**Resources and the Future of New York State Global Regents’**

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**Introduction**

 Starting off as a new teacher is one of the most difficult things an educator will do in their career. Fresh out of the gate, teaching should be fun and, in some aspects, it is. For instance, when I began student teaching, my cooperating teachers told me I had “too much energy,” and would scare off students from listening due to this. That said, there are many more difficult aspects of being a new teacher vs. “fun” ones. Especially being a social studies new teacher, one has to realize that school districts do not always focus time on this content. “Schools are often laser-focused on preparing students for standardized tests in math, science and reading,” (Cardinali 2018). Math, science and reading are interpreted as more important than learning about what happened a thousand years ago. There is this obstacle to overcome, but there is also the bump of not having resources for regents’ exams or any state-sponsored tests. The main thing I was told when in college was, “get ready to teach 10th or 11th grade because those are the curriculums that have the regents exams in New York State.” Now sure, it might seem like there are immense resources out there for teachers to use, but most that focus on the regent’s content, the teacher has to pay for. If we are being honest here, first year teachers make an average of $42,844 annually (Knezevic 2024) which means when a district does not give you the budget with big dollar signs on it, no one can afford it. It should be mentioned that one specific website that does offer regents content for social studies is newvisions.com. This website offers standards, objectives, curriculum pacing, videos, note guides, questions and essentially everything for a first-year teacher, besides answer keys (New Visions for Public Schools, 2024). The issue with new visions is that one, if you do not know some of the answers, there is nowhere to find them and the second being, if you do not teach in a classroom where students are continuously watching videos and filling out note sheets, than this website can not be used. The most in my opinion that it can be used for is regents questions, but even those seem a bit extreme at times.

**Exams are Focusing on Contemporary Issues, So Should We!**

 Where are exams going? Where should New York State go with exams and why are there not resources for exams? I can assure my audience here that the reason I made this website as a tool is to offer as many resources as I can for first year teachers who are educating in both Global 9 and 10. I state on the Global 9 page that this course is specifically there to get students ready for Global 10. One aspect of these exams that is beginning to make sense is the idea that especially for enduring issue essays, the state is asking students to discuss contemporary issues. A resource from a course I took at Brockport discusses the importance of this: “Despite history’s resiliency, the critics’ point that history’s contribution to the modern curriculum could only be useful if it cast light on contemporary problems proved potent, if not commanding. Although the stewards of history sought to maintain the traditional history curriculum to ‘train the intellect,’ social studies practitioners relentlessly pressed their demands that every content area must pass the test of social utility as a subject area that contributed to understanding and resolving contemporary social problems,” (Saxe 2003). Students that can understand contemporary issues can also make connections to what they have learned about history. “Scholars have argued we need to integrate more discussion of civics and history into reading instruction. While we agree this could be useful, we are skeptical this will lead to sustained improvement in social studies scores unless we attend to more systemic barriers that stand in the way of boosting students' social studies knowledge and skills,” (Kaufman & Diliberti 2023). The reason why I integrate these findings is the idea that with this Global 10 enduring issue essay, students should be focusing on contemporary issues. On this website, there is a link to different contemporary issues that can be discussed in the classroom. In mine specifically, we have discussed the Israeli/Hamas and the Russian/Ukraine conflicts and how that specifically impacts our world in the United States. We have also had discussions/worked on what a World War III simulation would look like and how people in the United States should be weary of the decisions other countries are making. This exam focuses on these issues that have endured across time and it is our job as educators to bring contemporary issues to the table. This is simply not just to memorize for an exam though, which is what my next session will discuss.

