



**U.S. History and Modern World History Courses for English
Speakers of Other Languages in Montgomery County
Public Schools**

Office of Shared Accountability

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Huafang Zhao, Ph.D. & Julie Wade, M.S.



OFFICE OF SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Geoffrey T. Sanderson, Associate Superintendent
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, Maryland 20850
301-279-3553

Dr. Joshua P. Starr
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Kimberly A. Statham
*Deputy Superintendent
of Teaching, Learning, and Programs*

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Executive Summary

Background

The Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) in Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) examined academic performance of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students in U.S. History and Modern World History courses, as well as the course sequence in ESOL U.S. History and Modern World History. In MCPS, students who are not ESOL take U.S. History in Grade 9 and Modern World History in Grade 11. The ESOL social studies course sequence may be different. Since ESOL students come from different parts of the world, it is assumed that they are more familiar with world history than with history of the United States (U.S.). For this reason, the Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs recommends that lower-level ESOL students take ESOL Modern World History first in their sequence of social studies courses, and higher-level ESOL students take ESOL U.S. History first (Appendix A).

In MCPS, three social studies courses are required for graduation and must be taken by ESOL and non-ESOL students: U.S. History; Modern World History; and National, State, and Local (NSL) Government. This study investigated how the course sequence impacted academic performance in the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses so the optimal course sequence could be suggested. The focus of this study is the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses because there is currently no NSL Government course designed for ESOL students in MCPS.

Major Findings

The major findings for the study are described below.

1. In the 2012–2013 school year, 508 students took ESOL U.S. History in Semester 1, while 512 students took the ESOL U.S. History in Semester 2. Across two semesters, the majority of students who took ESOL U.S. History were in Grades 9 and 10. Most of these students were at ESOL Levels 3 and 4. Almost half of them were Hispanic/Latino, and more than 60% of them received Free and Reduced-price Meals System (FARMS) services.
2. In the 2012–2013 school year, 231 students took ESOL Modern World History in Semester 1, while 213 students took the course in Semester 2. In Semester 1, the majority of students who took ESOL Modern World History were in Grades 9 and 10. Over half of them were at ESOL Levels 2 and 3. Over 61% were Hispanic/Latino, and nearly 60% received FARMS services. In Semester 2, the majority of students who took ESOL Modern World History were also in Grades 9 and 10. Most of the students were at ESOL Levels 3 and 4, about 61% were Hispanic/Latino, and 74% received FARMS services.
3. The test reliability of the final exams was reasonably high, ranging from .82 for ESOL Modern World History A to .88 for ESOL U.S. History B. However, some test items had questionable psychometric properties and may require further examination and revision. Teachers recorded final exam scores of student written responses in an inconsistent manner, so analysis of written responses across classes could not be conducted.

4. Over 90% of students passed ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History semester courses, while only 49–69% passed the final exams. The course passing rate was much higher than the final exam passing rate across all student groups.
5. The course sequence was not significant in predicting course success. English language proficiency as indicated by ACCESS (Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State to State) overall scale scores was a significant predictor of passing ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses with a D or higher (or C or higher). Students taking ESOL U.S. History had higher mean overall English language proficiency scores than their peers taking ESOL Modern World History. The English language skills for students in the ESOL U.S. History varied more widely than those in the ESOL Modern World History.
6. Of 24 schools, 20 (83% response rate) responded to a school practices questionnaire. Among the 20 schools responding, 14 reported that their ESOL students first took U.S. History, followed by NSL Government, and Modern World History. Schools using this sequence reported that it logically followed the middle school courses and that the U.S. History course contained less challenging English language requirements than other social studies courses. Major factors for the social studies course sequence decisions included student English language proficiency, student's schedule, teacher's recommendation, previous course performance, and being new to the United States.
7. Thirty one teachers of ESOL social studies courses responded to a survey (52% response rate) about the sequence of social studies courses for high school ESOL students. Teachers reported that the greatest challenges in the ESOL social studies courses were language related, including inadequate language skills, multiple ESOL levels in the same class, and inadequate and inappropriate texts and resources. The number one suggestion from teachers on "ways to optimize ESOL students' social studies performance" was to develop curricula adapted to the language needs of ESOL students. Based on teachers' feedback, course sequencing is a secondary issue. The primary issue is language readiness. If curricula can be adapted based on student English language proficiency level, course sequence will not matter very much, according to teachers.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are proposed:

- Continue to provide flexibility for schools to determine the optimal course sequence in ESOL social studies.
- Address ESOL students' language needs by providing appropriate resources for differentiation and flexibility in content coverage.
- Use different course (or section) codes to distinguish sheltered ESOL social studies courses from the regular social studies courses in high school in order to better monitor student progress.
- Examine and revise test items with discrimination coefficients below .20 on ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History final exams.
- Simplify the final exam score conversion rules so scores can be recorded consistently and human coding errors can be reduced.

