always a forward progression and that there are often setbacks and regression, so they are prepared to meet the democratic challenges of the present and future (Castro, 2012; Martell & Stevens, 2021).

### **In this curriculum, the instructional methods draw connections to the contemporary world and foster civic engagement.**

- Instructional materials support students in understanding how past events influenced the creation of our current world and drawing comparisons between present and past events.
- Instructional materials develop students' understanding of historical context, so it can inform relevant action in today's world.
- Instructional materials not only include important individuals, but also examples of how people have collectively engaged in civic action and organized movements to bring about social change; Instructional materials invite an honest analysis of how such action has fueled both progress and regression.
- Instructional materials invite students to consider how and why people acted when faced with historical challenges or injustices, as well as to consider solutions to the problems of our current world and envision a better future world.
- Instructional materials develop students' civic skills and dispositions (values, virtues, and behaviors, such as respect for others, commitment to equality, capacity for listening, and capacity for communicating in ways accessible to others) by including routines and activities in which they practice engaging effectively with others in public problem solving.

- Instructional materials involve investigations of power and how power is/was used in different societies by asking students to analyze and evaluate the responsibilities and structures, decision-making procedures, and deliberation and participation mechanisms of governments and other civil, economic, and political organizations.
- Curriculum units include tasks in which students engage in independent research, gathering relevant information from print and/or digital sources.
- As appropriate, instructional materials include opportunities for students to take action by asking students to understand the issues from the unit in a larger and/or current context, assess the relevance and impact of the issues on the outside world, and act with meaningful agency in a real-world context.

## Curricular Materials

Our approach to curricular materials connects five essential concepts: increasingly challenging academic tasks, disciplinary literacy, support for all students, embedded formative and summative assessments, and integrated educative resources. These five essential concepts are the foundation for the instructional methods and provide a structure to support teachers in implementing the curriculum for all students in equitable and inclusive ways.

### INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING TASKS

What do we mean by increasingly challenging tasks?

All students are capable of intellectual growth, and educators have a responsibility to guarantee students' academic success through persistent attention and encouragement (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, 2014). As such, curricular materials should be built to support this stance by intentionally structuring increasingly challenging tasks for students, which will lead to increased engagement and motivation for student learning (Margolis & McCabe, 2003; Marks, 2000).

Curriculum units must build on students' previous understandings and connect academic concepts across units (Bransford et al., 2000; Darling-Hammond et al., 2008). Yet, these tasks must also provide bridges or scaffolding so that students can become proficient in the more challenging work that they experience (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). This can be done through teacher's careful monitoring of their students' learning and a gradual lowering of support as their students become more autonomous in their abilities (Hammond & Gibbons, 2005; Wood et al., 1976).

Decades of research have revealed that it is a false assumption that basic skills must be mastered before students can develop more advanced skills (Means & Knapp, 1991; Tomlinson, 2012). Rather, students should simultaneously practice basic and more advanced skills (Means & Knapp, 1991). In fact, students of color and students of lower socioeconomic statuses are more likely to receive instruction overly focused on basic skill development, such as fact-recall or summary writing, at the expense of more rigorous activities that focus on reasoning and analysis (Darling-Hammond & Friedlaender, 2008; Haberman, 1991; Means & Knapp, 1991). Instead, all students can be supported during more challenging tasks by embedding differentiated instruction or the tailoring of instruction to the individual needs of students within curricular materials (Tomlinson, 1999, 2008, 2012).

Additionally, curriculum should be designed with a level of flexibility related to content and skill development that allows teachers to support students who need additional support or greater challenge (Albers, 2006; Taba, 1967), especially for students who may change schools or classrooms midyear (Busey & Russell, 2016).

## **In this curriculum, the materials provide increasingly challenging academic tasks and skill-building throughout the year.**

- Curriculum units build on previous understanding and connect content and concepts across units.
- Curriculum units support students' abilities to engage in history and social science practices with increasing levels of complexity.
- Curriculum units include increasingly rigorous reading, writing, and speaking tasks; Texts meet grade level expectations for complexity, with teacher materials suggesting “just in time” scaffolds and accommodations that enable all students to access grade-level text as quickly and independently as possible.
- Curriculum units include student practice of basic and more advanced skills, which allows a level of flexibility with the curriculum for teachers.
- Instructional materials include embedded opportunities for student reflection on the development of their knowledge, skills, and understanding.

