Project-Based Inquiry Pathway (Six Sessions)

The Project-Based Inquiry Pathway provides an alternative sequence for students and teachers to approach a concept. This sequence uses the Document-Based Investigation to introduce and frame the entire course of study. Students use the EXPLORE and EXPLAIN resources to develop and articulate background understanding. This pathway places additional emphasis on deep understanding of the Document-Based Investigation and the development of a high-quality student product.

Once the investigation is introduced, students can proceed through the remaining activities at differentiated paces, with different levels of support from the teacher. The teacher should facilitate completion of the project by supporting content understanding, checking on progress, and providing feedback. Teachers are encouraged to create checklists for students of all the steps for project completion and monitor each student’s checklist daily.

ENGAGE

Use the Activate Student Interest steps and questions from the Document-Based Investigation to engage students and introduce the Investigation Question. Present the Investigation Question and the student product(s). Review the rubric criteria for exemplary work with the class to set expectations. If time permits, create a more detailed criteria-based, task-specific rubric with the class.

Preview some or all of the primary sources included in the Document-Based Investigation, particularly the sources that are graphically compelling or present strong and provocative points of view. You may want to present these to the whole class using a projector or in stations. Students should note their reactions and questions in journals or on the Already Know/Need to Know graphic organizer. They should not begin a detailed analysis of these documents at this time.

Ask students to complete the Already Know/Need to Know graphic organizer. If students are completing the investigation in groups or pairs, encourage them to complete this organizer together. Encourage students to phrase the Need to Know section as questions and to brainstorm where and how they might find the answers.
EXPLORE

Present the concept Essential Question to students as the “background” knowledge they will need to answer many of their Need to Know questions. Use resources from ENGAGE if necessary to set context.

Provide students with the appropriate graphic organizers and allow them to use the EXPLORE resources, the ELABORATE Inquiry Library, the Reference tool, and the Techbook Atlas as resources to organize information related to the concept’s Essential Question. Remind students that they will be accountable for a full understanding of the Essential Question on the selected-response assessment but that they should make sure they learn as much as possible to answer their Need to Know questions.

EXPLAIN

Use the Social Studies Explanation template to check student understanding of the Essential Question. Encourage students to use the final section of this organizer to focus specifically on any questions they may want to investigate in their Document-Based Investigation sources.

At this point, students may want to take the self-assessment in the EVALUATE resources to check their own understanding as well.

Review the Social Studies Explanations for any remaining student misconceptions. Redirect and reteach students who have misconceptions or who do not have a thorough understanding of the content in order to ensure that they are prepared to re-examine the primary sources in the Document-Based Investigation with a more critical eye.

Please note that not all students will reach this point at the same time. Students with strong background knowledge or who are quick to comprehend the background content may finish this quickly and move on to completing their Document-Based Investigation product. Other students may need more time and support to complete this step.
ELABORATE

Review the Investigation Question and products for the Document-Based Investigation. Provide the graphic organizers for analysis and organization. If students have not used these graphic organizers frequently, provide whole-class and small-group modeling of graphic organizer use. Students who struggle analyzing a given source may need to use the appropriate Primary Source Analysis tool to further scaffold the analysis process.

Encourage students to complete multiple rehearsals or drafts of the final product, using the rubric as a tool for self-assessment and feedback. If possible, provide opportunities to publish or present final products to a wider, authentic audience. This final product should be considered a performance-based assessment.

EVALUATE

Use the Assessment Tool to provide a traditional summative assessment of all content in the concept.