In 2007-09, World History for Us All (WHFUA) undertook a project to pilot and evaluate elements of the model curriculum in middle school classrooms in the Long Beach, California Unified School District. The teachers who took part in the project have also developed new teaching units for the WHFUA model curriculum.

This project was administered by the National Center for History in the Schools at UCLA. The project involved a collaboration of the Long Beach USD, CSU Long Beach, San Diego State University, and the California History-Social Science Project. This project was made possible by a grant from the Ahmanson Foundation.

The nine middle school teachers who took part in the project initially met with WHFUA leaders for four days in the summer of 2007 to thoroughly familiarize themselves with WHFUA, its conceptual approach, and its online navigation. Subsequently, these teachers piloted selected teaching units from the WHFUA site in their own classrooms. They systematically kept journals of their experience with these units, and they collected both materials used in teaching the units and samples of student work. In a series of monthly meetings over the following months, the teachers reported on their classroom experiences, including modifications they made to the units (mainly for grade level cognitive reasons), successful and not-so-successful class strategies and activities, student response, and changes in their understandings of teaching world history.

The nine teachers have also written new teaching units for WHFUA based on their experience with the model curriculum. Several of these units are now on the WHFUA site, all of them units at the Closeup level of historical scale. Work continues with several of the teachers to bring new units to completion.

Linda Mehlbrech, Curriculum Leader for History-Social Science, and Dawn Lakowski, History Coach, at the Teacher Resource Center of Long Beach USD, facilitated the project in several ways. The nine participating teachers were:

Neal Cates, Hoover MS
Michelle Ferrer, John Muir Academy
Gail Hamilton, Bancroft MS
Gabrielle Mercado, Bancroft MS
Gerry Morrison, Hoover MS

Christy Rodriguez, Rogers MS
Joel Rothblatt, Emerson MS (LAUSD)
Renee Shipman, Milliken High School
Linda Wohlman, Bancroft Middle School
World History for Us All and the Challenges of Teaching World History

World history is arguably the fastest growing subject in the social studies, if not the entire school curriculum, – and despite its increasing popularity, it is among the most challenging subjects to teach. The growth in the past 20 years has been remarkable. Over two thirds of the states require it for high school graduation and the majority of high school students now take world history in some form or another. 2 A 2005 study of high school transcripts reported that more than 75% of American high school students had taken at least one secondary world history class. Since fewer than 33% of high school students had taken a world history course in 1982, this dramatic increase made world history the largest growth sector in the American curriculum.3 The Advanced Placement World History exam, offered for the first time less than ten years ago, is now among College Board’s most popular offerings, trailing only U.S. History among AP social studies exams.4 The National Assessment Governing Board, an arm of the federal government, is exploring the possibility of adding world history to its National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), often called the “nation’s report card.” In short, a consensus appears to have formed about the value of world history in the education of American students. State governments, local school districts, parents and students have made world history just about co-equal to U.S. history in popularity.

However, despite this growing consensus and increasing popularity, most teachers and students face significant challenges in trying to teach or learn world history. Previous research suggests that teachers find it difficult to bring into focus the history of the entire

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1Bob Bain and Lauren McArthur Harris are both former teachers of world history in high school with other 30 years of classroom experience between them. They study the teaching and learning of history across multiple sites and age levels. Bain is Associate Professor of History and Social Science Education at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor where Harris is a post-doctoral fellow in History and Social Science Teacher Education. Their recent research has focused on cognition in world history classrooms.


world without falling into the “one darn culture [or thing] after another” trap that has long plagued history instruction. Of course, developing meaningful and coherent history instruction at any scale – whether regional, national, or local – is a challenge, but the difficulties are more acute for teachers of world history.

Why? First, there is some confusion over the contours of the world history course. Recent analyses of state standards revealed significant differences in the scope, sequence and foci of world historical content. Standards vary in their quality and usefulness. Second, few teachers of world history have had any formal training in the subject, a perilous situation caused by out-of-field teaching and thin certification requirements in this area. Professional development to help teachers of world history acquire needed content knowledge is sparse and episodic. Unlike American history, there are no national programs to raise teachers’ knowledge of world history. Third, curriculum in world history is also chaotic. There are no coordinated, dedicated, or tested curriculum projects in world history, though as we will argue below, World History for Us All is the rare exception. And, fourth, though there has been a dramatic increase in instructional accountability through educational testing, we have few reliable and valid assessments targeted to probe students’ understanding of world history. Finally, possibly as a result of the above, there is growing evidence that teachers have a very difficult time organizing world history coherently either for themselves or for their students.


