

OUSD History Assessment Newsletter

Volume V, Number 1

Oakland Unified School District, Oakland, California

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Welcome Back!

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2007 –2008 Professional Development Opportunities for OUSD History Teachers

The following is a heads-up for staff development opportunities for high school history teachers. It is early in the year and we don't have confirmed dates or speakers yet, but we want to let you know about possibilities. We hope to provide additional opportunities for staff development, and we will let you know about those as well in future newsletters or emails.

World History Book Club – Open to all 6th, 7th and 10th grade world history teachers. We will meet 5 – 6 times over the course of the year and read two books in common. The discussion is facilitated by Alan Karras, a professor at U.C. Berkeley. There will be a small stipend and books will be provided. This book club is co-sponsored by the Bay Area Global Education Project.

U.S. History Book Club – (Open to all 5th, 8th, and 11th grade teachers who participated in OUSD's 2004-2007 Teaching American History grant. We will meet 4-5 times over the course of this school year and read two books in common. Professor Robin Einhorn of U.C. Berkeley and Professor Charles Postel of Sacramento State University will facilitate the discussions. A stipend and books will be provided. (Depending on sign-ups, this group may be opened to general enrollment.)

Writing the Historical Essay: This series is designed to support student achievement on the district's document based question assessments in the 10th and 11th grades. Its focus is on improving student writing in history. The series will have one full-day kick-off session (substitute provided), and then have three after-school meetings. A full day session after school lets out in June concludes the series. Teachers who participated in this series last year were so excited that we are providing the same in-service again for 20 teachers who were unable to participate last year. Participants receive a \$600 stipend.

World Affairs Council Speaking Series – The World Affairs Council, located in San Francisco, has received a grant to bring teachers and students to hear some of their speakers. They can take 10 teachers from Oakland and each teacher can bring a small group of their students to the Council to hear speakers. Over the course of the year they will support teachers coming to three programs. The topics are varied, for example in October a speaker will be speaking about conflict diamonds in Africa. Teachers can choose which program they wish to attend. Students and teachers will be provided with food and money for transportation. In addition, teachers will receive \$100 stipend.

Project Citizen – This will be a two day training geared primarily to government teachers. It is a program designed to have students actively participate in researching and developing policies that can be implemented by government agencies. It is also a wonderful opportunity for teachers who are working with students on Senior Projects. Substitutes will be provided.

International Economic Summit – The Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco is offering a two day training to teachers of economics. The training is designed to support teachers who wish to participate in a global trade simulation in San Francisco in the spring. Teachers from Oakland who participated last year were pleased with the opportunity. In addition to the training teachers will receive support materials to use in classrooms with their students. Substitutes will be provided for the training.

Please contact either Shelly Weintraub or Stan Pesick if you have questions, or for more information about the assessments and related professional development.

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Stan Pesick—879-8497; Stan.Pesick@ousd.k12.cas.us

Why are the History Assessments Important?

Four years ago teachers voted overwhelmingly to implement a district-wide high school history assessment that was based in writing. Since that time many teachers are new to the district or new to teaching 10th and 11th grade history. Therefore, it is important to review the reasoning of teachers who voted to undertake the district-wide assessment. Behind the vote by district teachers were two basic goals they believed the assessment could help address:

I. Building Students Academic Capacity

Our schools have a clear goal of preparing students for college, but the state colleges and universities report that students are entering the post K-12 system unprepared to do the demanding work required to achieve academic success at that level. In 2000 the *Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges, the California State Colleges**, and the University of California issued a report on academic literacy that identified what academic skills are most necessary for student success in college. In the area of writing the report notes that:

- According to faculty respondents, only 1/3 of entering college students are sufficiently prepared for the two most frequently assigned collegiate writing tasks: analyzing information or arguments and synthesizing information.
- Faculty expects students to reexamine their thesis, to consider and reconsider additional points or arguments, to reshape and reconstruct as they compose, and to submit carefully revised and edited work.
- High School students should be assigned writing tasks that demand analysis, synthesis, and research.

The demands of the district assessment, as developed by district teachers, directly address many of these skills. It requires students, among other demands, to develop a thesis, and to analyze and synthesize documents that often illustrate different perspectives. Thus, by preparing students for the district assessment, we are helping to prepare students for the demands they will meet as they enter college.