U.S. History and Modern World History Courses for English Speakers of Other Languages in Montgomery County Public Schools

Huafang Zhao, Ph.D. & Julie Wade, M.S.

Background

U.S. History; Modern World History; and National, State, and Local (NSL) Government are required courses for high school graduation in Maryland. High school students usually take U.S. History in Grade 9 and Modern World History in Grade 11. However, the course sequence may be different for students of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL). Since high school ESOL students come from different parts of the world, it is assumed that they are more familiar with world history than with U.S. history. For this reason, the Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs recommends that lower-level ESOL students take Modern World History first in their sequence of social studies courses, and higher-level ESOL students take U.S. History first. The guidelines for the high school ESOL instructional pathways are provided in Appendix A.

Course Sequence of ESOL Social Studies in Montgomery County Public Schools

Despite the recommended instructional pathways, Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) high schools used different course sequences in 2012–2013. In some high schools, ESOL students took U.S. History first, while in others ESOL students took Modern World History first regardless of their English proficiency levels. According to the program staff, this might be due to the fact that Modern World History has become more rigorous after its curriculum revision in 2008–2009. Furthermore, students enrolled in 2012–2013 U.S. History and Modern World History courses were required to take countywide final exams, which accounted for 25% of their final course grade. Some ESOL and social studies teachers believed that the curriculum revision of the Modern World History course actually makes it inappropriate for lower-level ESOL students.

To address teachers' concerns, the MCPS Office of Shared Accountability (OSA) was asked to investigate how the course sequence impacted academic performance in the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses so the optimal course sequence could be suggested. This study focused on ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History because there was no NSL Government course designed for ESOL students in MCPS in 2012–2013.

ESOL Program in MCPS High Schools

In this study, “ESOL students” refers to students receiving ESOL services in MCPS, and the term “English Language Learner (ELL)” refers to students whose native language is not English, but who are not necessarily receiving ESOL services due to various reasons including parent’s request. The ESOL program in MCPS high schools “enrolls linguistically and culturally diverse secondary students who require intensive English language instruction and orientation to a new cultural and

academic environment” (MCPS, 2012a). A description of high school ESOL courses is provided in Appendix B.

The amount of daily ESOL instruction varies according to the level of English language proficiency (MCPS, 2012a). Students at the lowest English proficiency level receive the most intervention. Beginning students (ESOL Levels 1 and 2) receive two ESOL classes daily, while intermediate (Levels 3 and 4) and Advanced (Level 5) students receive one ESOL class daily. The ESOL classes provide structured instruction in the acquisition of the English language with specific emphasis on the listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills that are prerequisite for success in a rigorous academic environment. More detailed descriptions of high school ESOL courses may be found in Appendix B. In addition to ESOL classes, students may be enrolled in sheltered content courses, such as sheltered courses in math, science, or social studies, according to need. The ESOL U.S. History and the ESOL Modern World History courses that are the focus of this study are sheltered content courses where students are taught the content material of the regular unsheltered course but with additional language support.

Table 1 describes the characteristics of MCPS high school ESOL students based on October 2012 enrollment data. There were 2,315 students enrolled in ESOL classes in the 2012–2013 school year. The students varied in demographic characteristics and ESOL instructional level. They came from over 100 different countries and spoke more than 70 different languages at home. More than half of them were Hispanic/Latino students (56%; $n = 1,294$).

Table 1
Characteristics of MCPS High School ESOL Students, 2012–2013 ($N = 2,315$)

		High School ESOL Students	
		<i>n</i>	%
Grade	Grade 9	933	40.3
	Grade 10	663	28.6
	Grade 11	412	17.8
	Grade 12	307	13.3
ESOL instruction level	Level 1	198	8.6
	Level 2	310	13.4
	Level 3	377	16.3
	Level 4	600	25.9
	Level 5	600	25.9
	Level 10*	230	9.9
Gender	Female	1,058	45.7
	Male	1,257	54.3
Race/ethnicity	American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.0
	Asian	404	17.5
	Black or African American	473	20.4
	Hispanic/Latino	1,294	55.9
	White	135	5.8
	Two or More Races	8	0.3
Free and Reduced-price Meal System (FARMS)	Yes	1,068	46.1
	No	1,247	53.9
Special education	Yes	91	3.9
	No	2,224	96.1

Source: October 2012, Office of Shared Accountability.

* Level 10 ESOL students included those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at their parents' request. Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) codes Level 10 students as ESOL.

