

**HARFORD COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
BOARD OF EDUCATION
ACTION REPORT**

June 9, 2025

HUMAN GEOGRAPHY 7

Background Information

During the SY21-22 and SY22-23, Maryland State Department of Education convened a multidisciplinary group to draft a new framework for the Social Studies 6 (SS6) and Social Studies 7 (SS7) courses. The resulting SS6-7 framework is a two-year World Human Geography course described by the course overview as follows:

Grades 6 and 7 social studies is a two-year experience in which students employ geographic, economic, civic, and historical tools to understand how big geographic questions link the past to the present. Grade 6 and 7 social studies builds on the elementary social studies courses by aligning a progression of skills and student understanding of civics, geography, economics, and history. This two-year sequence ensures that students understand the global context for the events they will study in Middle School United States History as well as establish a foundation for launching their high school experience in Modern World History. Exploration of each topic should start with an examination of how location affects the events, ideas, and individuals being investigated. In addition, students should understand the broader historical context for each topic. Significant opportunities exist within the framework to integrate claim construction, evidence evaluation, and argumentative writing so that grades 6 and 7 scaffold to support student success on the middle school assessment administered at the end of grade 8.

The framework for Grades 6 and 7 are organized around a series of compelling questions related to enduring geographic understandings that link student investigation of the past and present. According to the MSDE Course Overview, the four enduring geographic understandings are:

- **Movement:** People, goods, and ideas move across the planet through migration, trade, transportation, and communication networks.
- **Human Systems:** Humans develop spatial interactions, land use and settlement patterns in the creation of economic, social, political, and cultural systems that connect and divide people across multiple scales.
- **Human Interactions with the Environment:** Human and environmental systems are interdependent. Humans modify the Earth at various scales to meet wants and needs, and also adapt to long- and short-term changes in environmental systems.
- **Place and Region:** The physical and human attributes that make a specific location, or place, unique. The shared attributes that link places into coherent and distinct areas, or regions.

In January of 2024, the Maryland State Department of Education approved the new frameworks for SS6-7 and the HCPS Office of Social Studies convened a multidisciplinary curriculum team consisting of current middle school social studies teachers, high school teachers with experience in teaching the College Board AP Human Geography course that is closely aligned with the geographic thinking perspectives inherent in the new SS6-7 frameworks, and a Library/Media Specialist to create a new Social Studies Human Geography 6 curriculum aligned to the new framework.

The team evaluated the SS6-7 framework and, based on the scope and sequence of the high school AP Human Geography course, sequenced the units to better align and scaffold geographic thinking skills. The team then wrote a curriculum for the first four units, which comprises the HCPS Social Studies Human Geography 6 course. This was to align our HCPS curriculum with the MSDE frameworks. This course was taken to GCC in April of 2024 and then initially to the Board of Education in June of 2024 with final approval passed by a majority vote of the Board of Education in July of 2024.

During SY24-25, the Office of Social Studies convened a curriculum development team to complete this process by creating a Social Studies Human Geography 7 curriculum to align SS7 to the new MSDE framework. The team represents a diverse range of perspectives and experiences, with classroom teachers from every brick-and-mortar middle school, a special educator, a Librarian/Media Center Specialist, and a group of high school teachers consulting. The Media Center Specialist played a key role in curating credible and accessible materials, while the special educator ensured that differentiation strategies are embedded to meet the needs of all learners.

During whole-day meetings, the team received evidence-based professional development to support their capacity around both content and pedagogy. The team broke into subgroups to develop materials aligned to the framework. Subgroups presented draft experiences for whole team review. These presentations sparked rich discussions, with team members providing thoughtful feedback through a structured “glows and grows” process to ensure that resources are balanced, perspectives are diverse, and instructional strategies are refined. Based on this feedback, subgroups made necessary adjustments, supported by the media specialist, who evaluated materials for bias, readability, and credibility, and the special educator, who advised on accessibility and instructional scaffolding. Between meetings, team members conduct in-depth research to build a strong foundation of subject knowledge and develop evidence-based instructional strategies.

In addition to the Curriculum Development Team, an Independent Review Team worked to evaluate and edit the units once they were in a state of relative completeness from the primary curriculum team. This secondary team looked for alignment of materials with the MSDE framework, a balance of perspectives in resources, diversity of instructional approaches, and readability of procedures to ensure all our teachers, whether new to the profession or seasoned veteran, have what they need to be successful in implementing the curriculum.