7"Out of field teaching" occurs when teachers teach in areas without either a major or minor in the content they teach. While this affects all subject areas, history and the social studies are impacted more than other content areas. About 60% of students in history courses have teachers who have not majored or minored in history – any history, let alone world history. See Richard Ingersoll, "The Problem of Under-qualified Teachers in American Secondary Schools." Educational Researcher v.28, # 2 (1999): 26-37.


9The Teaching American History Grant Program provides professional development for teachers of U.S. history. To date, the U.S. Congress has made almost $1 billion available to deepen teachers content knowledge of U.S. history. There is nothing like this in world history.

10Harris, "Building Coherence in World History: A Study of Instructional Tools and Teachers’ Pedagogical Content Knowledge."; Bain and Harris, "Preface."
Thus, over the past 15 years, standards and course requirements in world history have grown faster than did programs in teacher preparation, curriculum and assessments — each a critical and necessary component for providing quality instruction. Without well-prepared teachers using coherent curriculum and employing valid assessments even the best standards remain distant goals. In short, developing world history standards or requiring world history courses, while necessary, are not sufficient to improve learning or to help teachers meet the challenges of teaching world history.

The architects of and contributors to *World History for Us All (WHFUA)* website have recognized the distinctive instructional challenges teachers face in teaching world history. Through this project, they attempted to provide what world history teachers needed to provide coherent instruction and to improve students' learning. Judging by “word-of-mouth” popularity among educators and praise left by teachers using the site, the project has been very successful. We suspect this popularity and praise is due, in part, to *WHFUA*’s expanding and easily accessible array of instructional materials and its innovative structure. While there are other websites offering world history lesson plans, no other site represents world history so clearly or so well. By using different temporal-spatial “lenses” — the innovative Panorama, Landscape and Closeup lenses — to situate instructional materials, *WHFUA* provides teachers a clear way to coherently organize content across vast expanses of historical time and space. World historians and educators have long talked about the importance of linking local and regional events to larger global or inter-regional patterns; *WHFUA* went beyond talk to create instructional materials at different scales *and* to represent the connections for teachers.

Given this design and the rich materials teachers find there, we are not surprised by the popularity and the praise teachers have offered. However beyond such self-reports, questions remain about the role *WHFUA* plays in helping teachers actually meet the challenges they face. How do teachers use the site and materials? Do they teach the content “as is” or must they modify the materials? Are some materials more useful to teachers than others? What impact does *WHFUA* have on teachers and students?

This report takes up these questions. At the invitation of Ross Dunn, we documented and analyzed the way that eight California middle school teachers used *WHFUA* materials, and we tried to determine the impact the materials had on instruction. After a brief description of the study’s methods, we will turn to our findings and recommendations for future work.

**Pilot Study**

To answer some of these questions, we designed a pilot study focusing on the ways teachers used the existing *WHFUA* materials. Eight California middle school teachers (sixth and seventh grade) participated in this study. These teachers were involved in a

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11 Both of us are quite familiar with *WHFUA*. One of us (Bain) consulted on the project from the outset, spending a few days with the WHUFA team during the first two working summers helping to frame the work and helping to identifying cognitive challenges in teaching and learning global history. More recently, Harris co-authored two landscape units.
project led by Ross Dunn and Tim Keirn that required each teacher to teach one
*WHFUA* unit during the first semester (Fall, 2007) and to write an additional unit during
the second semester (Winter, 2008) that would eventually go onto the *WHFUA* site. All
of the teachers were middle school teachers, teaching either sixth or seventh grade
world history. All were veteran teachers with at least four years experience, but only one
teacher had extensive university study in world history.

We focused our study on the way teachers utilized *WHFUA* during the first semester
(Fall, 2007) of the project, focusing in particular on the unit they were required to teach.
To create a data set for analysis, we asked teachers to document their use of the
*WHFUA*. Teachers maintained a journal when working on or teaching their *WHFUA* unit
and they gave us copies of all the materials used to teach the unit. In a sense, we
developed an archive of classroom artifacts, including annotated lesson plans,
handouts, and some samples of student work from *WHFUA* lessons. We also asked
teachers to complete a short written survey after they taught the unit. In January, 2008,
one of us (Harris) conducted and audio taped a follow-up interview with each teacher.

For each teacher, we analyzed all the data—journals, handouts, surveys, annotated
materials and interviews—to create a description of how they used *WHFUA*. Then we
looked across the individual cases for salient patterns, patterns that could constitute the
findings of this study.

Below we discuss these findings and then, based upon the findings, offer some
recommendations for future *WHFUA* work.

