Part VI. Gateway Instructional Strategies for Social Studies

This section contains the following instructional strategies:

- Preparing Students for the Gateway Assessment
  - Types of Questions
  - Understanding the Assigned Task
  - Writing an Effective Gateway Essay
- Using the Gateway Anchor Papers in the Classroom
- Conducting a Practice Gateway Assessment
- Writing to Learn
Preparing Students for the Gateway Assessment

The Gateway Assessment tests a student’s ability to integrate information from a variety of historical sources and to communicate effectively in a timed writing context. These abilities require practice and are most appropriately taught on an interdisciplinary basis throughout the school year. Adequate test preparation cannot be achieved with a last minute course in “How to Take the Gateway.” Students need repeated exposure to the expectations for writing effectively in the content area of world history. Many general skills in writing apply to social studies writing, but there are also conventions specific to social studies writing that require explicit instruction. Regular writing assignments about historical events are the most effective preparation for the Gateway Assessment, and these will also help students learn the facts, concepts, and principles in the AKS. The following are some suggestions for preparing students for the Gateway assessment:

WHAT TYPES OF QUESTIONS ARE ON THE GATEWAY ASSESSMENT FOR SOCIAL STUDIES?

Questions may be focused on a particular civilization or an historical era. Students will be expected to answer questions concerning:

- Technological advances
- Forms of government: their benefits and limitations
- Social and economic conditions
- Causes of revolutions and wars
- Prominent leaders in history
- Class structure
- World religions
- Colonialism and Imperialism
- Exploration

UNDERSTANDING THE ASSIGNED TASK

Review the Vocabulary Used in the Gateway Assigned Writing Tasks

- Familiarize students with the verbs used in social studies essay test questions:
  - Explain
  - Describe
  - Discuss
• Students may be familiar with most of these terms from other reading or writing contexts, but many students will still require explicit instruction on applying these terms in the context of social studies writing.

• One of the bullets for the Cultural Contributions of the Renaissance Gateway topic asks the students to “Discuss the artistic contributions of the Renaissance” Regardless of which of the verbs listed above is used in the assigned Gateway task, students are expected to provide a fully elaborated explanation in their responses. All explanations in Gateway responses should include specific, relevant examples.

Understanding and Using the Information in the Gateway Documents
• Students need explicit instruction in processing historical documents like diagrams, tables, maps, quotations, photographs, timelines, and charts in order to be prepared for the Gateway Assessment. It is important to assess your students’ ability to interpret historical documents at the beginning of the school year in order to plan for their instructional needs. These interpretive skills are a form of visual literacy that is often overlooked in general reading comprehension course work, because most non-history books don’t contain diagrams, maps, and timelines.

WRITING AN EFFECTIVE GATEWAY ESSAY

Planning the Essay
• Post the High School Gateway Writing Checklist in the classroom. This will be the only writing resource that students have available to them during the Gateway Assessment. The writing checklist provides reminders of the expectations for each scoring domain of Gateway.

• Show students the Gateway response folder and discuss the time allotted for planning and drafting during the Gateway Assessment.

• Provide students with prewriting strategies for developing an appropriate overall plan during a timed social studies writing assessment. The quality of each student’s overall plan is scored in Organization of Social Studies Concepts.
  o Outlining can serve as both a note-taking skill as well as a prewriting strategy for the Gateway Assessment.
  o Constructing a concept or mind map of the topic can serve as a prewriting strategy and a learning strategy:
    ▪ Providing a grouping and sequencing basis for the writer’s overall plan.
    ▪ Revealing the links between the writer’s major ideas.
- Providing additional cues to the writer’s prior knowledge.
- The completed concept map can also serve as a study guide for classroom assessments and the Gateway Assessment.
- A classroom notebook of concept maps (student or teacher created) for each social studies unit covered during the year can also serve as a review for the Gateway Assessment.