## **DISCIPLINARY LITERACY**

### **What do we mean by disciplinary literacy?**

Disciplinary literacy includes an understanding of how information is created, communicated, and evaluated within specific academic domains (Moje, 2008; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2017; Shanahan & Shanahan, 2008). Each discipline of social studies (i.e. history, civics/politics, geography, economics) has specific ways of thinking (Journell et al., 2015; Lévesque, 2008; Monte-Sano, 2010; Schmidt, 2011; Wineburg, 1996, 1999, 2001), which influences disciplinary ways of reading, writing, and speaking that are hallmarks of advanced literacy in those areas (Britt & Ming, 2017; Damico et al., 2009; Duhaylongsod et al., 2015; Lazere, 2009; Monte-Sano, 2010; Wineburg & Reisman, 2015). Students should be explicitly taught through instructional activities focused on reading, writing, and speaking, but in ways that help them develop generic, but also content-specific literacy skills (Monte-Sano et al., 2014).

As such, this curriculum includes targeted literacy standards presented through the content of history and the social sciences, as well as practice using content-specific academic vocabulary (Baumann & Graves, 2010). Moreover, students will have regular opportunities to develop disciplinary arguments (Monte-Sano et al., 2014) using a claim-evidence-reasoning framework (McNeill & Krajcik, 2009; Newell et al., 2015; Toulmin, 1958/2003). Students also have regular opportunities to practice active listening with teachers, peers, or audiovisual materials, as they grapple with history and social science ideas and concepts (Cleveland, 1980; Jalongo, 1995).

At the same time, students should be able to use their “everyday language” to describe their historical and social science ideas; the goal is to develop a “language of ideas” acknowledging that disciplinary content, ideas, and practices can be expressed in a variety of ways and students bring to the table an array of linguistic resources (Bunch & Martin, 2020). Aligning with these goals, students will also have opportunities to engage in writing tasks with authentic purposes

and audiences, which has been linked to increased literacy achievement, but also increased student motivation for learning (Duke et al., 2006; Halvorsen et al., 2012).

**In this curriculum, the materials provide discipline-specific literacy instruction as well as support the development of students' general literacy skills.**

- Curriculum units explicitly target literacy standards and develop students' disciplinary literacy skills through instructional activities focused on reading, writing, and speaking.
- Curriculum units highlight, and provide repeated and intentional practice with key content-specific and academic vocabulary that students use in their reading, writing, speaking, and listening activities.
- Curriculum units use the claim-evidence-reasoning framework to support students in developing arguments, gradually moving students away from this scaffold over time; Instructional materials support students in distinguishing the difference between facts, opinions, and arguments.
- Curriculum units help students gain familiarity with the similarities and differences between their everyday language and the ways that historians and social scientists communicate, with materials explicitly introducing students to the language used by historians and social scientists, but also allowing for students to communicate in ways that are aligned with their home language or are most comfortable for them.
- Curriculum units include a diverse variety and complexity of discipline-based reading tasks that specifically build students' understanding of academic vocabulary and concepts.
- Curriculum units include discipline-specific writing tasks that ask students to write for a variety of authentic purposes and audiences.
- Curriculum units include discipline-specific listening and speaking tasks that ask students to engage in active listening and involve teacher or peer modeling of academic discourse
- Curriculum units include tasks that support students' development of news and media literacy, including the use of a critical lens for all forms of news and media and an understanding of how information is gathered and reported.

## **SUPPORT FOR ALL STUDENTS**

### **What do we mean by support for all students?**

For a curriculum to support all students, it must be built with the goal of equity for emergent bilingual students and students with dis/abilities. To achieve this, the curriculum materials are informed by the principles of universal design for learning, where there will be multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression across units (Jiménez et al., 2007; Lopes-Murphy, 2012; Meyer et al., 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2006). Instructional materials and assessments will reduce potential barriers and include differentiation and scaffolds to support the learning of emergent bilingual students and students with dis/abilities (Jiménez et al., 2007; Lopes-Murphy, 2012; Meyer et al., 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2006). It is essential that teachers consider their students' existing knowledge, interests, and identities in making instructional choices for emergent bilingual students and students with dis/abilities (Jiménez et al., 2007;