**Findings**

We found that the *World History For Us All* website helped all the teachers deepen their
content knowledge and understanding of world history, offered usable materials for
teachers to teach the “big picture,” and provided teachers with a rich set of sources and
ideas to use with their students. The most important finding of this study, we think, is the
impact *WHFUA* had on teachers’ understanding of world history and of teaching world
history. Working with the site and the teaching materials – even for a very short time –
challenged productively the ways teachers thought of world history and pressed them to
reconsider the lens through which they viewed history. The teachers in this study
acquired new and powerful schemes for organizing their own understanding of global
history, and consequently for their students. Given the research on the cognitive
challenges teachers face in thinking about, as well as teaching, world history and given
the poor condition of teacher preparation in world history, *WHFUA*’s educative value for
teachers is a key finding. In using *WHFUA* materials with their students, teachers
learned more world history and learned how to structure world historical content. Also,
though not unexpected, our analysis demonstrated that the teachers viewed *WHFUA* as
a veritable treasure trove of resources, teaching materials and lessons. More
specifically, the teachers identified *WHFUA*’s “big picture” materials, such as Panorama
PowerPoints, as especially valuable for their students. In sum, this study suggests that
*WHFUA* helped teachers manage two of the three challenges that world history
teachers face – trying to teach complicated content with little preparation in world history and in the absence of coherent curricular materials.

In addition, our analysis of the teacher’s annotated lessons, the surveys and interviews shows that these middle school teachers invested significant time modifying materials to fit the specific context within which they worked, and, in so doing, added great value to already valuable instructional materials. In modifying the lessons, the teachers reported that they benefitted from the opportunity to collaborate with and talk to each other, a few of the teacher-authors of the content, and the historians working in their project. Finally, while very enthusiastic about the WHFUA content, materials and resources, the teachers were less enthusiastic about the WHFUA assessments. We offer more detail of these findings below.

1. **WHFUA Helped Deepen Teachers’ Understanding of World History and of World History Instruction**

All teachers in the project reported that by working with WHFUA materials they deepened their understanding of world history and developed new and useful frameworks for building coherent instruction. This is critical. In using the overall design of the site or by learning to use a few specific concepts employed regularly in WHFUA materials, all the teachers learned new ways or expanded upon existing ways to “see” and think about world history. Teachers used ideas or materials from the site to develop more sophisticated pictures of world history, or at least, conceptually more useful pictures for teaching.

For example, almost all of the teachers pointed to the value added to their thinking by WHFUA’s use of the concept “Afro-Eurasia.” Most of the teachers claimed that they were not familiar with the term or had never used it with students before encountering it in the WHFUA materials. More than simply expanding teachers’ (and students’) vocabulary, the concept seemed to represent for teachers an important category to “contain” large scale, interconnected changes. Learning to use the concept “Afro-Eurasia” helped teachers look outside the standard “containers” for history, such as events or discrete political units. Using Afro-Eurasia enabled them to construct a bigger geographic or temporal space, one that allowed connected processes and interconnected events to come into view. Likewise, teachers noted the value of other concepts central to WHFUA, such as “spheres of interaction,” and “zones cultural exchange.” We were struck in listening to the teachers talk about such ideas, in reading over their survey answers or in looking at the annotated teaching materials, the power such concepts afforded teachers to make new connections.

A few teachers also pointed to the great value in comparative study, identifying particular places where WHFUA helped them learn to make productive comparisons. Though comparative history is widely talked about—indeed “compare” might be one of the most frequently used verbs for essay questions—it is rarely explicated fully. 12

Through the explicit use of comparative history, WHFUA helped teachers reconsider separate content while expanding the use of comparative methodology. For example, one teacher used a WHFUA unit that compared creation myths of early civilizations. Though he was familiar with the myths, having taught them in the past, the comparative method offered a fresh approach to familiar material. Instead of teaching the myths separately, embedding them within self-contained units on the early civilizations, this WHFUA unit engaged his students in a comparative analysis of three creation myths. The activity provided the teacher with a useful comparative design, as way to bridge different civilizations, by offering common points of comparison.

Like the use of new concepts and the comparative method, teachers also were enthusiastic about WHFUA’s explicit focus on the global or inter-regional scale. For the teachers, such attention to different scales suggested new connections or comparisons between and among societies, civilizations, and regions. Important tools for helping teachers develop their world historical understanding were the essays that introduced eras and revisited the organizing questions. The teachers were almost unanimous in their praise for the value of the essays and for WHFUA unique way of “sorting” curriculum materials along geographic and temporal scales. As one teacher commented, “I wish 10 years ago when I started teaching that someone had told me about this then.”