- Effective writers often plan the introduction and conclusion to a piece of writing after the plan for the body of the essay has been decided and drafted. This allows the writer to first see an overview of his or her major ideas and then choose the most appropriate method to introduce the reader to the topic and purpose of the essay.

- Students need to be reminded that effective conclusions do not merely repeat what has been written in the body of the response, and that there are many types of introductions and conclusions that are appropriate for social studies writing.

- After prewriting, students should review the assigned task once again to ensure that their writing plans cover each part of the assigned task. Students should also check the time remaining for the assessment.

- Make sure students understand the importance of including relevant prior knowledge throughout their responses in addition to relevant information in the provided documents.

**Drafting the Essay**

- Remind students that every claim a writer makes in social studies writing must be substantiated with relevant evidence (facts). Although the Gateway is not an assessment of persuasive writing, students are expected to offer historical proof for every statement they make. This requires demonstrating an understanding of relevant facts as well as why and how historical events occur, not merely listing what occurs.

- As a class activity, read some of the responses in the Assessment and Instructional Guide that received scores of “5” in Development and Knowledge. Ask students to articulate in their own words the qualities of a fully (or sufficiently) elaborated Gateway response.

**Using Precise Vocabulary on the Gateway Assessment for Social Studies**

- Teach students to translate between generic, everyday language and precise social studies vocabulary.
  - Student responses in the Assessment and Instructional Guide can serve as anonymous classroom models of “what to do” or “what not to do” in social studies writing.
• Remind students to use precise social studies vocabulary throughout their Gateway responses and in classroom assignments during the year.
  o Advise students to avoid generic words (something, stuff), slang, and texting abbreviations (b/c).
  o A misspelled but precise term is a less severe error than a very simple or general word spelled correctly.

• Students may use the vocabulary words from any part of the assigned writing task in their responses, but it is not appropriate to copy entire phrases and sentences verbatim from the test pamphlet without using quotation marks and a citation of the source.

• Instruct students in the proper citation of sources by reviewing “Citing Original Sources” in this guide.

Development and Elaboration in Social Studies Writing
• Allow students to discuss the amount of elaboration used at each level in the released writing samples.

• Students need to know how much and what types of elaboration constitute an effective response to a Gateway task. The following are the types of ideas that should be included in each part of a response to a Gateway task:
  o Definitions of terminology
    ▪ For the Renaissance topic, these might include definitions of humanism, sonnets, or heliocentric theory.
  o Balanced in-depth analysis
    ▪ For the Renaissance topic, this could include prevailing cultural attitudes prior to, during, and following the Renaissance.
  o Connections and detailed explanations of connections between parts of the assigned task.
    ▪ For the Renaissance topic, these connections could include how science, art, and literature today have been influenced by the works produced during the Renaissance.
  o Specific examples that support the writer’s reasoning.
    ▪ For the section on artistic contributions, an explanation of how the Mona Lisa and Pieta represented new directions in artistic expression would be appropriate.
    ▪ Even when the writer is specifically asked to “describe” in the assigned task, the underlying expectation is that the writer will “explain” both how and why an event occurred and provide evidence to support the explanation.
Specific historical data from the provided documents if applicable.

- Many Gateway assigned tasks provide a timeline to cue the writer’s prior knowledge of important events of an historical era.

- Students need opportunities to practice making connections. There are many connections embedded within and across historical eras:
  - Connections between different classes of a society.
  - Connections between religion, science, and government.
  - Connections in terms of the short and long term impact of historical events on a nation.
  - Connections between ruling countries and colonies.
  - Connections between the ways each historical era has been influenced by preceding eras and impacts future eras.
  - Connections between the geography of a nation and its culture.
  - Connections between the most powerful political figures of an era.

USING THE GATEWAY ANCHOR PAPERS IN THE CLASSROOM

Because the released topic for this guide is the Cultural Contributions of the Renaissance, teachers can coordinate some of the recommended activities with their Renaissance instructional units to reinforce regular classroom activities.