**Memorization is Not Why We Teach (Contemporary Issues Asked on Exams Should Accelerate a Society of Awareness)**

There is a key aspect that new and veteran teachers should understand in the world of social studies as our content area: whether it be what happened ten thousand years ago vs. a contemporary issue as discussed in the previous section, a huge reason I’m making this website is to understand that tests should not just be for memorization. I tell my students all the time that back when I was in high school participating in school plays, I would read my lines off a thousand times a day. When I got my lines right, I would read them off again. That is memorization. About ten days after the performances, the lines that had just been spoken thousands of times for a few months had been forgotten. That is a great example of memorization and when teachers teach to the exam just to memorize, they are doing an injustice to their students. Why is this the case? The answer is simple and easy! When states put funding on tests, educators will teach to the test. “Leaders in the new-civics movement are nervous. If states pledge allegiance to large-scale standardized tests as a measure of civics learning, will they kill off its best qualities? Will those tests do to civics what No Child Left Behind-mandated tests did to English/language arts and math: narrow the curriculum down to ideas that can be captured by filling in a bubble sheet?” (Gewertz 2019). This is exactly what schools are doing and there is not much dispute here between teachers that teach in today’s age. States are pledging to these standardized tests and even if it’s a contemporary issue, the test is memorization. Jennifer D. Klein discusses how we as educators teach to the test, and its simply not even what we went in to the profession to do. “Afraid to lose our jobs and our livelihoods, most teachers have done the best we could–but most teach to the test a little more each year, even though we recognize that this isn’t education (and certainly isn’t why we went into education to begin with),” (Klein 2020). Again, the reason we went in to this profession was not to just discuss a few things with students including some contemporary issues, and have students memorize some facts that they will forget. To discuss this further, I’d like to connect this to my website and my delivery for my project. As mentioned earlier, students should learn everything they need to know about Global 10 in Global 9, besides the content. This is why I’ve provided on my site, as well as discuss this with my 9th grade classes that they should take more than a few things with them in to 10th grade. An example of this would be what China looks like at the end of Global 9. In 1644, China and the Ming Dynasty closed their doors after merchants like Marco Polo and Zheng He accelerated trade in China. The reason they stopped allowing foreigners was because of the culture diffusion (which is an enduring issue) that was going on in the country. The Ming rulers did not like the aspects of Christianity that were flooding into the empire. Due to this, they closed their doors until the British showed up (this is a conversation in Global 10 during imperialism). Here is where contemporary issues come in to play. I discuss this with my students that there is a direct connection between the Ming Dynasty closing their doors in 1644 and China being Communist. There is a long story involved, but China closing their doors in the seventeenth-century should not be something that is simply memorized. Instead, how does it impact our world today. It is my belief that my website has provided those resources for teachers (not just new ones either). That goes a long way in my rationale for this project. Educators including the state should realize that test scores are temporary as well as results. Looking at contemporary issues with connections builds a professional and society that is aware. It’s evident, “test scores might improve a trifle for a time; if all you do is drill a kid, you do get something for your money, temporarily. Not a lot, though, and not over the long haul,” (Kozol 2000). The resources that I provide as well as will continue to provide should influence educators around the state to facilitate contemporary issue discussions that connect to previous events in history and take these conversations to perform well on exams. The whole idea of this rationale paper is the idea that it is understood that these exams are frustrating, but as of right now, they are not going away. That is why my website will stand up and connect these contemporary issues with previous events in history as I discussed earlier with the Ming Dynasty and how that can have a direct connection to China becoming and staying communist to this day.

Continuing the conversation that connects to my rationale about contemporary issues with memorization, I hope my website has a bipartisan vibe to it. The reason: while teachers discuss today’s problems, especially domestic issues, politics can be shared. “Politics and ‘culture wars’ have always had a hand in shaping what subjects teachers feel they can and can’t address in the classroom,” (Schwartz 2023). Names will not be mentioned, but back in high school, I had an over the top while discussing politics teacher. For the sake of better explaining this, I’ll call them Mr. Steves. This gentleman would always bring up domestic issues, but every time they did so, it would be completely one-sided, and even if a different side was presented, students would be put down quick. The conversation was Mr. Steves and anyone who agreed with him. I strive to be the exact opposite of Mr. Steves. Why? Simple, he did not allow for students to think for themselves. I think to myself every time I bring up a contemporary issue, especially one that could be used on the regent’s exam, if I’m like Mr. Steves, I hope a student calls me out on it. Even if a colleague did that, I would respect it, because teachers influence the way their students think. Although we are not parents of these children, we are influencers. Especially because if the “today’s issues” are not talked about at home, a social studies educator’s classroom might be the only place where that conversation happens. Thus, it’s a big deal that we influence our students. Our job is simple as social studies educators, get students ready for the next level, and facilitate positivity and facts to our students to make their own decisions. I am not going to discuss the C3 framework too much in my rationale, as if I’m being honest, a course I took at SUNY Brockport did somewhat shy me away from whether it works or not. I do want to bring to the table how it discusses what social studies prepares students for because I think it speaks to my website and what I have created. “As a core area in the K-12 curriculum, social studies prepares students for their postsecondary futures, including the disciplinary practices and literacies needed for college-level work in social studies academic courses, and the critical thinking, problem solving, and collaborative skills needed for the workplace,” (Swan et al., 2010). The key of this section of my rationale is to hopefully get across to readers and users of my resources that I am bipartisan when discussing issues, especially domestic, and I hope every teacher is. There is less space for Mr. Steves’ educators in our schools and more space for teachers that are open-minded and willing to see every side. This is especially for when our students present different viewpoints. The IB Learning Profile describes an open-minded learner as someone who “understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions or other individuals and communities,” (100 Mentors Team, 2023). Our students should not be the only open-minded learners as we should be as well. As I have discussed, it is my hope that educators that utilize my resources think of me as an open-minded learner as well as accelerate the idea in their own classroom. Again, if every educator could close the idea of how Mr. Steves taught and do the exact opposite presenting all sides and taking in information on a daily basis, our schools would be more reliable.

