

Grade
7

WORLD STUDIES

Advanced Grade Seven



Advanced World Studies Overview

How is this different from the on-level World Studies curriculum?

The Advanced Grade Seven World Studies curriculum supports the Grade Seven World Studies curriculum. It is not a replacement for the existing curriculum. The focus of the advanced curriculum is on building the historical thinking skills of students. This includes the ability to critically read and write in response to primary and secondary historical sources. Many of these skills are included in the on-level curriculum. The advanced curriculum, however, provides additional skills, more rigorous writing expectations, and more challenging sources. The advanced curriculum is designed for classroom flexibility and teacher choice. Teachers are not expected to deliver the entire advanced curriculum cover to cover. The course can be taught in a heterogeneously-grouped class where selected advanced students complete parts of the curriculum or a homogeneously-grouped class where all students complete parts of the curriculum.

KEY CHARACTERISTICS

- builds on current curriculum
- incorporates many primary and secondary historical sources
- focuses on teaching advanced historical thinking, reading and writing skills
- adaptable for a variety of classrooms

The skills of historical thinking that form the backbone of this course are part of a grade six to eight continuum of skill development. Skills are built through the use of Document Based Inquiry (DBI) tasks. In grade six, advanced students are introduced to basic skills of historical thinking. In grade seven, these skills become the foundation for more complex skills of analysis and historical inquiry. Advanced students in grade eight hone the skills developed in earlier years as they learn how to respond to complex writing tasks known as Document Based Questions (DBQs), a central element of social studies Advanced Placement courses taken in high school.

Middle School Advanced Courses in English, Science, and Social Studies: Vision and Rationale

How is curriculum designed in MCPS?

MCPS curriculum in all disciplines is designed to meet the needs of learners of all backgrounds and abilities. Each content area develops curriculum to meet the standards of the state of Maryland as well as to prepare students for college level curriculum as assessed by such organizations as the College Board and the International Baccalaureate Organization.

Why create middle school advanced courses in English, science, and social studies at this time?

MCPS continues to focus on rigorous instruction and is monitoring the district's success in meeting the goal to increase participation and performance of all students in honors and Advanced Placement courses. Advanced courses in middle school help teachers prepare all students for challenging curriculum in high school. In addition, the Middle School Reform report, the Deputy Superintendent's Advisory Committee on Gifted and Talented Education report, and a resolution by the Montgomery County Council of Parent Teacher Organizations call for a clear definition of rigorous instruction and clear expectations for delivering advanced instruction to highly able and motivated students.

What is different about advanced courses?

Advanced courses are designed to provide explicit direction to teachers related to the selection of content, differentiation of instructional processes, or development of student products. Depending on the content area and unit, one or more of these areas will be substantively more challenging than on-level instruction. Frequently the content and topics of the advanced courses are the same as on level classes, but the depth of study, or the expression of understanding, or the product from learning is more challenging.

Why have advanced courses?

Highly able students or those with the potential to perform at high levels have unique needs that require an instructional program of appropriate challenge and enrichment. Instruction for all students is based on the goals and objectives of the MCPS curriculum. The content, processes, and products may be enriched, compacted, or accelerated to meet student needs. Such an instructional program creates multiple opportunities for students to realize their full potential as learners.

What type of teaching is expected for students in advanced courses?

Teachers are expected to deliver rigorous instruction to all students in all MCPS courses. Rigor can be seen in instruction that engages the learner, focuses on the use of inquiry as a learning tool, and reflects the complex nature of the learning and human expression. In advanced courses, however, teachers are expected to challenge students at an additional level. The design of advanced courses can be considered from the teacher's perspective as well as the student's.

In advanced courses, the teacher:

- Plans instruction that requires students to interact with content that is complex, provocative, ambiguous, or emotionally challenging.
- Helps students develop the skills needed to manage rigorous content.
- Facilitates student discussions about important ideas and concepts.
- Models thinking, reading, writing, and problem-solving strategies.
- Incorporates meaningful tasks for students to apply and transfer learning.
- Connects reading materials by genre, subject, or theme.
- Encourages students to judge or evaluate situations, problems, or issues.
- Requires thinking at analytic, interpretive, and evaluative levels.
- Emphasizes student synthesis of information within or across disciplines.
- Engages students in the exploration of diverse points of view.
- Encourages students to determine implications and consequences of findings.
- Uses appropriate extension and scaffolding to challenge and support all learners.
- Provides opportunities for independent and group learning to promote depth in content understanding.
- Uses multiple differentiation models for acceleration and enrichment.
- Engages students in planning, monitoring, and assessing their learning.
- Uses portfolios to build students' awareness of their own progress and goals.