ESOL U.S. History

In the ESOL U.S. History course, students study economic, political, social, and geographic developments in American history from 1877 to the present. Topics include the effects of the Industrial Revolution and immigration, the United States in world affairs through World War I, major developments of the 1920s and 1930s, World War II and its impact on American society, domestic policies during the period of 1945–1970, the impact of the cold war, and cultural change in post-war America (MCPS, 2012b).

ESOL Modern World History

In this course, students examine past world history and draw connections to similar concepts and forces at work today. Using historical thinking skills to access primary and secondary sources, students build their understanding of key trends, patterns, and turning points of modern world history. Key areas of investigation include global trade and interactions of the 17th and 18th century, political revolutions, global effects of industrialization, imperialism and global interactions, the World Wars, political and economic globalization, and the promise and challenge of modern technology (MCPS, 2012b).

High School Assessment Requirements

All Maryland students who graduated in 2012 and beyond and who entered Grade 9 in fall 2005 and later must meet the High School Assessment (HSA) graduation requirements by passing all three HSA tests (Algebra/Data Analysis, Biology, and English) with a combined score on the three tests of 1208 or higher, or completing the required Bridge Plan projects (MCPS, 2012c). Due to a state budget cut, the administration of the Government HSA was eliminated after 2011, and the graduating class of 2011 was the last class that needed the Government HSA for graduation (Maryland State Department of Education [MSDE], 2012). However, the Government HSA was reinstated in 2012. With the reinstatement of the Government HSA, schools must also consider what course sequence will best prepare students for success on this high stakes state assessment.

Literature Review

ELL students are a rapidly growing student population in American schools. More than 5 million ELL students enrolled in the public schools by 2009, equivalent to 11% of the total Pre-K–12 school enrollment (National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition & Language Instruction Educational Programs [NCELA], 2011). As the ELL population increases, the achievement gap between ELL students and their English proficient peers has become a great concern for educators. The gap begins early and persists through middle and high schools. According to the nation’s report card, only 29% of Grade 8 ELLs performed at or above basic on National Assessment of Educational Progress, compared to 77% of their non-ELL peers (NCELA, 2011). This section of the report discusses literature related to English language acquisition, academic English, sheltered instruction, and social studies instruction for ELLs.

Age Effect on Second Language Acquisition

Based on their review of the past literature, Nejadansari and Nasrollahzadeh (2011) summarized the age effect on second language acquisition. First, there was a period up to a certain age during which learners could achieve native-speaker-like competency in a second language (Patkowski, 1980). Birdsong (1992, 2006) believed that the cut-off age to acquire the native-like competency was at puberty or at 12 years old, while others postulated a younger age such as six years old (Long, 1990). Learners who were exposed to a second language early in life were more likely to attain a native accent than older starters. Second, the critical period for grammar may be later than pronunciation—at around the age of 15 (Bialystok & Hakuta, 1999). Older learners may perform better in writing and reading (Cummins & Nakajima, 1987). Adult learners can reach grammatical accuracy or full linguistic competency (Nejadasari & Nasrollahzadeh, 2011). Third, the rate for learning a second language varies for students of different ages. According to Collier (1987), ELL students who entered ESOL at ages 8–11 were the fastest achievers, requiring two to five years to reach the 50th percentile on national norms in all the subject areas tested. The ELL students who entered the program at ages 5–7 were one to three years behind the performance level of their ELL peers who entered the program at ages 8–11, when both groups had the same length of residence. Students who arrived at ages 12–15 experienced the greatest difficulty and required 6–8 years to reach grade-level norms in academic achievement when schooled all in the second language. Whereas some groups might reach proficiency in some subjects in as little as two years, it was projected that at least four to eight years might be required for all ages of ELL students to reach national grade-level norms of native speakers in all subject areas of language and academic achievement (Collier & Thomas, 1997). As DeKeyser (2000) noted, “the decline of language learning ability does not suddenly occur around puberty but seems to take place gradually from ages 6 or 7 to 16 or 17 and beyond” (p. 500).

Language Transfer

ELL high school students can bring a variety of literacy skills with them based on their past educational experience. For those who are literate in their first language, their skills in their native language can be applied to the second language with appropriate instruction (Francis, Rivera,

Lesaux, Kieffer, & Rivera, 2006). Cummins and Nakajima (1987) examined English reading and writing skills of 273 Japanese students in Grades 2–8. They found older students were more likely to have strong reading skills and better writing skills. The explanation they offered was that the older learners benefited from the prior academic experience in reading and writing in Japanese. The ‘interdependence principle’ formulated by Cummins (1981) suggested that cognitive academic language proficiency is common across languages and can easily be transferred from the first language to a second language by learners. In other words, ELL students with a solid background in their first language can benefit from their prior education during their second language development.