**Where Are Regents Exams Going?**

 As I write this, I too am currently getting ready to prepare my Global 10 students for the big summative test at the end of this school year. I (like any sane teacher) am nervous for my students. One of the major reasons why is because these tests are so memorized-based as discussed earlier in my rationale. If there is some piece of information that my students don’t remember, my job is on the line because of it. Especially as a new teacher without tenure where with obvious exaggeration, if I cough the wrong way, I could have a pink slip in my mail box. That said, the future of regents exams are up in air. The entire reason I’m doing this project is to provide as many resources as I can for Global 9 and 10 teachers in order for them to prepare their students for regents exams. “New York State education bosses are considering ditching regents exams as a graduation requirement for high school students, leading to some education advocates accusing them of dumbing down standards,” (Campanile & Nesi 2023). The question becomes, is getting regents exams dumbing down standards, or is it simply moving in the right direction? Based on the research in which I have performed in this course as well as previous courses I’ve taken at the SUNY Brockport, my answer is clear and backed by research on where regents exams are going. The answer; straight to the garbage can!

Before diving in to my research on this issue, I do want to define both formative and summative assessments just so my readers and fellow teachers utilizing my research and resources are on the same page with me. “Formative assessments as those intended to enrich the learning process by providing nonjudgmental feedback; they are assessments for learning than assessments of learning,” (Kibble 2017). “Summative assessments are usually applied at the end of a period of instruction to measure the outcome of student learning. They are high stakes for all concerned, most obviously for the learners who are being judged but also in a sense that the data may be used to drive course improvement,” (Kibble 2017).

The future of public education, especially summative assessments in the social studies is inquiry-based learning (IBL) aligned with project-based assessments (PBA). IBL is asking a series of essential or compelling questions to students and having them research these and create conclusions based on their research using evidence. In a series of studies, three authors examine the impact on inquiry-based learning in the classroom where students are continuously struggling to be engaged with the tradition form of teaching. The research question being addressed was “What are the perceived influences of the inquiry-based learning professional learning program on student engagement?” Interviews were conducted with both primary and secondary teachers who had previously participated in professional development on inquiry-based pedagogies as well as their students who undertook inquiry-based projects on infrastructure programs in their local communities. These interviews (around 30-minutes in duration) were asked the essential question above, but were also asked in-depth inquiries pertaining to their experiences with inquiry-based learning in terms of professional development and the negative/positive impacts of the pedagogical use. It was discovered that although this study primarily focused on STEM-based learning, while answering the question above, educators and their students saw a major positive impact in using inquiry-based learning in the classroom. This was especially true when implementing the pedagogy to a hands-on activity as the one used in this research. Thus, combining inquiry-based learning with project-based learning was a success for increasing student outcomes. The future of our field is using IBL in order to achieve student success. Educators can utilize the formative journey plan as well as utilize primary and secondary sources that are not going away when it comes to our discipline and answer questions using research, (Attard & Berger 2021). The easiest way to describe a classroom with IBL is one that is student-oriented and focuses on students inquiring about essential questions on certain topics for different units. Students can work together, but in this type of classroom, the educator in the room is the facilitator of knowledge as opposed to the holder of knowledge which we as teachers have been since the dawn of education. There should be a clear connection between IBL in the classroom and PBL as the summative assessment that is being given.