Lopes-Murphy, 2012; Meyer et al., 2014; Rose & Meyer, 2006). It is also important to have students engage in collaborative and cooperative learning opportunities that specifically increase verbal interaction, to provide explicit instruction of vocabulary concepts, and to develop leveled language objectives for various English proficiency levels that include an explicit focus on language features and functions (Baker, 2014; Misco & Castañeda, 2009; Piazza et al., 2015). Moreover, creating classrooms that are grounded in culturally affirming pedagogy and literacy as a social practice has improved learning outcomes for emergent bilingual students and students with dis/abilities (Piazza et al., 2015).

To specifically support students with dis/abilities, this curriculum attempts to embed high-leverage practices (McLeskey et al., 2017), or practices that can be used to leverage student learning across different content areas, grade levels, and student abilities. It is designed to be used in inclusive settings and to simultaneously support students with different learning needs (Posey & Novak, 2020; Simonsen et al., 2020), including multiple modalities and displays of information (Twyman & Tindal, 2005) with options for adaptations, modification, and support strategies (Steele, 2005) embedded in the curriculum.

To specifically support emergent bilingual students, this curriculum relies on distinct instructional techniques to provide support to help English learners understand demanding lesson content (Echevarria & Short, 2010; Gottlieb, 2013; Pappamihiel et al., 2005; Shanahan & Beck, 2006), while also realizing the importance of home language for bilingual students (August et al., 2006). This includes clear language objectives and scaffolding (Shanahan & Beck, 2006). Students will also have practice engaging in the specialized languages (registers) of cultural and professional communities, choosing the language that is most useful for that particular context (Gee, 2015; Gibbons, 1998). Students will have opportunities to use the languages of their academic settings, as well as their home settings as part of history and social science learning (Snow & Uccelli, 2009).

### **In this curriculum, the materials are built with the goal of equitable history and social science instruction for all students.**

- All lessons include learning objectives and language objectives.
- Instructional materials are informed by the principles of universal design for learning by including multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression when available and practicable across units.
- Given that cultural and professional communities have specialized languages (registers) to help their communities share ideas, curricular units ask students to practice register switching between everyday language and the professional language of historians and social scientists, choosing the language that is most useful.
- Instructional materials and assessments allow for the equitable participation of all students by reducing potential barriers and including appropriate differentiation and scaffolds to challenging academic experiences.
- Instructional materials prompt teachers to learn about their students' existing knowledge, interests, and identities to make instructional choices in response and allowing students to see aspects of themselves represented in the curriculum and/or share their relevant existing knowledge with the class.

## EMBEDDED ASSESSMENTS

### What do we mean by embedded assessments?

Assessment is how teachers make sense of their students' learning, understand how their learning progresses, and should be viewed as an ongoing and continuous process throughout learning units (Alleman & Brophy, 1998); it involves the collection of student learning data to inform ongoing decisions (Boudett et al., 2020). Assessments should be constructed to produce the best evidence possible about what students know and what they could do with that knowledge (VanSledright, 2013). Moreover, assessments benefit teachers and students when they provide timely student learning data that aligns with the curriculum (Stiggins, 2002; Young & Kim, 2010).

This curriculum regularly embeds formative and summative assessments (Dixson & Worrell, 2016) aligned with the history and social science content, practice, and literacy standards. Formative assessments deliver ongoing information to teachers and students during the curriculum units in order to measure students' progress toward learning goals, while summative assessments document how much learning has occurred by the end of curriculum units and give teachers and students an overall measure of their learning (Dixson & Worrell, 2016). Students can achieve a learning goal only if they understand that goal and can assess what they need to do to reach it (Black et al., 2004). As a result, assessment must also provide students opportunities to analyze their own and their peers' ideas (Black et al., 2004).

Assessments must be authentic and equitable. Authentic assessments replicate the challenges and standards of performance that exist in the real world, including those of historians, politicians, geographers, economists, sociologists, and citizens; they involve "ill-structured" challenges that help students rehearse for the complex ambiguities of the adult and professional life (Wiggins, 1990, 2011). Assessments are equitable when they are responsive to individual students and to school contexts, as well as when they require human judgment or dialogue (Wiggins, 1990, 2011). In assessments, students should be asked clarification questions and to explain their answers (Wiggins, 2011) and have multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge (Neill, 1997).