The impact of WHFUA on teachers’ thinking, understanding and knowledge of world history is vital. By introducing or strengthening teachers’ understanding and use of temporal-spatial scales, and by showing how to use important world historical concepts, (i.e., “zones of exchange” or “Afro-Eurasia”), WHFUA provided teachers with essential tools to thinking about global history. It is very difficult for teachers to teach what they themselves do not understand. Therefore, WHFUA played a critical role in improving instruction by helping to deepen teachers’ understanding of world history and through helping teachers to frame the world historical “big picture.”

2. WHFUA Provided Robust Instructional Materials including Primary Sources
Teachers loved the robust set of resources WHFUA provided and incorporated into lessons. Since WHFUA is filled with primary sources, maps, graphic organizers, videos and PowerPoints and since teachers are often starved for resources beyond textbooks, we anticipated this finding. Given the previous discussion, it is not surprising that the teachers found greatest value in WHFUA materials that helped students focus on the “big picture.” The teachers uniformly praised the materials designed to help students see interconnections among historical events and historical processes, or to make connections across time and across space. One teacher captured the sentiments of all when she explained that, “The thing that I like about World History for US All is that it provides ways to connect different societies and civilizations. I think that’s what my kids struggle with the most; seeing that they are connected [and] that they aren’t just civilization after civilization.”

In addition to the units they had to teach for the project, almost all of the teachers used WHFUA materials from the global or “panorama” level, even though nothing in their
state standards called for such “big picture” instruction. Teachers told us that they used WHFUA material over and above the content their state required because they thought that WHFUA helped students develop a more coherent understanding of history. The “Seven Minute History of the World” and the Panorama PowerPoints were the most popular materials among the teachers. Two teachers, for example, used the “Seven Minute History of the World to introduce their students to what they would learn throughout the year. Teachers thought video gave their students a picture of the entire course of study, describing the video as offering students a copy of the picture on the puzzle box before working with the individual pieces. Teachers reported that students liked the video, thinking it was “pretty cool” and that they “couldn’t believe how many things had happened.” For the teachers, however, the video did more than “wow” students – it gave them a necessary overview. One teacher used the video to show the students the temporal scope of the course, and then had students compare it with previous history courses, such as U.S. history and California history.

Almost all of the teachers used the Panorama PowerPoints in some fashion. Some teachers used the PowerPoints to give students an overview/preview of what they were about to study, while others used them to review what students had learned in previous unit or even a previous year. Most selected just a few slides from among a set to stress big ideas. Several teachers mentioned that they were planning to use the PowerPoints at the end of the year as a review.

Teachers also explicitly used the concepts of “Afro-Eurasia” or “zones of exchange” with students to help students make connections. For example, after introducing the concept of Afro-Eurasia during a unit on the development and spread of Islam, one teacher had students continue to work with the concept in the next unit on Africa. Another teacher explained that references to Afro-Eurasia helped students make connections, even when focusing upon specific regions or civilizations. Still another teacher used the concept of Afro-Eurasia when having her students create maps to show trade networks that crossed civilizations and regions.

As explained in the previous section, teachers also used the comparative method with students as a way to move beyond individual events. For example, the teacher who used comparison to restructure his students’ study of creation myths, explained that he thought comparative method would help his students focus upon the similarities and differences between three communities. Using comparative method to look across civilizations in advance of digging down into each, he speculated, would be “profitable for their [students’] understanding [of] the interconnections and cross-cultural ties between these three very important ancient civilizations.” WHFUA comparisons allowed students to build connections between discrete civilizations.

In addition to WHFUA’s instructional materials, concepts and methods, all the teachers reported that the WHFUA structure, with its interconnected scales, offered “students a framework from which to examine other cultures and regions of the world, especially using scales of time, and geography.” Through their words and use of WHFUA structure, it units, materials and ideas for approaching world history, all the
teachers demonstrated the added value WHFUA provided for students’ learning world history.

3. Teachers Modified WHFUA Materials for Student Use
One of the strengths of the WHFUA units and lessons is the inclusion of rich set of primary sources, maps, graphs and historical resources. For teachers, having easy access to such materials is certainly one of WHFUA’s strengths. However, the middle school teachers invested significant time modifying lessons to fit the students and the context within they taught. These dedicated teachers adjusted lessons, edited resources, and often added their own materials to WHFUA’s in order to make the lessons and activities more accessible to their students and more in line with the standards they were required to teach. While we did not actually see teachers enact these modifications to WHFUA content, we thought their explanations for the modifications were sensible, and in many cases, thought that teacher-initiated adjustments added value, particularly for others teaching in a similar setting or teaching similar students.