Some English learners have had quality schooling in their country so their content knowledge is at grade level or above. For those students, transferring their educational knowledge may come easily through a well-planned program of English development. For other students, whose schooling has been sporadic and who have had little opportunity to develop academic skills in their home country, English may require more intensive and targeted instruction (Dutro, Achieve, & Kinsella, 2008).

Academic English

Academic language is different from everyday conversation. It refers to language of text, academic discussion, and formal writing. For ELL students, academic English proficiency is crucial to academic success. Deficiency in academic English can prevent ELL students from learning grade-level curriculum (Genesee, Lindholm-Leary, Saunders, & Christian, 2006). Academic English includes, but is not limited to, vocabulary, ability to handle world complexity, and understanding complex sentence structures and syntax of English language. Academic English is commonly used in professional books and characterized by the specific linguistic features associated with academic disciplines such as sciences, economics, and mathematics. It is also used in business and legal settings (Scarcella, 2003).

Academic English entails multiple dimensions and fits into a theoretical model of academic literacy proposed by Kern (2002). Based on Kern’s model, Scarcella (2003) suggested that academic English has three different dimensions: linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural/psychological. The linguistic dimension consists of phonological, lexical, grammatical, sociolinguistic, and discourse components. The cognitive dimension includes components of knowledge, higher order thinking, cognitive, and metalinguistic strategies. The sociocultural dimension is made up of social and cultural norms, values, beliefs, attitudes, motivations, interests, behaviors, practices, and habits.

According to Dutro, et al. (2008), sufficient background knowledge needs to be applied to words differently across content areas in academic English. It takes four to seven years for most ELL students to learn adequate academic English skills in order to handle grade-level content demands (Cook, Linquanti, Chinen, & Jung, 2012; Hakuta, Butler, & Witt, 2000). However, high school ELL students cannot afford to wait until they have mastered academic English before they access grade-level curriculum.

Sheltered Instruction

Sheltered instruction is an approach to teaching that extends the time students have for receiving English language support while learning content subjects. The Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) model was developed based on a seven-year research project by the Institute of Education Sciences (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2008). The SIOP model is a validated model of sheltered instruction. Professional development in the SIOP model helps teachers plan and deliver lessons that allow English learners to acquire academic knowledge as they develop English language proficiency.

The SIOP model consists of eight interrelated components: lesson preparation, building background, comprehensible input, strategies, interaction, practice/application, lesson delivery, and review/assessment (Echevarria, et al., 2008). Using instructional strategies connected to each of these components, teachers are able to design and deliver lessons that address the academic and linguistic needs of English learners. The ultimate goal is accessibility for ELL students to grade-level content standards and concepts while continuing to improve their English language proficiency. The SIOP model is adopted in MCPS classrooms.

The ELL high school students face a double challenge of learning a new language while mastering the same academic content as their English proficient peers. Their English language development depends on literacy in their primary languages, previous and present experience in American schools, and English language knowledge.

Social Studies Instruction for ELL Students

Learning social studies content presents a wide range of challenges for ELL students, particularly in secondary school (Pahl, 2007). Many ELL students have not had prior exposure to a U.S.-based social studies curriculum and lack an understanding of the cultural context in which the social studies curriculum is presented. In addition, social studies lessons require literacy skills, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, interpreting tables, charts, and maps, and synthesizing information (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007).

Szpara and Ahmad (2007) proposed a multi-tiered approach to meeting the needs of ELL students in the social studies classroom. They outlined best practices in three broad areas: 1) creating a socially supportive classroom, 2) providing explicit instruction in academic strategies necessary for successful comprehension of complex content, and 3) increasing the accessibility of complex content knowledge by reducing cognitive load without reducing content.

As educators try to meet the challenges ELL students bring to the classroom and provide effective instruction, it is important to remember the unique role that social studies lessons play in students' education. In a study of high school social studies teachers, O'Brien (2011) concluded: "Of all the secondary classrooms across the United States, social studies classes are the one place where ELLs have the unique opportunity to learn important citizenship skills which can help them become effective participants in a democratic society.... If [their educational needs] are not met, as a nation

we risk losing out on the future contributions of ELLs who are not educated as well as their English-speaking counterparts” (p. 33).

Methodology

Purpose of the Study

This study addressed the following questions:

1. What were the characteristics of students who took ESOL U.S. History in 2012–2013?
2. What were the characteristics of students who took ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013?
3. What were the psychometric characteristics of the final exams for the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses?
4. How did students perform in ESOL U.S. History in 2012–2013?
5. How did students perform in ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013?
6. Did the course sequence contribute to student performance in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History?
7. What was the process and criteria for placing ESOL students in required social studies courses in 2012–2013?
8. What were teachers’ views on the sequencing of the required social studies courses for ESOL students, and factors that might affect ESOL student performance?

