BREAKING NEWS: GRADUATION REQUIREMENTS ARE CHANGING!

In a recent decision by the Board of Education, Downey Unified will be shifting the requirements to graduate high school. While the move will no doubt be challenging, the end goal will ensure that all DUSD high school graduates are equipped to meet the expectations of their college and career. Here is how the graduation eligibility will change:

- By the year 2021–22 (our current 8th graders), DUSD students must meet the current graduation requirements and take: 3 years of Math, 2 years of World Language, and 1 year of Visual/Performing Arts.

- By the year 2023–2024 (our current 6th graders), DUSD students must complete (and pass) all 15 "A–G" course requirements.

- By the year 2025–26 (our current 4th graders), DUSD students must complete (with a "C" or better) all 15 "A–G" course requirements to be eligible for graduation.

IN THIS ISSUE:
Page 2 = Understanding the work behind NGSS
Page 3 = Virtual Field Trips for All Subjects
Page 4 = Highlighting AVID Schoolwide + Math Corner: Desmos Calculator
Page 5 = DBQ Fundamentals + History Resources

7th grade science teachers planning their NGSS Instructional Segments
It’s no secret that this year secondary science teachers have been working diligently to accomplish the monumental task of building curriculum for the new Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS).

With the oversight of John Harris, Michael Butler, and Gregg Stapp, secondary science teachers have truly embraced the role of writing curriculum in a collaborative and meaningful way. Organic leadership is happening at all sites where teachers are bringing "all voices to the table" in order to design these new and improved units of study.

So how exactly do these new standards affect the instructional practices taking place in science classes? As with other subject areas, the traditional methods of "information gathering" are shifting. Students are now expected to complete tasks using recurring science practices and skills, while integrating other concepts that overlap with other disciplines of science, mathematics, and engineering.

Essentially, there are 3 main dimensions that need to be considered when designing the new science curriculum:

1. Disciplinary Core Ideas
2. Science and Engineering Practices
3. Crosscutting Concepts

Through collaboration, discussion, and creativity, our secondary teachers are making this new curriculum relevant and accessible to all students. Excellent work science teachers!

Click HERE for more NGSS information.
EXPLORE THE WORLD USING VIRTUAL FIELD TRIPS

Most people would agree that taking students on field trips is fun, engaging, educational, and positive. The downside is they can be challenging to organize and plan. Not anymore! Microsoft Education has created Skype Virtual Field Trips which allow teachers to take their students all over the world without physically leaving their classrooms and without spending any money!

Each field trip includes a credible host who serves as the expert guide at the place of interest. Using Skype video and audio technology, hosts walk classes through a site and provide information as they go, answering student questions in real-time.

In addition, Skype Virtual Field Trips vary in location, subjects, and age ranges, giving plenty of options for teachers of all grades and subject areas.

Click HERE to learn more about setting up your own virtual field trip!

Stauffer Students Visit Monticello

Recently, Mrs. Munoz, social studies teacher, spoke about her students' virtual field trip to Monticello. "The result was extremely positive! Students were spellbound walking through Jefferson’s mansion."

Some Tips for Teachers:
1. Plan for some video/audio glitches based on Internet connection
2. Expect a slight delay when communicating to host(s)/tour guide(s)
3. Have a large speaker that is loud enough for whole classroom to hear
4. Make sure to go over how Skype works (stand in front of camera when talking)
5. Plan ahead with ready-to-ask questions
What is AVID?

AVID is an academic elective that:

- teaches skills and behaviors for academic success
- provides intensive support with tutorials and strong student/teacher relationships
- creates a positive peer group for students
- develops a sense of hope for personal achievement gained through hard work and determination
- aims to close the achievement gap of students underrepresented in higher education

(from AVID.org)

Click HERE to see what's happening at our AVID Secondary Sites!

MATH CORNER: Desmos Calculator

Desmos Calculator is the embedded tool for the digital SAT, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9. The Desmos Online Calculator is now the embedded tool for the Smarter Balanced Assessment, digital SAT, PSAT 10, and PSAT 8/9. The Desmos Calculator is a great tool that helps students build conceptual understandings.

Click HERE to take a look!

The calculator is also available for free download at iOS and Android app stores.
DBQ Project: Process and Beliefs

DBQ (Document Based Question) is a process for thinking and writing that prompts students to answer a question using a variety of historical documents.

The 7 Steps of The DBQ Project:

1. HOOK EXERCISE – Engages students and orients them toward the question at hand
2. BACKGROUND ESSAY – Provides context that helps students understand the background information for the documents/primary sources
3. PRE-BUCKETING – Students plan how to use the documents to answer the question
4. ANALYZING THE DOCUMENTS – Students look through the documents to find clues or evidence needed to answer the question
5. BUCKETING – Organizing the gathered evidence into “buckets” or categories for grouping
6. THRASH OUT – Students debate their answer to the question, verbally practicing how to support their conclusion using textual evidence
7. ESSAY WRITING – Students will write a multi-paragraph essay using their documents, buckets, and outlines

DBQ Beliefs

1. All students need to learn how to think.
2. Learning to think requires practice.
3. Thinking is hard work.
4. Thinking is clarified by writing.
5. Thinking is for everyone.

Reading Like a Historian

Are you interested in having your students investigate history using an analytical and critical lens? Do you want students to evaluate historical issues using different perspectives?

If so, CLICK HERE to learn more about Stanford History Education Group’s "Reading Like a Historian" lesson plans and "Beyond the Bubble" history assessments.