Understanding How the Gateway Assessment is Scored

- Conduct a practice Gateway Assessment early in the school year to assess instructional needs in the basic skills of social studies writing.

- Explain the purpose of four scoring domains in the Gateway Assessment using the definitions provided in this guide.

- Expose students to the scoring rubrics by using the Gateway domains to give feedback on classroom assignments.

- Give each student a copy of the Gateway Student Friendly Rubric and conduct a class discussion to clarify expectations for the Gateway Assessment.

- Keep a set of Gateway social studies writing anchor models available in the classroom as a student reference and a teaching tool.
Share and discuss the annotated Gateway responses and writing topic in this guide.

- As a whole class activity, orally compare and contrast effective and ineffective Gateway responses in each of the four scoring domains.
  - Practice rewriting each bulleted statement in the rubric into a question. These questions can serve as focus questions for analyzing the student responses released in this guide.
    - For example, change “Your reasoning was explained in all parts of the response” to “Is the reasoning explained in all parts of the response?”

- Discuss both the quality of writing and the quantity of writing in the released responses.
  - Depth of Development is not entirely dependent on the length of a student response; however, very brief responses limit the demonstration of competence in every domain.

- Practice improving parts of the ineffective responses in each scoring domain as an individual, class, or homework activity.
  - For Development, Analysis, and Interpretation, individual students or small groups can read responses with limited development and suggest improvements for developing each part of the assigned task.
  - For Expression of Social Studies Knowledge, individual students or small groups can read responses which contain limited scientific vocabulary and correct any incorrect use of vocabulary or imprecise terminology.
  - For Organization of Social Studies Concepts, students can practice rewriting the introductions and conclusions of the responses released in this guide.
  - For Conventions, students can practice correcting sentence formation, usage, and mechanics errors in the responses released in this guide. EL students can practice orally to develop an ear for Standard American English.

CONDUCTING A PRACTICE GATEWAY ASSESSMENT

Developing Writing Tasks

- Create a bank of sample world history writing topics to share within the school and with other Gwinnett County high schools.
  - Use the topics in the “Academic Knowledge” section of the high school AKS for World History as the basis for developing practice test questions.
  - Each Gateway writing topic consists of the Historical Background statement and a Writing Task.
• The Writing Task explains the general theme of the assigned task: (“Write an essay in which you discuss the cultural contributions of the Renaissance.”).
• The Writing Task also instructs the writer about specific information which must be included in the response (“Discuss the artistic contributions of the Renaissance; Discuss the literary contributions of the Renaissance; Discuss the scientific contributions of the Renaissance”).
• Each part of the Writing Task requires the writer to explain and apply facts, concepts and principles from the topic. Make sure that each part of a practice Gateway writing tasks accesses Level Three or Four of the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) classification.
• Review the parts of a Gateway Task with students and ask them to generate sample Writing Tasks as a homework assignment.

Administering a Gateway Practice Assessment
• Practice assessments should follow the procedures outlined in the Gateway Examiner’s Manual.

• Encourage students to use the Gateway writing checklist during the practice assessment.

• Practice assessments may be appropriate for both ninth and tenth grade students; however, the timing of the practice assessment may have an impact on how best to interpret the results. An assessment administered at the beginning of the tenth grade school year may not predict how much content area recall students will demonstrate six months later during the actual administration of the Spring Gateway Assessment. Also, students who take a practice Gateway during the ninth grade may not perform the same way near the end of their tenth grade year. Gateway practice assessments in ninth and early tenth grade may identify at risk students, but may not serve as effective predictors for other student groups.

• The primary value of conducting a practice Gateway may lie in the practice it provides for the actual Gateway assessment. A practice Gateway provides practice writing in a timed context with no outside resources and can help familiarize students with both the format for the assigned task as well as for the scoring expectations, because student responses can be scored and returned.