With the exception of two sixth grade teachers who taught a unit on Creation Myths, all of the teachers mentioned that their biggest challenge in using the WHFUA units was having to make extensive modifications because of the high reading level of unit materials. Teachers pointed out that WHFUA offered no guidance regarding the grade or reading level of lesson materials. Even at first glance, teachers expressed concern about the length and sophisticated level of text targeted for students. Some of the participants tested the reading level of primary source passages and found the texts to be at a high school level and beyond. Many of the teachers explained that since the majority of their sixth and seventh grade students read at grade level or below, the high school level texts were simply too complicated or, as presented, inaccessible for their students.

Therefore, to use WHFUA texts and handouts with their middle school students, the teachers modified, edited, and adjusted the activities that called for students to read texts beyond their reading level. For the teachers, such modification was time consuming. A few teachers said it took them more than eight hours to edit the primary source texts in their WHFUA unit. For example, one seventh grade teacher explained to us how she “spent a lot of time trying to figure out how to get the reading level down.” In addition to editing words and sentence, she created a document-specific glossary and changed the format of documents to give her students room to take notes while they read. Other teachers made similar modifications to texts and materials. One teacher worried that in making primary sources more accessible for the students, she would be “dumbing down” the curriculum. It “made her nervous to modify primary documents” wondering about which sections of text “should I choose…to capture the essence of the document.” Another teacher talked about how difficult it was to “keep the main idea” of the primary sources while editing the document to reduce its length and simplify its complicated language. This teacher ended up adding a glossary section to a WHFUA handout and using brackets to re-phrase some passages in the text while cutting down the number and length of the sources used in a lesson. She also created a chart to
guide student writing as they read. These additions, she said, helped the students use the sources n WHFUA provided.

Primary sources were not the only materials teachers modified before teaching the WHFUA units. They also edited maps and handouts that accompanied WHFUA lessons. While the teachers liked the way WHFUA used maps, many teachers claimed that many of the maps were “too small and hard to read,” difficult to copy, and hard to modify because of the Adobe PDF format. Teachers, therefore, spent time tracking down other copies of WHFUA maps. One teacher claimed she “spent a lot of time trying to find a map of Afro-Eurasia.” Many teachers explained that they recreated and re-calibrated worksheets and handouts to make them more “student friendly.” Teachers were concerned that worksheets did not afford middle school students enough space to write in answers, and because of teachers did not have access to software to edit PDF format, they decided it was easier to simply recreate the worksheets and graphic organizers. As one teacher wrote in her survey, capturing the sentiment of the majority of teachers, “I wish the lesson came with student handouts that did not need much modification, but could be used ’as is.’”

It is important to note that the teachers liked the WHFUA lessons, in part, because the lessons came with primary sources, maps, graphs, handouts and other resources. And, teachers liked teaching with WHFUA materials claiming that the lessons “worked” and that students liked the content and lessons. However, it is equally important to remember that the majority of teachers spent time modifying WHFUA materials and/or adding supplementary materials, such as reading guides or glossaries, before they used the lessons with their middle school students. While we did not see how the students took to the modified materials in the classroom, we do think that, in most cases, the teachers added valuable content or reasonable alternative strategies to make materials more “user friendly” for middle school students.

4. Teachers Created Assessments for WHFUA Units

The teachers thought that the assessments in WHFUA were sparse, uneven and unclear. Typifying the concerns of the group, one teacher said “[t]here was only an assessment in the first lesson [of the unit], so I am unsure if this was the overall assessment or only for this lesson.” We could only document one case where a teacher used a WHFUA assessment. All of the teachers, then, needed to add their own assessments to the units. One teacher explained that he “created different assessments that would be more appropriate for my students and their ability levels. When creating my own assessments, I tried to stay true to the concepts of the WHFUA unit.”

5. Hidden Impact of Historical and instructional Conversations:

Teachers reported enjoying the conversations with peers and project historians around world history and the WHFUA materials. In the surveys and interviews, we saw examples of how teachers benefitted from the conversations and discussions they were having about WHFUA lessons, about how a lesson played out in the classroom, about ways to modify lessons or about different approaches to teaching the lessons. Though we have no way of parsing out the instructional value added through such
conversations and discussions, we think it must have played a role in helping these teachers make such effective use of WHFUA materials.

**Recommendations**

As it currently stands, we think that the *World History for Us Website* is the most valuable resource available for world history teachers at all levels. Our modest study suggests that teachers who use the website can develop a deeper understanding of global history, acquire important world historical concepts, and gain access to a treasure house of good primary sources, maps, handouts and innovative materials to help teach the nested global story.