Study Design

A non-experimental design was employed, utilizing a variety of data collection methods. The data collection methods included document review, the use of student performance on the final exam and on the courses, as well as surveys. A survey of teachers who taught ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History was administered in the spring of 2013. In addition, a brief school-level questionnaire collected information about the process and criteria used for placement of ESOL students in social studies courses. The teacher survey examined experiences and perspectives of teachers who taught social studies to ESOL students and also investigated their views on the sequencing of the two social studies courses for ESOL students as well as other factors that would promote achievement of ESOL students in social studies.

Study Samples

Students

The student sample included MCPS students who enrolled in ESOL U.S. History or in ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013. Even though both were year-long courses, students who took one semester course also were included. Since MCPS ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History have the same course codes as the regular U.S. History and Modern World History,

and some ESOL students took regular history courses, the only way to accurately identify students taking the two ESOL history courses was to use information collected on the final exams via a specially designed Scantron sheet. Only students who took the ESOL U.S. and Modern World History final exams were included in the analyses. Student ESOL level was based on January enrollment for Semester 1 and June enrollment for Semester 2.

Teachers

Social studies teachers or ESOL teachers who taught ESOL U.S. History or ESOL Modern World History from 2009 to 2012 were asked to complete a survey. These teachers were identified by program staff in the Office of Curriculum and Instruction Programs (OCIP), the Division of ESOL/Bilingual Programs, and MCPS databases. Sixty surveys were e-mailed to teachers who had taught ESOL U.S. History, ESOL Modern World History, or both, during the last four years. Thirty-one surveys were completed and returned, yielding a response rate of 52%.

School-Level Questionnaire Respondents

The school-level questionnaire was sent to a staff member at each high school who facilitated the sequencing of social studies courses for ESOL students. The questionnaire of school practices was sent to 24 of the 25 high schools; one principal had informed the OSA that their school had no current or previous ESOL social studies courses, and the principal did not identify a contact person for the study. Of the 24 surveys that were sent out, 20 were completed and returned, reflecting an 83% response rate. Staff members from 3 of the 24 schools indicated that there were no ESOL social studies courses at their school; one school did not respond to the survey request and reminder. Thus, responses to the survey of school practices were received from 20 schools, representing all but one of the schools that have ESOL social studies courses.

Measures and Data Sources

The measures used included final exams and semester course grades, proficiency level on English proficiency tests, and teacher survey responses.

Final ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History Exam Grades

Final exam grades were used as an outcome measure to report student performance on the final exams. Final exam items were examined for psychometric characteristics. The percentage of students passing the final exam (grade of D or higher) was used as an outcome measure and reported for each exam.

Course Grade

Since the final exam only accounts for 25% of the course grade, the semester course grade was used as another outcome measure. The percentage of students passing the courses (grade of D or higher) was reported for each course.

English Language Proficiency: ACCESS for ELLs

In Maryland, ACCESS for ELLs is currently the standard assessment for language development of ELL students. ACCESS for ELLs is a large-scale test measuring the English language development standards developed by World-class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA), 2012. Maryland has joined the WIDA Consortium and has adopted the WIDA English Language Development Standards, which describe the expectations educators have for ELL students in five different content areas: social and instructional language, English language arts, math, science, and social studies. Maryland school systems use the WIDA standards as a basis for developing their own curriculum for their ELL students.

On ACCESS, student English language development is characterized with six English language proficiency levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, including Level 1 (Entering), Level 2 (Beginning), Level 3 (Developing), Level 4 (Expanding), Level 5 (Bridging), Level 6 (Reaching). The six levels describe the spectrum of a learner's progression from knowing little or no English to acquiring the English skills necessary to be successful in an English-only mainstream classroom without extra support (WIDA, 2012).

For this study, students' ACCESS overall scale score, an indicator of English language proficiency, was used as a control variable when studying course sequence impact.

Survey and Questionnaire

The experiences and perspectives of ESOL social studies teachers were obtained through a teacher survey, and school-level information was collected with a questionnaire completed by school personnel involved in placement of ESOL students in social studies courses.

1. The survey of social studies teachers aimed to elicit information on: 1) teachers' views of the impact of ESOL social studies course sequence on student success in the courses, and 2) other factors that contribute to or hinder ESOL students' success in social studies courses.
2. The school-level questionnaire asked respondents to describe the criteria and process that their schools use to place ESOL students in required social studies courses.

The survey and questionnaire were administered electronically in spring 2013. Follow-up reminders were sent approximately two weeks later in an effort to increase the response rates.

Demographic Information

Student demographic information and ESOL level designation were obtained from the MCPS end-of-year enrollment file and the ESOL file.