### **In this curriculum, the materials embed formative and summative assessments throughout units.**

- Curriculum units include both formative and summative assessment:
  - Formative assessments deliver ongoing information to teachers and students during the curriculum units in order to measure students' progress toward learning goals.
  - Summative assessments document how much learning has occurred by the end of curriculum units and give teachers and students an overall measure of their learning.
- Assessments focus on both content and practice standards and spiral standards in order to help teachers measure the increasing abilities of students over time.

- Formative assessments are embedded within instructional materials and directly related to a lesson's learning objectives in order to give teacher immediate feedback on student learning.
- Summative assessments are engaging and authentic; authentic assessments relate to students' prior knowledge, interests, and identities and have value beyond the classroom or school.
- Assessments, when possible, allow students multiple ways to demonstrate their learning.
- Summative assessments ask students to create a range of increasingly complex and sophisticated spoken, written, and multimodal products for different purposes and audiences.
- Assessments allow for students to share their ideas with their peers, receive feedback, and make revisions, as appropriate.

## INTEGRATED EDUCATIVE RESOURCES

### What do we mean by integrated educative resources?

Educative curriculum has the potential to not only support student learning, but also teacher learning (Ball and Cohen, 1996). To foster teacher learning, educative curriculum should cross boundaries by making goals and rationales for learning activities explicit, use the curriculum to model practices that would improve instruction, and position teachers as partners in practice by addressing their learning needs within the curricular materials. Since then, numerous studies have shown evidence that curriculum materials can be built to support teacher learning related to demanding instructional shifts (Cervetti et al., 2015; Collopy, 2003; Davis et al., 2014; Davis et al., 2017; Grossman & Thompson, 2008; Hill & Charalambous, 2012a, 2012b; Krajcik, 2017; McNeill, 2009; McNeill & Krajcik, 2009).

To help teachers make shifts in their practices, it is important to provide access to conceptual and practical tools (Barton & Avery, 2016; Barton & Levstik, 2003; Grossman et al., 1999; Levy et al., 2013; Martell, 2020). Conceptual tools are principles, theories, frameworks, and ideas about teaching, learning, and disciplinary acquisition in a specific subject area (Grossman et al., 1999; Martell, 2020). Practical tools are tangible resources with local and immediate classroom utility, such as instructional guidance or curricular materials, that exist alongside conceptual tools (Grossman et al., 1999; Martell, 2020).

Educative features can be provided in curriculum to help teachers acquire and refine their conceptual and practical tools. These educative features may include text and graphics that are incorporated into curriculum materials with the intention of supporting teacher learning (Davis et al., 2014) and providing teachers with representations of practice (Davis et al., 2017), such as model student responses and narratives that describe lesson enactment by teachers. Moreover, the structure of the lessons that model sound practices also serve as a device to foster the development of teachers' conceptual and practical tools (Grossman et al., 1999; Martell, 2020).

**In this curriculum, the materials integrate educative resources to support teacher learning and instructional shifts.**

- Curriculum supports teacher learning by modeling a logical and coherent sequence of high-quality, inquiry-based, and culturally affirming lessons and exposing teachers to new classroom activities that engage student interest and support deeper learning.
- Educative resources, including readings, videos, interviews, and links to outside resources, are provided to support professional learning related to content and pedagogical techniques that may be unfamiliar to most teachers, including advice for approaching difficult histories.
- Educative resources connect teachers to open-access educational resources and educational technology, allowing them to see how particular approaches and tools can support specific curricular goals.

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## Appendix

# Investigating History Key Design Features

Accompanying the Design Specifications Framework are the following Key Design Features. This section includes specific details related to the Investigating History curriculum build. It is organized into five sections, describing five aspects of the curriculum materials: units, individual lessons/lesson clusters, investigations and source work, assessments, and educative materials.