The teachers in this project liked WHFUA and thought it a valuable resource. All of the teachers in the pilot study said that they would use it for future instruction in their classrooms. And, all of the teachers went beyond the unit the project required them to teach. For teachers, WHFUA site provides a global framework, centering on connections, comparisons, and an accessible “big picture” of world history that is hard, if not impossible, to find in any other world history curriculum. The inclusion of Panorama, Landscape, and Closeup units allows teachers to, at times, engage students in the large global story of the history of the world, and at other times “zoom in” to take a closer look at inter-regional, regional, and even local events.

There are, however, some areas that could be improved to make the site more user-friendly and appropriate for teachers at various grades, teaching different types of students. With continued work, additional support, and some modest but strategic changes we think this outstanding resource can be made even more useful to world history teachers and students.

Therefore, based on these findings and our familiarity with the WHFUA site, we have five recommendations for future WHFUA work:

1. **Continue to populate the site with unit and lesson materials plans**
   While the website seems to have a complete set of units at the Panorama level, there are still “holes” within the Landscape and Close-up levels. Our study clearly points to the value of WHFUA in its present form. It needs, however, to be developed further. Even in light of the teachers’ concerns about the sophistication of the texts (reading levels) and handouts, or time involved to modify WHFUA materials, every teacher in this study recognized the value of the WHFUA materials and was thankful to have access to it. All looked forward to future development, to the creation of new materials, units and to additional lessons.

   Therefore, we strongly recommend that WHFUA continue to add more units, lessons and materials.

2. **Elaborate on existing connections among WHFUA teaching materials**
   One of its most useful features for teachers is WHFUA’s innovative structure that organizes curriculum materials along geographic and temporal scales. The website’s
structure is more than a functional system of organization, but it serves an educative function in helping teachers develop a picture of world history that moves beyond the cultural cavalcade found in most textbooks or curriculum. Combined with the essays introducing the eras, the structure and the content helped teachers focus on “big ideas” at different geographic and temporal scales. Through their words and instructional actions, we found teachers acknowledging the great value in WHFUA’s attention to scales and interconnectivity.

Building upon and expanding this great strength would enhance the site’s educational potential and add to its ease of use. Teachers would benefit from explicit connections between units. Since the units have been written at different times and by different authors, few if any of the unit procedures or materials makes specific reference to or links with the materials “above” or “below.” For example, making explicit references within a Landscape unit to related Panorama, Closeup, or other Landscape units would build upon connections implied in the structure and help foster new links for students and teachers. We noted with enthusiasm that some Closeup units were linked “upward” toward Landscape units. We strongly encourage WHFUA to continue such nesting of content.

3. Capture key teacher modifications and additions and expand the WHFUA community
Before teaching the units, the teachers in this study invested significant time and thought to modify WHFUA materials. In a sense they added another scale to the Panorama, Landscape and Closeup scales – the Classroom scale. We thought that, particularly after they taught the lessons, the teachers had “scaled” the primary sources, maps and handouts for use with middle school students or for students reading below high school or college grade levels. The teachers designed reading strategies and handouts that added great value to the units. They expanded the number of usable strategies and instructional tools. Certainly, other teachers have made and future teachers will make similar modifications to existing materials. It is a minor tragedy if, for example, the work of the teachers in this project is lost or only becomes available to those in the immediate locale.

Therefore, we strongly recommend WHFUA expand the site to pursue additional connectivity, where future users of the site could be connected to teachers who have modified and taught WHFUA materials. We urge WHFUA to explore reasonable ways to capture the ways that skilled teachers have modified the units and to find space on the site where teachers might explain what they learned or the adjustments they made teaching WHFUA materials to different students in different contexts. While this task might sound daunting, there are other projects that have found ways through wikis or other new technology to expand content by adding in the experiences of “users.” We think that tremendous value can be added if WHFUA could show how successful teachers modified lessons for different grade levels, collect additional teaching strategies for existing WHFUA materials, expand the teaching ideas, and open lines of communication among the growing community of WHFUA teachers. The need is great and we think with appropriate support, WHFUA is poised to make a significant contribution to world history education in this area.
4. Work on WHFUA assessments
Assessments are a widely acknowledged force in history teaching and arguably the poorest and least developed feature of history instruction. As noted above, WHFUA assessments are sporadic, inconsistent and incomplete. We recommend WHFUA add a section on the website on assessment by creating a pool of good assessments at the Panorama, Landscape and Closeup levels and/or by including assessments within all the units. A good place to start might be with the Panorama and Landscape units since they appear to be the most useful and innovative for teachers. Therefore, we strongly suggest that WHFUA work with historians, teachers and those scholars with knowledge and understanding of assessments in history to frame a variety of usable assessments (such as essays, DBQ, comparative projects, multiple choice items and rubrics to evaluate each).