Analytical Procedures

The analytical procedures for the study included: 1) psychometric analyses for the final exams, 2) descriptive analyses of students and their performance by demographics and ESOL levels, 3) logistic regression for sequence impact, and 4) survey data analyses.

Psychometric Analyses for the Final Exams

Psychometric analyses were conducted for the final exams of the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses in 2012–2013. The analyses were intended to examine test reliability, item difficulty, discrimination index, distractor, and written response analyses.

Reliability. Reliability refers to the consistency of a test (or measure). A test is considered reliable if similar results can be obtained across test administrations. However, it is impossible to calculate reliability exactly. Test-retest, inter-rater, parallel-form, and internal consistency reliability are different ways to estimate reliability. In this study, final exam data for ESOL social studies were available only for one form in one administration (with sufficient sample size), and one teacher scored his/her own students. Therefore, it only is possible to estimate internal consistency which judges the consistency across items on the same test. Cronbach's alpha is often used to measure internal consistency when a test includes both multiple choice and open-ended questions (Cronbach, 1951).

The theoretical value of Cronbach's alpha varies from zero to 1, including negative values, although only positive values make sense (Ritter, 2010). Higher values of alpha are more desirable. A common rule of thumb requires a reliability of 0.70 or higher when used with an instrument (Kline, 1999; Nunnally, 1978). Factors that contribute to higher reliability include less homogeneous test takers, longer test, objectively scored items, and high quality of test items, so this rule of thumb should be used with caution (Cortina, 1993).

Item Difficulty. For multiple choice items, item difficulty (also called p value) is measured by the proportion of students who selected the correct response (p values range from zero to +1.0). For example, an item with a p value of .95 is easy, because 95% of the examinees selected the correct responses. Items either too easy or too difficult are unable to distinguish high performing students from low performing ones. It is important to keep in mind that repeated administration of the same test item will increase the p values and make items appear to be less difficult.

Discrimination Index (point-biserial). The discrimination index measures a test item's effectiveness at discriminating those who know the content from those who do not. Discrimination index is based on point-biserial correlation between a correct response and overall points on a test. The index ranges from -1.0 to 1.0. A positive correlation suggests that students who perform better on the entire test have a higher probability of getting a test item right. The higher the discrimination value, the better the test item.

A discrimination index of 0.2 or higher is regarded as acceptable because the test item is able to differentiate between the low and high performing students (Ebel & Frisbie, 1991). A negative value is questionable. When a discrimination index is negative, it suggests that overall the most

knowledgeable examinees are getting the item wrong and the least knowledgeable examinees are getting the item right. A negative discrimination index may indicate that the item is measuring something other than what the rest of the test is measuring. Items with negative indices should be examined to determine whether the item was flawed or mis-keyed.

Distracter Analyses. Choices other than the correct answer are called distracters. If a test item has four choices, students will have a 25% chance of guessing the correct response. With four possible choices for an item, three distracters should attract some students in order to reduce probability of guessing. The correct answer should attract more students than any distracters. If correct answers attract fewer students than distracters, it may indicate potential issues such as multiple correct answers or a wrong answer key.

Open-ended Items. For open-ended test items, mean scores can be used to judge item difficulty. For example, an item with a mean of 3 out of 6 points is moderately difficult (3 out of 6 = 50%).

Descriptive Analyses of Students and Their Performance Data

Descriptive statistics were used to summarize information on the characteristics and performance levels of MCPS high school ESOL students who took ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses.

Logistic Regression for Sequence Impact

Logistic regression analyses were applied to examine whether the sequence of the courses was related to successful completion of the courses with a grade of D or higher (or C or higher), after controlling for student English language proficiency. Student English language proficiency, and student previous course taking history (e.g., whether they took U.S. or Modern World History courses before the 2012–2013 school year) were used as predictors, while passing the course was the dependent variable.

Survey Data Analyses

Descriptive analyses of the responses to the teacher survey and school-level questionnaire were conducted. Content analyses of responses from open-ended items were used to identify themes and categories of common responses. Counts of responses within categories as well as examples of representative comments were presented.

Results

Results are organized according to the evaluation questions. Student characteristics, item analyses of final exams, and student performance in the courses are presented first, followed by the survey findings. When a group has less than five students, the course performance for the group is not reported.

1. What were the characteristics of students who took ESOL U.S. History in 2012–2013?

Table 2 displays the characteristics of students who took ESOL U.S. History in 2012–2013 by semester. In Semester 1, 508 students took the ESOL U.S. History course, while 512 students took the ESOL U.S. History in Semester 2. Demographic characteristics of the two groups were similar.

