**History Learning Goals**

The history design team used the Core Constructs as the basis for designing a set of learning goals. These are what the design teachers infused into their curriculum at middle and high school levels. They were useful because they helped the teachers to focus on meaningful historical thinking and practice as they planned to engage students in reading and writing. The explanation provided here has been excerpted from an article written by the team (Shanahan, Bolz, Cribb, Goldman, Heppeler, and Manderino, 2016).

**1.** Students engage in close reading of historical resources, including primary, secondary, and tertiary documents, to construct domain knowledge. Close reading encompasses meta-comprehension and self-regulation of the process.
Reading closely is just as important and relevant to the study of history as it is to the English Language Arts. Through close reading in history, students learn what the text says – literal comprehension, as well as what the text is doing, and its larger meaning. These processes inform analysis and evaluation of the information, processes that are detailed in additional learning goals (Goals 2-6) discussed below. Close reading is in service of these other goals.

*When prompted, historians have been found to be actively reflective about the processes they use to read history text, and they explicitly regulate how they read. Thus, a close reading goal includes these attributes. We wanted students to engage in the process of close reading as historians do.*

**2.** Students synthesize and reason within and across historical resources using comparison, contrast, corroboration, contextualization, sourcing, and other historical inquiry processes.

*Historians have particular ways of interpreting what they read and study about the past. They consult many sources of information because they know that no single source tells the whole story. They compare one version of events with another, looking for consistencies and inconsistencies across different versions. They interpret a document based upon its place in history, about what was happening at the time and how the document fits into that milieu, the chronology of events and activities, and how it helps them make claims about aspects of history such as cause-effect and significance. Like historians, we wanted students to engage in these processes in order to identify, understand, and make claims about significance, cause/effect, and other insights into the past.*

**3.** Students construct claim-evidence relations, using historical evidence and explaining the relationship among pieces of evidence and between evidence and claims. Historical claims interpret the past. The interpretations are grounded in historical evidence (written documents, eyewitness testimonies and artifacts from the period of study) and informed by the work of historians on the subject. These claims, which form historical argument, may be expressed as descriptive, explanatory or narrative accounts.

*Historical arguments explain the relationships among pieces of evidence and the reasoning that connects evidence and claims. For example, a historian may describe and discuss the evidence itself, show how various pieces of evidence together build a cohesive picture or how a particular perspective made sense within the context of the times. We wanted students to engage in historical argumentation themselves by learning to analyze evidence, create claims, and explain how the evidence connects to the claim.*

**4.** Students use interpretive frameworks such as societal structures (e.g. political, economic, technological), systems (e.g. feudalism, colonialism, Jim Crow), patterns (e.g. periodization, individual vs. mass agency, immigration, industrialization) and schools of historical thought (e.g. idealism, material determinism) to analyze historical claims and evidence.

*Interpretive frameworks are the lenses historians use to analyze the past. These lenses allow them to not only analyze claims and evidence but to create their own arguments and even their own interpretive frameworks. We wanted students to become aware of all of these kinds of interpretive frameworks and use them in the development of their own arguments.*

**5.** Students evaluate historical interpretations for coherence, completeness, the quality of evidence and reasoning, and perspective.

*In order for historians to create plausible interpretations of the past, they must evaluate what they read, and so must students. In order to evaluate a historical interpretation (argument), they must be able to read the argument closely and analyze it on a number of levels. We want students to recognize the work of historians as argument and have the tools to comprehend, analyze and evaluate them.*

**6.** Students demonstrate understanding of the epistemology of history—as inquiry into the past, seeing history as competing interpretations that are contested, incomplete approximations of the past, open to new evidence and new interpretations.

*This last focus is the most overarching of the six—encompassing understandings gleaned from each of the prior points. Students will be hampered in developing historical inquiry practices and achieving the other five learning goals if they do not take up the epistemology of historians. However, many students view history as a set of facts to memorize. Rather than just hope that students, by working toward the other five goals, will come to view history as interpretation, the epistemology needs to be made explicit through document sets that contradict one another (provide conflicting accounts), through discussions about why historians read and write the way they do, and by opportunities to engage in reading, thinking and writing like a historian.*