Given the state of assessment available for teachers, we suspect that this will be another important and innovative role WHFUA could play for teachers of world history. The need is great and we think with appropriate support, WHFUA is poised to make a significant contribution to world history education in this area.

5. Follow-up studies with teachers and students
Most curriculum projects fail to assess the impact of the project on teachers or on students. WHFUA should be commended for initiating this study of how teachers used the projects materials and in supporting this effort to determine the impact of WHFUA on instruction. We suggest that WHFUA pursue further such studies, including more substantive look at how students use these materials. A more sustained study of WHFUA teaching in a few classrooms would offer needed information for continued revision and improvement. It would also make a significant contribution to world history education.

Conclusion
In closing, it is important to underscore how valuable teachers found WHFUA website and materials to be for teaching. In addition, our research revealed ways that using the WHFUA site expanded teachers’ understanding of world history as well as extending the materials they have to teach world history. In terms of quality, coherence, resources, and its attempt to be a comprehensive “full-service” resource for teachers, there is nothing like World History for Us All.

II. WHFUA project director’s response to the external evaluators recommendations

Continue to populate the site with unit and lesson materials plans
Many educators have ratified our view that the organization of the teaching units in the WHFUA model curriculum by levels of “scale” of historical investigation is the site’s most innovative feature. This approach is also supported by scholarly research on how children learn, remember, and understand the past. Instructional units are grouped in three categories—Panorama, Landscape, and Closeup. The criterion for these categories is the scale in time, geographical space, and subject matter of the topics to
be explored. We have designed this system to guide teachers and students in study of the past on a variety of scales, from broad, global changes to developments that occurred within regions, civilizations, or nations. Teachers may choose to introduce students to an entire Big Era in a few class periods by focusing on the sweeping changes of the era. Or, they may devote a greater number of class days to an era, using several teaching units in all three categories of scale to examine the era in finer detail. Teachers may tailor class time spent on a Big Era to their pedagogical strengths and interests and to state or local content standards.

On the WHFUA site, the number of Panorama and Landscape teaching units has been predetermined, but at the Closeup level, we will continue to add units in the coming months and years. We would like to do this at a quickening pace depending on availability of funding and personnel. Practicing or retired History-Social Studies teachers write all teaching units, often in collaboration with an academic adviser. Our current policy is to pay these teachers $900 for each unit, once it is accepted for the site.

Under Phase II of the site development, we worked to post all teaching units for the Panorama and Landscape levels for world history up to 1500 CE. There are thirty of these units, and all but one is on the site. (The project director continues to work with a teacher to complete the one missing Landscape unit, we expect by January 2009.)

In Phase III of development, we have been working to post all Panorama and Landscape units for historical periods since 1500. This task has gone more slowly, mainly owing to some teachers who were unable to fulfill their obligation after many months, requiring us to identify and recruit a new writer. Thirty-one units have been designated. Eighteen of these are on the site. The rest have all been assigned to writers, and several of them are in the editing process.

Extensive development of teaching units at the Closeup level remains in the future. The Long Beach USD teachers have developed nine units and will write nine more by late spring 2009.

At present, the project does not have funding to contract for additional instructional units. We also require funding to continue to pay our project manager (Ingrid DeHaas) who handles final editing and proofreading of units and contributes her skills to other site editing tasks, and our web master/designer (Robert Prom) who takes charge of all technical and design work. We have sufficient funds to pay these project officers only to approximately May 2009.

Completing all Panorama and Landscape units and initiating more Closeup unit development remains the project’s highest priority. We are also exploring with Andrew Pass, one of our seasoned writers, plans for adding more materials with electronically animated and interactive elements. (See, for example, the Seven Minute History of the World on the home page.)
Elaborate on existing connections among *WHFUA* teaching materials
The single most appealing advantage of a web-based curriculum is that teachers and students may move quickly and seamlessly from one scale of historical investigation to another, a task that is much clumsier and time-consuming in using a printed textbook with printed or electronic ancillary materials.

Prof. Bain and Dr. Harris, however, have pointed out the need to provide teachers with more explicit guidance on connecting one scale of investigation with another. Several months ago, we started to improve this deficiency in the curriculum by including in new Closeup teaching units uncomplicated guidance showing teachers how the subject matter in a Closeup unit conceptually connects to related but broader subject matter at the Landscape and Panorama levels. The diagram below is an example from a Closeup teaching unit:

![Diagram](image)

Developing this recommendation will require further consultation with Bain, McArthur Harris, and teacher/users, probably involving modification of units already on the site. This is not a difficult task but will require continuing funding for our web master/designer.