Table 2
Demographic Characteristics of Students Who Took ESOL U.S. History
in 2012–2013 by Semester

	ESOL U.S. History Semester 1 <i>N</i> = 508		ESOL U.S. History Semester 2 <i>N</i> = 512	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade Level				
9	248	48.8	252	49.2
10	175	34.4	175	34.2
11	70	13.8	82	16.0
12	15	3.0	3	0.6
ESOL Level				
No level defined	7	1.4	6	1.2
Level 1	17	3.3	19	3.7
Level 2	124	24.4	90	17.6
Level 3	161	31.7	145	28.3
Level 4	155	30.5	167	32.6
Level 5	36	7.1	65	12.7
Level 10*	8	1.6	20	3.9
Gender				
Female	242	47.6	243	52.5
Male	266	52.4	269	47.5
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian	104	20.5	109	21.3
Black or African American	101	19.9	121	23.6
Hispanic/Latino	268	52.8	253	49.4
White	33	6.5	27	5.3
Two or More Races	2	0.4	2	0.4
Services Received				
FARMS	316	62.2	328	64.1
Special Education	4	0.8	12	2.3

* Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE regards Level 10 as ESOL.

As shown in Table 2, the majority of students who took ESOL U.S. History in Semester 1 were in Grade 9 (49%, *n* = 248) and Grade 10 (34%, *n* = 175). Most of the students were at ESOL Level 3

(32%, $n = 161$) and Level 4 (31%, $n = 155$). Of all 508 students, 53% ($n = 268$) were Hispanic/Latino, and 62% ($n = 316$) received FARMS services in 2012–2013.

In Semester 2, the majority of students who took ESOL U.S. History were also in Grade 9 (49%, $n = 252$) and Grade 10 (34%, $n = 175$). Most of the students were at ESOL Level 4 (33%, $n = 167$) and Level 3 (28%, $n = 145$). Of all 512 students, 49% ($n = 253$) were Hispanic/Latino, and 64% ($n = 328$) received FARMS services in 2012–2013 (Table 2).

Table C1 in Appendix C displays English proficiency levels as scored on ACCESS for students who took the ESOL U.S. History course in Semester 1. For 493 students with valid ACCESS scores, 1% ($n = 4$) were at entering level, 10% ($n = 49$) at emerging level, 32% ($n = 158$) at developing level, 33% ($n = 161$) at expanding level, 16% ($n = 80$) at bridging level, and 8% ($n = 41$) at reaching level. Similar information for Semester 2 is presented in Table C2 (Appendix C).

2. What were the characteristics of students who took ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013?

Table 3 shows the characteristics of students who took ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013 by semester. In Semester 1, 231 students took ESOL Modern World History, while 213 students took the course in Semester 2.

In Semester 1, the majority of students who took ESOL Modern World History were in Grade 10 (38%, $n = 88$) and Grade 9 (36%, $n = 83$). Most of the students were at ESOL Level 3 (29%, $n = 66$) and Level 2 (28%, $n = 65$). Of all 231 students, 61% ($n = 141$) were Hispanic/Latino, and 59% ($n = 137$) received FARMS services in 2012–2013.

In Semester 2, the majority of students who took ESOL Modern World History were in Grade 9 (47%, $n = 100$) and Grade 10 (40%, $n = 85$). Most of the students were at ESOL Level 3 (37%, $n = 79$) and Level 4 (23%, $n = 48$). Of all 213 students, 61% ($n = 129$) were Hispanic/Latino, and 74% ($n = 158$) received FARMS services in 2012–2013.

Table 3
Demographic Characteristics of Students Who Took ESOL Modern World
in 2012–2013 by Semester

	ESOL Modern World History Semester 1 <i>N</i> = 231		ESOL Modern World History Semester 2 <i>N</i> = 213	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Grade Level				
9	83	35.9	100	46.9
10	88	38.1	85	39.9
11	31	13.4	26	12.2
12	29	12.6	2	0.9
ESOL Level				
No level defined	4	1.7		
Level 1	10	4.3	11	5.2
Level 2	65	28.1	42	19.7
Level 3	66	28.6	79	37.1
Level 4	43	18.6	48	22.5
Level 5	37	16.0	30	14.1
Level 10*	6	2.6	3	1.4
Gender				
Female	98	42.4	96	45.1
Male	133	57.6	117	54.9
Race/Ethnicity				
Asian	39	16.9	36	16.9
Black or African American	45	19.5	44	20.7
Hispanic/Latino	141	61.0	129	60.6
White	5	2.2	3	1.4
Two or More Races	1	0.4	1	0.5
Services				
FARMS	137	59.3	158	74.2
Special Education	6	2.6	4	1.9

* Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE regards Level 10 as ESOL.

