

Introductory Note for World Geography (7th) Teachers

August 9, 2006

The 7th grade curriculum has been modified to better align with the ASD calendar. Units of study are organized on a quarterly basis in order to provide greater consistency and to facilitate maximum learning opportunities for the large number of students transferring schools within the district. Teachers are asked to attempt to finish each quarter's study at the end of the quarter.

The course should cover all of the listed areas of study for each quarter. The times allotted are only suggestions and may be adjusted within the quarter at teacher discretion. However, the suggested times listed for each region are an attempt to provide an appropriate ratio of emphasis on the different regions of the world. We realize that covering the entire world in one year is a difficult task. It may not be possible to cover all areas in depth during the quarter. Each teacher will have to use discretion about what best fits the needs of his/her students while trying to meet curriculum expectations.

The national and state standards are listed in the curriculum guide as encompassing all standards in every unit. It is understood that all the standards should be covered throughout the year, but they may not all be taught in every unit. Each teacher will have to use discretion about which standards best fit the needs of the units and his/her students while trying to meet the expectation of balanced coverage of all the standards during the course of the year.

This curriculum is designed to emphasize best practices using a Backward Design model (see Wiggins and McTighe, Understanding by Design). This model uses Enduring Understandings (EU) and Essential Questions (EQ) to focus teaching and learning. An Enduring Understanding is a significant idea that students should remember over time. Essential Questions are the pathways of exploration leading to those understandings. The textbook and other instructional materials are useful tools to accomplish these goals. The textbook is *not* the curriculum.

Quarter 1 North America and Introduction to Geography (8 weeks)

1. Introduction to Geography and Alaska (3 weeks)

A study of basic geography skills and concepts will be taught during the Alaska unit.

Note:

1. Alaska geography is introduced in elementary programs. The Alaska Studies high school course includes Alaska geography that builds upon the middle school foundation. In middle school, the starting point for a study of the world is Alaska. Geography skills and concepts are introduced here and reinforced throughout the year.

2. North America (about 5 weeks)

Notes:

1. U.S. geography is introduced in elementary school. It is incorporated in eighth and tenth grade U.S. history courses.

2. The geography of other areas within North America is not emphasized in any other place in the social studies curriculum.

Quarter 2 --South America, Europe, Mesopotamia (ancient civilization)

1. South America (about 3 weeks)

Note: The geography of South America is not emphasized in any other place within the social studies curriculum.

2. Europe (about 3 weeks)

Note: Be sure to cover Eastern Europe as well as Western Europe. Western Europe is included in American History and more extensively in World History. Eastern Europe is not emphasized in any other place in the social studies curriculum. Russia may be taught here or in the Asia Unit.

3. Ancient Civilization study of Mesopotamia (about 2 weeks)

- early humans and the hunter / gather lifestyle
- development of farming
- development of cities
- development of central government
- development of complex social institutions such as religion
- specialization of jobs leading to social classes
- characteristics of Mesopotamian writing, art, and architecture

Note: In an attempt to make the year more manageable, study is limited to one ancient civilization. High school teachers, involved in vertical teaming discussions, have asked that we focus on teaching the elements of a civilization (see above) and were not overly concerned as to which individual civilization was taught. Teachers may also teach other early civilizations in addition to Mesopotamia at their discretion. Mesopotamia was chosen because it is the earliest civilization and has a strong impact on other early civilizations, as well as Western culture and thought.

Quarter 3 –Middle East, Africa, Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica

1. Middle East (about 3 weeks)

Note: Studying the Middle East immediately following the unit on Mesopotamia makes sense.

2. Africa (about 4 weeks)

3. Australia, Oceania, and Antarctica (about 2 weeks)

Note: Third quarter is the longest quarter for actual student contact time. There are no parent conferences and no testing during third quarter. Therefore, teachers should have nine full weeks for instructional time. Each teacher should cover all three areas listed above. The times are only suggestions and may be adjusted within the quarter at teacher discretion. Ancient Egypt tends to be covered extensively in elementary school; therefore, it does not need to be emphasized.

Quarter 4 –Asia and optional world review

1. Asia and optional world review (7 1/2 weeks)

Note: The geography of Asia is not emphasized in any other place in the social studies curriculum. This quarter allows for an optional world review or culminating activity, if time permits.