Scoring a Gateway Practice Assessment
There are many options for how to score a practice Gateway Assessment:
• Independent Scoring: The teacher scores only the writing samples produced in his or her own classroom.
• Pair Scoring: Two high school teachers score each writing sample separately then discuss any differences in scores. The two teachers might both be content area teachers, or one may be a Language Arts teacher.
• Cooperative Scoring (school level): All high school social studies teachers discuss and score the writing samples together or trade samples to score. Each sample may be scored by more than one person.
• Cooperative Scoring (system level): Social Studies teachers from different schools work together to score the samples from that system. Two teachers score each writing sample and differences are resolved by another teacher or a panel trained in using the Gateway rubrics.

Writing To Learn

In the Gateway Assessment for Social Studies, students write to demonstrate what they have learned in World History, but writing in the classroom can also be a vehicle for learning throughout the school year. Research indicates that writing gets students actively engaged with subject matter and promotes deeper understanding of historical content. Content area teachers can use informal and formal writing assignments in the classroom to teach content and to assess their students’ understanding of course material.

Creating effective writing to learn assignments in social studies requires planning and structure but does not require extensive training in the language arts. Many writing educators recommend a format called a mini-lesson, based on the work of Lucy Calkins and the Reading and Writing Project. A mini-lesson focuses on one specific aspect of the writing process such as generating ideas, finding a focus, using graphic organizers, or revising to clarify major ideas. These can all be adapted to writing in social studies.

Most writing mini-lessons have several steps which are common to all good teaching practices: making a connection to the students’ prior knowledge to set the context, introducing a specific teaching point and explaining its purpose, modeling by conducting a think aloud for the entire class, giving students the opportunity to practice the skill or strategy with teacher assistance and individual feedback, and providing an opportunity for independent practice. Although high school students may have many years of writing instruction, they will benefit from multiple opportunities to practice social studies writing in the classroom.

Even shorter writing assignments that require analysis and interpretation of historical events will provide valuable practice for the Gateway assessment and reinforce the concepts being taught throughout the school year. Content area teachers can also use these assignments as formative assessments during each unit to check student comprehension of the course material. It is not
necessary to score every informal written assignment. Teachers can use whatever criterion is regularly assigned to homework or out of class reading assignments.

Time constraints are an issue for classroom teachers in every content area. Incorporating writing to learn activities into the social studies curriculum may require significant up front planning time. Teachers can ask their schools and systems for planning time during the year to develop a bank of social studies writing activities that can be shared within and across schools. This initiative can include social studies teachers and language arts teachers from both the high schools and middle schools. Effective social studies writing for the Gateway assessment requires cognitive skills that take several years to develop.

The following ideas are suggestions for informal writing assignments. Teachers should model the expectations for these assignments and compose a sample with the whole class.

- At the beginning of the school year, teachers and students compile a list of the themes or big ideas in world history. For each reading assignment, students complete a brief analysis (one paragraph) of one social studies theme covered in the assignment. For example, in a reading assignment covering the Renaissance, students could choose to discuss philosophy, religion, art, literature, technology, foreign relations, or economics, but students would be required to do at least one analytic piece in each of these areas over the course of the school year. These assignments could be compiled into review guides for classroom assessments and the Gateway assessment. Teachers who use these assignments for formative assessments will receive feedback on what themes in World History are most challenging for high school students.

- A brief analysis of the impact or contribution of an historical event on today’s world based either on a reading assignment or classroom lecture.

- An analysis or concept map that follows one strand of technology from the ancient to the modern world.

- A comparison of labor practices in two historical eras.

- A comparison/contrast of an ancient vs. modern form of government.

- A comparison/contrast of the social conditions that led to two major revolutions.

- A comparison/contrast of two historical figures who built empires.
• A comparison/contrast of an ancient vs. modern class structure in two societies.

• An analysis of the conflict between church and state in European countries.

• An argument for or against Imperialism and Colonialism.

• An argument for the culture that has contributed the most to modern day America.

• An analysis of the causes of the rise and/or fall of European empires.

• An argument about the major causes of change and growth in world history.