In advanced courses the students:

- Interact with content that is complex, provocative, ambiguous, or emotionally challenging.
- Engage in inquiry, discussions, and tasks that focus on understanding and applying important concepts.
- Write daily for a variety of purposes and audiences.
- Make meaningful connections within and across disciplines.
- Use a variety of strategies and tools to solve problems.
- Apply knowledge and skills to authentic situations.
- Design and conduct experimental research investigations.
- Design and conduct observational explorations.
- Use a variety of strategies to solve problems and apply skills to authentic situations.
- Effectively use rubrics and scoring tools to assess and improve writing.
- Monitor their own learning through journals, logs, reflection, self-assessment, and portfolios.

Please note that while some independent work is appropriate for students working at advanced levels, it should not comprise a majority of a student's instructional time at school. All students should be challenged to the degree that they require explicit instruction and direct support from the teacher.

What are the expectations for implementing advanced courses in middle school?

Each content area, in collaboration with the Division of Accelerated and Enriched Instruction (AEI) has created materials that define the instructional approach and curriculum of advanced courses. These resources establish the expectation for differentiation in content, process, and product for each course. In English and social studies, these course supplements or amendments accompany each instructional guide. In science, a new course, Investigations in Science (IT6) has been developed and will be disseminated in a Web-based format.

- **Schools** design schedules to meet the unique needs of students who perform at advanced levels or who have the potential to perform at advanced levels. The on level and advanced level courses are constructed to allow movement from one level to the other.
 - Schools are expected to establish processes that ensure students have the opportunity to take advanced courses at any point in their middle school years, regardless of previous course enrollment.
 - Schools may form homogeneous sections of an advanced course in English, science, or social studies.
 - In English and social studies, schools may offer heterogeneous sections and provide advanced instruction to all students, with scaffolding for those who require support.
 - When scheduling heterogeneous classes, no fewer than eight students performing at advanced levels or who have the potential to perform at advanced levels should be clustered in any one section.
- **Teachers** of students in an advanced course or cluster-grouped for advanced instruction in a course are expected to deliver advanced instruction as described in the advanced course amendment/supplement (English and social studies) or the advanced course instructional guide (science).
- **Students** in an advanced course or cluster-grouped for advanced instruction are expected to show mastery of the indicators in the instructional guide and to receive the adjustments or instruction of greater challenge as described in the advanced course supplement (English and social studies) or the advanced course instructional guide (science).

Unit One Overview

The Foundation of Modern Political Systems: Europe in the Middle Ages

There are three types of lessons included in Unit One of Advanced Grade Seven. There are four sets of *Historical Thinking Lessons* that use primary sources (both visuals and text) to teach and reinforce the thinking and document reading skills for the unit. There is an *Extension Lesson* that introduces new content through historical fiction, providing an opportunity for interdisciplinary instruction. Finally, there is an *Independent Research Project* that applies principles of the unit to modern examples. This project extends throughout the quarter.

The thinking, reading, and writing skills that are taught and reinforced in Unit One build important habits that will be used throughout the course. It is expected that students will have some familiarity with primary sources from Grade Six.

Advanced Skills

| Historical Thinking | Reading: Document Analysis | Writing |
|---|--|---|
| Categorizing Evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> evidence can be sorted in multiple ways sorting evidence helps make sense of data | Analyzing for Content <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analyzing a document for topic, inferences, and limitations | Generalizations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> using appropriate evidence to support a generalization |

Why Teach Categorizing?

Our world today is on information overload. The Internet has opened the door to an avalanche of information and opinions. The ability to sort and organize, identify common patterns, recognize trends, and notice similarities and differences in sources is a skill essential to learning in this age of electronic information. This ability is the skill of categorizing. Social studies classrooms provide a unique opportunity to teach students this valuable thinking skill. In Advanced Grade Seven World Studies, students will

- analyze multiple sources of evidence as they construct, challenge, and question the past.
- examine information from a variety of sources in order to make generalizations, form opinions, and create a historical narrative.