Capture key teacher modifications and additions and expand the *WHFUA* community
Since the project started, we have been concerned that teacher/writers have developed instructional units for the site whose historical sophistication, as well as the reading level and intellectual complexity of student handout materials, vary significantly. Depending on the state and school district, world history may be taught at any level between sixth and twelfth grade. Some units may be most suitable for lower-level middle school readers but others most effective with high schoolers or even gifted AP world history students. Our rule of thumb has been to cast the intellectual level of units at about grade
nine, but in reality the intellectual sophistication of the units has tended to vary depending on the grade the unit writer teachers. In the editing process, we pay close attention to vocabulary and clarity, often replacing difficult words with more common ones and striving to cleanse text that reads like academic “prof speak.”

Our experience with the Long Beach USD middle school teachers has brought this problem to the fore, as Bain and McArthur Harris have pointed out. These teachers have modified in one way or another nearly every WHFUA unit they have taught, which of course they are free to do. Moreover, they have done this, not only because of student reading level issues, but also because they prefer to develop an original activity, handout, or assessment that the unit on the site does not provide.

One partial solution to the problem of student developmental variability would be to produce two or more versions of every teaching unit, each one cast at a different reading and cognitive level, for example one for middle school students and one for high schoolers. This process, however, would be extremely expensive and labor intensive. It would require a significant expansion of the WHFUA team and paid time for project officers. The one innovation we have tried so far is to incorporate two versions of a student handout, an essay about empires, into one of the Landscape units (5.1) One version is designated as the high school version, the other the middle school version. This, however, is an early experiment modifying a tiny part of the web site. In addition, WHFUA should consider developing modified or new units with differentiated forms of instruction for English learners.

The recommendation that Bain and Harris make—to incorporate teachers’ unit modifications, as well as their thoughts and observations about teaching particular materials—is more practical, though also requiring higher workloads for teacher/writers and project staff. One approach might be to add a feature titled something like “The Classroom Experience” to accompany every unit on the site. Within this module, we would post teacher comments and modifications and also (anonymously) student work samples and performance rubrics.

The immediate task is to design such a feature on the site, then introduce into it modifications, observations, and perhaps journals that the Long Beach USD teachers have produced. That would be a start, but extensive development of this feature, which we see as an essential innovation, will require additional funded work time.

**Work on WHFUA assessments**

Assessment practice asks two fundamental questions: 1) What should the student know and be able to do in relation to particular subject matter, and 2) how can we know whether the student has acquired that knowledge and skill? Assessment theory and practice has become a highly specialized educational field. WHFUA has had the benefit of assessment advice from Bain and McArthur Harris, as well as veteran members of our teacher team. In its current form WHFUA teaching units incorporate teacher-constructed assessments on an ad hoc basis. Some units do not include them at all. As
Bain and McArthur Harris point out, most of the Long Beach teachers chose to construct their own assessment even when one was available on the site.

There is no doubt that the success and future of WHFUA depend on methodical evaluation of the usefulness of the curriculum to teachers but also on assessment of student learning experience, especially, as Bain and McArthur note, with Panorama and Landscape units, which more ambitiously challenge teachers and students to investigate the fruits of recent world history scholarship and larger-scale historical and geographical concepts than are part of the conventional textbooks and competency standards.

Bain has made a strong case for enlisting one or more individuals with both strong psychometric experience and broad historical knowledge to work with WHFUA on a continuing basis to systematically develop valid, reliable, and creative assessments for all the instructional materials. This will be a new dimension of the project requiring significant additional funding.

**Follow-up studies with teachers and students**

New proposals for WHFUA funding must include provision for continued documentation of the teaching experience and use of the model curriculum in the classrooms of the nine teachers who have participated in the Long Beach USD project. Concrete plans to undertake more projects of that type after June 2009 depend on funding. Most of these teachers have testified, as Bain and McArthur Harris point out, to the nearly “revolutionary” impact of WHFUA on the way they think about, organize, and teach world history. All of these teachers have expressed an interest in continuing to work with the WHFUA project in one capacity or another.

Because the collaboration with the Long Beach USD has been so fruitful and gratifying, we would like to propose a similar project with world history high school teachers, and perhaps AP world history instructors, in the district. Other districts in the Los Angeles basin may also be identified for potential partnerships. Gary Nash, Director of the NCHS, has been working with a number of districts in the region that have received funding from the Federal Teaching American History grants. Some of these districts and schools are likely to be interested in the innovative professional development that WHFUA offers.