Essentially, regents’ exams in the state of New York should be changed to project-based. This will allow students to showcase their skills with something productive as opposed to just passing a pen and paper test. The best analogy that can be made here is when I go to a mechanic, I’d like the person that knows how to fix a vehicle, not someone who just knows how to pass a test. The “PBL” for being a mechanic is can you figure out what is wrong with the car, and can you fix it? If the answer is yes to both of these, then we can move forward and there is no paper and pen test needed. Studies reaffirm the methodology that educators in preschool, elementary and secondary schools can use project-based assessment as a way to review learning outcomes for students. It’s noted that Holm reaches to research where this phenomenon has already been researched and has led to ideas like project-based assessment needing those driving essential questions where students identify worldly issues, and are student centered. The study took many different publications of peer reviewed articles that had overviewed project-based learning and the traditional lecture-based learning style and compared them. It is a myth that only lectures and direct instruction can open the door for students to gain mastery on content area because as the study shows, project-based learning/assessments that have those driving questions, and are mostly student oriented where they can research worldly issues are more effective with student outcomes than the traditional style of teaching (Holm 2011). This is especially true for those courses/disciplines that have standardized exams where it is only thought that direct instruction can be used to achieve content mastery. It is concluded at the ending of the study that project-based instruction/assessments while used in pre-kindergarten to 12th grade yields improvement in content learning, higher levels of engagement and a more positive outlook to disciplines within the subject. The future of our field is projects and showcasing what students can do with using inquiry-based learning and project-based learning. Now exam scores do sometimes show that we are preparing students for the next level as it is seen that New York State with regents scores are on average bringing students to higher grade level scores than other states in the region (Bishop et al., 2000). This study does outline how regents’ exams are preparing students for the next level more than other states in the region are. That said, students being able to showcase their skills with portfolio’s/different projects will show that students are ready for next level education/work. This will pull New York State even farther in their lead in terms of public education. Projects will also pull the gap closer with students of low socio-economic status. They’re able to showcase their skills as opposed to having to take a pen and paper test that relies on their schools funding. This connects to teachers not having a budget to buy study books for their students because the district cannot afford it. This disproportionately helps wealthier districts and it also is a huge money maker for the state. Education including both formative and summative assessments should be based on growth and students learning, not making money!

**Conclusion: What I Want to Change/How I Want to Enact Change**

 To conclude this rationale, I’m providing for the website I created, I first would like to send a few thank you’s. Thank you to Gowanda High School which had some magnificent teachers in it that strove for me to excel in the classroom and taught me that I wanted to pursue the same career. Thank you to St. Bonaventure University and SUNY Brockport for being my two post-secondary school homes for learning how to be a professional and well-rounded educator in the twenty-first century. That thanks goes to all the faculty, staff including professors that have helped me in so many ways. I’d like to thank the current district I work in; Ellicottville as well as Springville, Gowanda and Silver Creek that have all fostered great experiences for me and my journey. I would not be where I am without my family so it is only right to give them a shout out in helping me through my work/school life. Lastly, I would like to thank fellow educators in this profession. This is difficult, but as stated, if you truly enjoy it, that is how you know you’re in the right profession. Speaking to young, and experienced teachers, there are going to be days where you question why you even do things, but there are many more days in a career of experiencing excitement and enjoyment from being in the classroom.

 So, what do I want to change/how can I change it? My project is based off providing resources for new teachers that are teaching Global 9 and 10. I walked in to teaching with a few resources, but not much considering I was teaching AP World History in year one. Teachers should look to this website for information, knowledge and a reminder that teaching is a great profession! I have provided many sources on this website as well as in this paper. Utilize them as you need to because that is why they are there. I am not writing this for teachers-pay-teachers. Yes, I could certainly make money on this, but why not just make it all free and help teachers that need the help. I am happy to be an educator and ready to take on the rest of my career. Everything in the world of pedagogy and education is always changing and it is something we should always be ready for. To finish my rationale, my hope is that this website provides relief to those that need it, including students. Thank you.

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