The end product of this work is the new Human Geography 7 curriculum, which is intended to replace the Ancient World History 7 curriculum currently used for Social Studies Grade 7. The course, like its counterpart for Grade 6, is an inquiry-design modeled curriculum grounded in the four Enduring Geographic Understandings with four units structured as chronological case studies on central geographic themes. The four units are as follows:

Unit 1: Place and Region	
Enduring Understanding: The physical and human characteristics of a location are defined and redefined by internal and external factors.	
Unit Question: How do the physical and human characteristics of a place impact internal and external power relationships?	
Experience 1: Pre-Columbian Civilizations in the Americas (250-1600 CE)	Does where you live determine how you live?
Experience 2: Tokugawa Shogunate (1600-1868 CE)	How do geographic features influence the distribution of power?
Experience 3: South African Apartheid (1948-1994 CE)	How can place be manipulated to define human relationships?
Experience 4: Jerusalem (1900 CE- Today)	Who defines place?

Unit 2: Movement of Humans	
Unit Enduring Understanding: Human movement facilitates the exchange of religious, cultural, and material goods which can create conflict and transformation.	
Humans develop spatial interactions, land use and settlement patterns and create political structures that generate stability, promote conflict, cause rebellion, and connect and divide people across multiple scales.	
Unit Question: How does human movement create change?	
Experience 1: The Development of the Muslim World (Dar Al Islam) (600-1100 CE)	Does territorial expansion strengthen or weaken cultural exchange?
Experience 2: Mongol Expansion (1100-1400 CE)	Can movement create power?
Experience 3: Partition of India (1940-1971 CE)	How do borders shape people's lives?
Experience 4: 21 st Century Migrations (2000 CE- Today)	Is migration inevitable?

Unit 3: Movement of Pathogens and Ideas	
Unit Enduring Understanding: The movement of pathogens and ideas drives innovation, generates fear, and facilitates change.	
Unit Question: How can the movement of ideas and the spread of disease create change?	

Experience 1: The Movement of Faith (600 BCE- 1000 CE)	How do religious systems move and spread?
Experience 2: Bubonic Plague (1340-1350 CE)	Does the spread of disease cause people to unite?
Experience 3: The Decline of Empires (1945-1997 CE)	How can the movement of ideas lead to change?
Experience 4: Pandemics (1980 CE- Today)	Can human systems prevent the movement of disease?

Unit 4: Regional Case Study of Geographic Thinking	
Unit Enduring Understanding: Geography can explain political, economic, and social patterns of settlement and interaction.	
Unit Question: How do geographic understandings explain the history of the Americas?	
Experience 1: First American Nations (10,000 BCE- 1607 CE)	How and why do cultural ideas, practices, and innovations change or disappear over time?
Experience 2: Transatlantic Slave Trade (1500-1808 CE)	How was culture created, preserved, and destroyed in the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade?
Experience 3: Colonial and Native Interactions (1490-1763 CE)	What creates conflict and cooperation among and between groups of humans?
Experience 4: American Indians Today (2010s CE- Present)	Who are American Indians today?

Implementation of this curriculum will include provided supports for teachers beginning in Summer 2025 with Sneak Peek sessions hosted by the Office of Social Studies. Launch Week professional development will focus on providing both content and implementation support for Grade 7 Social Studies teachers. Additionally, the Office of Social Studies will provide job-embedded professional development through Curriculum Specialist Office Hours, during which the Social Studies Curriculum Specialist will engage in collaborative planning with content teams. District-wide professional development time for Social Studies will focus for Grade 7 teachers on providing support for implementation based on ongoing feedback cycles. The Office of Social Studies will also plan to host facilitated teacher-leader collaborative planning sessions, during which time teacher leaders from each middle school will meet with the Office of Social Studies to receive professional development and supported collaborative planning. These teacher-leaders will then bring their learning back to their building-based peers.

The curriculum will be evaluated by quarterly teachers surveys and teacher feedback during district-wide professional development time. Additionally, the curriculum will be evaluated by gathering qualitative data during informal walk-throughs and formal observations.

Fiscal impacts for this curriculum are supported in the Curriculum Budget, which is part of the HCPS Operating Budget and is managed by the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum,

Instruction, and Assessment. This budget is allocated across content offices to support projects throughout the year. The specific fiscal impacts of this curriculum include the development thereof, paid for by FY24-25 substitute and stipend funds (\$31,073). In FY25-26, implementation will require stipend funds to compensate teachers who opt into participation of Sneak Peek PD and substitute funds to facilitate the Teacher-Leader PD sessions (estimated \$9,125). There are no purchased materials embedded in the curriculum and so there are no additional costs.

Requested Action

The Office of Social Studies requests that Human Geography 7 be approved by the General Curriculum Committee for recommendation to the Superintendent for Board approval.