II. Promoting Equity and Teacher Collaboration

If the goal of the assessment were simply to build student's academic capacity, there would be no reason to create an instrument that is developed and administered centrally. Rather, each teacher could use their own assessments – each classroom an island onto itself. But, when teachers voted for the assessment they wanted more than islands. Through the common scoring of the assessments and through staff development (elaborated on page 4 of this newsletter) we are trying to promote equity as we develop a community of history teachers from across the district. We want to be sure that what constitutes quality work in one teacher's classroom is comparable to what constitutes quality work in other teachers' classrooms. We also want to have a chance, building on a shared sense of what constitutes quality work, to talk about how to help our students do better. We want to share both ideas and strategies; having a common assessment means that we have the opportunity for a common conversation.

Thank You

Achieving these aims is an ongoing, long-term process. No single assessment or staff development program will address all the challenges teachers face in the classroom. Nevertheless, we commend history teachers for taking on this important task and working together in an effort to improve student achievement.

* A full copy of the report is available at <http://www.academicssenate.cc.ca.us/>

School by School Implementation (Spring Semester, 2007)

District Scoring Committee

- Erin Abraham - Farwest*
- Patricia Arabia - Mandela*
- Sam Brewer - Oakland Tech*
- Sharon Butler - Oakland Tech*
- Richard Charlesworth - BEST*
- Gordon Danning - Oakland High*
- Craig Gordon - Robeson*
- Sarah Goudy - CBITS*
- Kita Grinberg - Dewey*
- Anya Gurholt - Skyline*
- Jack Herman - CBITS*
- Tania Kappner - Oakland Tech*
- Chris Kelly - Skyline*
- Darien Lencl - Dewey*
- Daniel Manske - Independent Study*
- Mary Maultsby - Leadership Prep*
- Harry Pasternak - Oakland Tech*
- Stan Pesick, OUSD*
- Brian Risi - Oakland High*
- Ruben Rodriguez - Oakland High*
- Lydia Ropp - Skyline*
- William Ryle - EXCEL*
- Maria Serrano - Architecture*
- Neha Ummat - Mandela*
- Shelly Weintraub - OUSD*
- William Wong - Oakland High*
- Jonas Zuckerman - Oakland Tech*

school	#10th and 11th grade teachers	# teachers administering assessment	% teachers administering assessment
Castlemont Community			
• <i>Business and Info Tech</i>	2	2	100
• <i>EOSA</i>	2	2	100
• <i>Leadership Prep</i>	2	2	100
Dewey	2	2	100
Farwest	1	1	100
Fremont Federation			
• <i>Architecture</i>	2	2	100
• <i>Mandela</i>	2	2	100
• <i>Media</i>	2	2	100
• <i>Robeson</i>	2	2	100
Life Academy	3	0	0
Merritt College High	1	1	100
Metwest	4	0	0
McClymonds Community			
• <i>BEST</i>	2	2	100
• <i>EXCEL</i>	3	2	66
Oakland High	8	4	50
Oakland Tech	10	10	100
Rudsdale	1	1	100
Skyline	9	8	89
Independent Study	5	5	100
Youth Empowerment (yes)	2	0	0
District Totals	65	50	77%

Score Distribution of Submitted Papers - Fall and Spring Semesters, 2006—2007 (6 per class)

	Grade/Score (%)	5	4	3	2	1
10th Grade	Fall semester (157 papers scored)	2	10	49	74	22
	Spring semester (145 papers scored)	6	13	40	48	38
11th Grade	Fall semester (157 papers scored)	0	8	50	80	19
	Spring Semester (198 papers scored)	5	25	78	75	15

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Assessment Questions: 2007— 2008 school year

World History

Fall Semester:

Regarding imperialism, a British official, Lord Curzon said:

The British Empire has replaced misery, oppression, superstition and poverty with peace, justice, prosperity, and freedom.

To what extent is this belief valid?

Spring Semester:

Evaluate the motives for Japanese imperialism in the first half of the 20th century.

U.S. History

Fall Semester:

Was American expansionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries justified?

Consider political, economic and/or cultural factors of American expansion in the Western and Eastern Hemispheres. [Be sure to include examples from the different continents.]

Spring Semester:

Were America's policies and actions (1945-1975) toward Vietnam in the best interests of the American people?

