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March 9th, 2015

In The Headlines...

**Lessons for Learning and Life: 10 Messages Parents (and Teachers) Can Teach Kids**

Mary Ryerse, from the *Getting Smart* team, compiled a list of lessons both parents and teachers can learn from her memories of a favorite tennis coach. From consistency to simplicity, the short list offers valuable reminders about the message and vision we can be sharing with the young people we are responsible for.



**Document-Based Question (DBQ) Lesson**

An essential skill in social studies is using historical documents to answer a question. In high school, some students will take AP courses where the skill is taught through "Document-Based Questions," known as **DBQs**. Even for students who never take an AP test, **DBQs** are a powerful way to practice synthesizing research. They also align with the Text-Dependent Analysis (TDA) writings of the Common Core.

**DBQs** are tasks that require students to construct a research paper without having to find



"sources" - since all the evidence is provided. Instead, students focus on ana-

lyzing documents to find important details and apply them to a task. Part of the puzzle (and the challenge... and the authentic value) is that each of the sources provides a distinct point of view. Students must pull all the perspectives together to craft their own stance.

Students complete this first **DBQ on training wheels** (as I like to call it... with plenty of help from me) on the question "**How did Islam spread?**" Later in the year, students will complete additional DBQ tasks with more independence.

In addition to practicing research, the task also develops the **Common Core** skill of informative writing.



Students will begin by tackling the prompt and reviewing how to use sources based on [this guide](#). Then, students analyze [a set of documents](#) with guidance from Mr. Angelini. I prepared an [answer key](#) to give assistance for them (and you).

Students will then use their documents to plan a response to the prompt with a [guided graphic organizer](#). For many students, this is the most challenging step of the DBQ. The final step will be analyzing and revising a draft response written by Mr. Angelini to put all the pieces together.

**Controversy in the News: Article of the Week**

*Learning should be relevant.* We firmly believe the topics and skills students develop in school need to be connected to the needs and events of the "real world."



In our social studies curriculum, the relevance of our religious studies has never been clearer. Stories about ISIS and Israel dominate the news. Yet wars and terrorism are not the only conflicts and controversies surrounding religion.

Last week, the schools of New York City formally created two academic holidays in line with the most important holy days of Islam (which we learned about in last week's LEQ).

To consider the decision, I gave an [Article of the Week](#) (AoW) that summarizes the decision and the reasoning offered by Mayor DeBlasio and the Department of Education.

Since the holidays were made public, arguments have erupted. There are people who think the decision is fair, and others who believe America is losing its core values. Just as my students scanned the text, I could hear a few of them sharing strong opinions.

There is not a full open-ended answer for the students, but I did include some short answer prompts to help students consider the text and share their thinking.



Consider talking about your child's views with them. Can she support her position with reasoning? Can they use details from the text?

In addition to the short responses, I put a few PSSA-style questions with the AoW. I chose questions that many students struggled with on the latest 4Sight. Parents can also ask to see if students can share their rationale for the answers there as well.

Inspirational Quote

Education is a shared commitment between dedicated teachers, motivated students, and enthusiastic parents with high expectations.

- Bob Beapurez



**Article of the Week**

**New York City Schools to Close for Islamic Holidays**

**By Stephanie Lee**

The New York City School District announced on Wednesday that it will close schools for two days in March to observe the Islamic holidays of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. The decision was made by Mayor Bill de Blasio and the Department of Education.

The district's decision is part of a larger effort to make schools more inclusive and to recognize the diverse religious and cultural backgrounds of students. The district is also looking to make schools more accessible to all students, including those with disabilities.

The decision is expected to be controversial, as some people believe that closing schools for religious holidays is unfair to other students. However, the district argues that the decision is necessary to ensure that all students are treated equally.

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**Questions for Students:**

- What is the purpose of the article?
- What is the main idea of the article?
- What are the details of the article?
- What is the author's opinion?
- What is the author's purpose?

## Upcoming Dates

Monday, March 9th:  
Two Hour Delay for Students  
Friday, March 13th (4:00-9:00pm)  
8-2 Fundraiser at Infinto's  
Tuesday, March 17th:  
Trimester Two Grades Released  
Thursday, March 19th:  
6:30pm NOMS PTO Meeting  
Monday, March 23rd:  
Spring Picture Day

## Stay on the Scores!

Use [this link](#) to access the Parent Portal of MMS to stay on top of student grades. Students have access as well, so they should always know their scores. MMS is "Live" - meaning as soon as I put the grades in, you can see them!

Email response to...  
[angelinia@conewago.k12.pa.us](mailto:angelinia@conewago.k12.pa.us)



Have you been on the AngelHub yet today?

[Check in now!](#)

Colonials



## End of Trimester Scores



Grades are due early on Thursday morning. Any late or make-up work needs to be turned into teachers by Wednesday. Please check MMS to look for incomplete assignments.

Please remember that for 2014-2015, NOMS is using "weighted grades." Weighted grades use a formula to calculate trimester averages.

Earlier in the year, I posted an [Announcement](#) on the AngelHub that summarizes the three categories. It also includes an FAQ and a short video on the trickier elements of weighted grading. It is certainly worth looking at again.

For example, students who want to raise their scores should begin by looking at their lowest category. It will be easiest to make an impact on their overall grade by raising that category.

Please contact me if you have specific questions. I am doing my best to get scores in quickly so students can stay up to date.

## Something to be Proud of...



In February, six students from Team Discovery presented Mrs. Foreman, our school librarian, with the proceeds from the Lock-In Fundraiser. The presentation took place during a faculty meeting. The children composed and shared reflections on the importance of books and reading as part of the short ceremony. At the conclusion, they presented a certificate and the donation.

Over the last weeks, students have worked with Mrs. Foreman to purchase new books with the donated money. Working from awards lists, library journals, and other sources, the students chose high-interest titles. Additional students have worked with Mrs. Foreman to unpack and cover the orders once they have arrived. At our last book exchange, students had a chance to "taste tests" the new selections. Many students jumped on the chance to be the first kids to sign out the new books.

Over the next few weeks, we will also be introducing a competition to design a "nameplate" that will be placed inside the cover of each book. I will send home information once it is ready to encourage participation!



New Oxford Middle School

"Doing the Right Things, at the Right Time, for the Right Reasons!"



You can use the icon above to access a link to a blog from Dr. Gates. Her most recent post discusses the value of technology in connecting home and school.



You can use the icon above to access a link to the PTO monthly newsletter.