### UNITS

- Each unit aligns with the content and practice standards in the 2018 DESE History and Social Science Curriculum Framework.
- Each unit includes a front matter section with a table of contents, unit overview and rationale, unit essential questions, unit learning objectives, and a list of the Content Standards, Standards for History and Social Science Practice, and Literacy Standards for History and Social Science that are covered; This front matter section also explains through-lines to other units or courses.
- While the number of lessons vary, each grade 6/7 unit generally includes 20-40 lesson plans of about 50 minutes each (with occasional mini-units that bridge the larger units); Each grade 5 unit generally includes 21 lesson plans (three sessions per week over 7 weeks).
- Grade 5 lessons include literacy block extensions of about 30 minutes, with the identification of supplementary historical fiction, poetry, and/or secondary sources that can be used in ELA to build knowledge of the content, as well as suggested reading, writing and speaking skill development activities; Grade 5 includes a full year plan in a Scope and Sequence.
- Grade 6/7 does not include a full year plan as not all of the topics included in the DESE Curriculum Framework will be developed, but curriculum materials provide recommendations for where the units developed may fit within the school year and in relation to the units that were not developed.

### LESSONS/LESSON CLUSTERS

- Lesson plans are not scripted word-for-word, but include a general procedure section outlining the 2-3 activities of the lesson with provided or linked resources for the students; Lesson plans include the connective pieces that teachers need to introduce, explain, and debrief those activities.
- Lessons include anchoring activities that engage students, evoke their curiosity about the content and concepts, and spark their questioning.
- Each lesson involves 2-3 engaging classroom activities, which might include simulations, analysis of sources, artifacts, and data, turn and talks, museum walks/carousels, debates and discussions, class polls, observations of videos and artwork, listening to music, conducting interviews, and engaging in research.
- When relevant, lessons include warm up activities that activate prior knowledge.

- High-leverage classroom activities (e.g. visual thinking strategies, notice and wonder) recur across units, allowing teachers to establish routines and build students' independence.
- Given that each district/teacher has different approaches to homework, specific homework assignments are not included for each lesson.
  - For Grade 5, homework/extension activities are included relatively infrequently and reflect the limited nature of homework at that level.
  - For Grades 6/7, an average of 2 homework/extension activities per week are suggested to build upon classroom learning.
- Lesson plans include specific strategies for accessibility embedded within instructional materials.

## INVESTIGATION AND SOURCE WORK

- Each unit involves 1-3 inquiry cycles (a new inquiry cycle will occur roughly every 7-10 lessons); inquiry cycles involve multiple activities building on each other to answer an inquiry question or questions.
- Across each inquiry cycle, students engage in argumentation and source work in multiple lessons.
- Like historians, geographers, and other social scientists, students' source work relies on a diversity of primary and secondary sources including texts, images, graphs, charts, and maps; the types of sources will vary based on the content and concepts included in the lesson (for example, some ancient history lessons rely almost exclusively on secondary sources, where other lessons rely more heavily on primary sources).

## ASSESSMENTS

- There are 1-3 formative assessments per lesson/lesson cluster, which are in the form of exit tickets, pre-learning assessments, thumbs up/down, observations of students during discussions, etc.
- There are 1-2 summative assessments per unit, including 1-2 larger student projects throughout the year that also serve as summative assessments.
- There are choices for summative assessments, where possible; when choices are provided for summative assessments, they assess the same core set of content and practice standards.
- Formative and summative assessments include guiding language that support the teacher in successfully implementing them.
- Summative assessments include rubrics; Formative assessments include rubrics and/or other teacher guidance when appropriate.
- The level of choice in summative assessments makes it difficult to provide student exemplars; however, as relevant, teachers are provided with guidance on expectations for the work that students produce.

## EDUCATIVE MATERIALS

- At their core, the curricular materials serve an educative purpose; they are built to model strong classroom practices and through the enactment of the lesson plans and assessments, teachers may learn new pedagogical techniques and how pedagogical techniques tie together for more meaningful learning, deepen their content knowledge, and understandings of their students' knowledge and skills.
- Each unit includes 5-10 curated additional resources to support teacher learning in varied formats, including readings, videos, interviews, etc.; Relevant resource links are also embedded within the lessons.
- Educative resources provide both background content knowledge and pedagogical support when appropriate; Lessons include embedded “notes to teacher” or “teaching tips” as relevant.
- The curriculum includes a Curriculum Toolkit with a glossary of practical terms, explanation of pedagogical approaches and assessment tools that are found throughout the curriculum.