ASSESSMENT IN WORLD HISTORY

Overview of the session

I. Designing performance assessments

II. Assessing writing in world history

III. The future of assessment and standards in PA

WELCOME!
DESIGNING PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENTS IN WORLD HISTORY
Warm-Up

- How do you assess your students?
- What are the most common types of assessments in social studies/history classes in your school?
- How much pressure is there to use the “text and test” approach?
Types of Assessments

- Informal checks for understanding
- Observation and dialogue with students
- Tests and quizzes
- Portfolios
- Performance tasks

What do each of these assess?
The question for our session is...

How do we assess understanding and critical thinking skills that address key topics in world history?
TEACHING UNDERSTANDING AND AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT
What happens in the social studies classroom?

- Charles Silberman observed in the 1960s that the great bulk of students’ time was
  - “devoted to detail, most of it trivial, much of it factually incorrect, and almost all of it unrelated to any concept, structure, cognitive strategy, or indeed anything other than the lesson plan.”

- The study of history as a long list of facts to be *memorized* and *tested* hasn’t changed a lot today.

Do you agree or disagree?
Research on Learning

“Teachers need to pay attention to the incomplete understandings, the false beliefs, and the naïve renditions of concepts that learners bring with them.”

- Bransford, et. al., *How People Learn*, p. 10

*What does this mean in relation to world history?*
Understanding means that you can:

- **Explain**: Show why and how (e.g. show your work, say why it works, defend your view, make connections on your own, etc.)
- **Transfer**: Apply what you have learned to a new situation (e.g. use it, adapt it, teach it, solve new problems, etc.)
AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

Rather than as a traditional way to end a chapter or unit, thinking of assessment as a tool that aids teachers to identify:

- what they value for learning
- what they want students to *know* and be *able to do*
- how to ensure we teach students the things for which they are held accountable
AUTHENTIC ASSESSMENT

**Authentic** means:

- Requires judgment and innovation
  - Lacks simple right/wrong answers
- Requires the use of a repertoire of knowledge, critical thinking, and skills
- Incorporates real-world situations or scenarios
  - Resembles work done by professionals in the field
THREE DIMENSIONS

- Students are constructing meaningful knowledge
- Students are engaged in disciplined inquiry
- The problem, issue or concept is related to the world outside the classroom

Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS)
Construction of Knowledge
- To what degree does the task:
  * Require students to organize, synthesize, interpret, explain, or evaluate complex information in addressing a concept, problem, or issue?
  * Require students to consider alternative solutions, strategies, perspectives, or points of view as they address a concept, problem or issue?

Disciplined Inquiry
- To what degree does the task:
  * Ask students to show understanding and/or use ideas, theories, or perspectives considered central to an academic or professional discipline?
  * Ask students to use methods of inquiry, research, or communication characteristic of an academic or professional discipline?
  * Require students to elaborate on their understanding, explanations, or conclusions through extended writing?

Value Beyond the Classroom
- To what degree does the task:
  * Ask students to address a concept, problem or issue that is similar to one that they have encountered, or are likely to encounter, in life beyond the classroom?
  * Require students to communicate their knowledge, present a performance, or take some action for an audience beyond the teacher, classroom, and school building?
# Two Ways of Thinking about Assessment

**Thinking like an assessor**

1. What is evidence that your students **understood**?
2. What types of **evidence** are required based on the learning goals?
3. Did the assessments distinguish **which students** understood and which didn’t?

**Thinking like an activity designer**

1. What would be fun and interesting to do?
2. What tests should I give based on the content taught?
3. How well did the activities work?
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT
Types of Assessments

- Informal checks for understanding
- Observations and dialogues
- Tests and quizzes
- Portfolios
- Performance tasks
Performance Tasks

- Embedding assessment in *real world problem-solving*
  - Students perform a task rather than select an answer from a ready-made list

- Based on belief that *understanding* is the goal of teaching
  - Understanding is seen in the transfer of ideas and knowledge to real-life situations

- Requires the students to answer *essential questions*
WHAT DISCIPLINARY TASK DO YOU WANT STUDENTS TO BE ABLE TO DO?

- Use primary sources to construct a narrative about what happened
- Evaluate the validity of historical sources
- Write a personal history or history of an event
- Predict population growth according to geographical features
- Understand patterns in supply and demand
- Understand the complex causes of historical events
- Design multi-media displays of historical events depicting multiple perspectives
- Explain the ideas behind important primary sources
EXAMPLES

- Write an editorial for a 1777 newspaper: Was the break with England inevitable?
- Read Canadian and French accounts of the Revolutionary War era. Defend or oppose their use as teaching resources at a simulated school board meeting.
- Write a series of letters between relatives in the U.S. and England during the pre-war, war, and postwar eras.
- Stage a debate between settlers and Native Americans on the effects of western settlement.
- Design a museum exhibit on the causes and effects of early 20th century immigration.
- Develop your own oral history using primary sources.
- Role-play a meeting of the minds scenario (e.g. Truman deciding to drop the atomic bomb).
- Develop a PowerPoint report to a special economic committee to explain fluctuations in the home prices over time.
- Plan and budget a four-day tour of Pa. to help a group of exchange students to understand the state’s impact on the history of our nation.
PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT FOR WORLD HISTORY
### Assessment in World History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>World History</th>
<th>National History</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Emphasis on connections and patterns within the “global human community”</td>
<td>- Emphasis on the great individual and national government</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Unit is world/ regional systems and processes; civilizations</td>
<td>- Unit is nation states</td>
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**What is an example?**
How do you assess students’ understandings of world historical patterns and processes?
**ACTIVITY:**
**DESIGNING A PERFORMANCE ASSESSMENT**

1. Read over your unit to identify key ideas

2. In your group, brainstorm a creative *performance task* for the unit your group is given. Discuss in your groups:
   a) The learning objectives for the unit: *what do you want your students to know after the unit?* (handout 1)
   b) The real-life task that students will do: *what do you want your students to be able to do?* (handout 2)
   c) The format in which the student responds (handout 3)