Table C3 (Appendix C) presents English proficiency levels on ACCESS for students who took the ESOL Modern World History course in Semester 1. Of 222 students with valid ACCESS scores, most were in the developing (33%, $n = 74$) and expanding levels (28%, $n = 62$). Table C4 in Appendix C provides similar information for Semester 2. Of 211 students, most of the students in ESOL Modern World History Semester 2 were in developing (37%, $n = 78$) and expanding (28%, $n = 60$) levels based on valid ACCESS scores.

In summary, about twice as many students took ESOL U.S. History as ESOL Modern World History in the 2012–2013 school year. A majority of the students were Hispanic/Latino and received FARMS services. Although the overall English proficiency levels of students in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History did not show large differences, the range (minimum to maximum) of ACCESS scores was larger for students in ESOL U.S. History than those in ESOL Modern World History (see Table C5 in Appendix C). This suggests that student English language skills in ESOL U.S. History varied widely, compared to those in ESOL Modern World History. Table C5 (Appendix C) presents average subscores for ACCESS by course and semester.

3. What were the psychometric characteristics of the final exams for the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses?

To study student performance on final exams, it is important first to examine the psychometric properties of the final exams. Table 4 shows the test specification of the final exams for the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses in 2012–2013. Each final exam was given at the end of a semester after students received instruction in the content areas. Students took final exam A at the end of the first semester, and final exam B at the end of the second semester.

Table 4
Test Specifications of ESOL Social Studies Final Exams in 2012–2013

	Test Form	Written Responses (WR)	Maximum WR Score %	Multiple Choice (one point each) %	Total Score Points
ESOL U.S. History A	EL	2 out of 4	10 x 2 = 20 (30.8%)	45 (69.2%)	20 + 45 = 65
ESOL U.S. History B	EL	3 out of 5	8 x 3 = 24 (40.7%)	35 (59.3%)	24 + 35 = 59
ESOL Modern World History A	EL	2	15 x 2 = 30 (42.9%)	40 (57.1%)	30 + 40 = 70
ESOL Modern World History B	EL	3 out of 5	10 x 3 = 30 (46.2%)	35 (53.8%)	30 + 35 = 65

Source: Social Studies Program of OCIP in MCPS, September 2012.

For the ESOL U.S. History A exam (Table 4), students responded to two out of four writing prompts (31% of the total score). The maximum score for writing prompts was 10 points. There were 45 multiple choice test items, equivalent to 69% of the total score. The total score points for both multiple choice and written responses on the ESOL U.S. History A exam ranged from 0 to 65 points.

Reliability

Based on multiple choice questions in the tests, the test reliability of the final exams ranged from .82 for ESOL Modern World History A to .86 for ESOL U.S. History B (Table D1, Appendix D). The test reliability is reasonably high (Nunnally, 1978).

Item Difficulty by Test

Table D2 (Appendix D) describes the item difficulty for ESOL U.S. History A and B final exams. For the ESOL U.S. History A exam, the item difficulty values range from 29% for Item 34 to 82% for Item 17. For the ESOL U.S. History B exam, the difficulty values range from 18% for Item 35 to 81% for Items 1 and 9.

Table D3 describes item difficulty for ESOL Modern World History A and B final exams. For Exam A, the difficulty values range from 26% for Item 18 to 80% for Item 36, while for Exam B, the difficulty values range from 25% for Item 33 to 77% for Item 4. These findings suggest that none of the test items for either subject are too difficult or too easy.

Discrimination Index by Test

Table D2 shows the discrimination index for ESOL U.S. History A and B final exams. The majority of the items are above the criteria value of .2 (Scheiser & Welch, 2006). However, two items on the ESOL U.S. History A final exam have index values below .2 (.15 for Item 13 and .16 for Item 6). On the ESOL U.S. History B final exam, two items also show index values below .2 (.16 for Item 19 and .17 for Item 35).

Table D3 describes the discrimination index for ESOL Modern World History A and B final exams. Most of the discrimination index values are above .2. However, six items have values below .2 (Items 11, 13, 16, 20, 25, and 30) on the ESOL Modern World History A final exam. On the ESOL Modern World History B final exam, Item 32 has a discrimination coefficient -.02. Items with negative value or values below .2 need further examination or revision.

Distracter Analyses

Since final exams are secure test materials, distracter analyses are not presented here but shared with OCIP staff due to security concerns. Results of distracter analyses can be used for test revision.

Written Responses for Open-Ended Items

Written responses on the final exams were scored by classroom teachers. Teachers received scoring training, used scoring rubrics to identify the response levels and converted levels to points and then to percentage correct as shown in Appendix D4.

However, it was observed that teachers recorded student written responses in different ways on the scantron sheets for the final exams. For instance, some teachers recorded levels, some recorded points and others recorded percentages for the written responses. Therefore, the written response results could not be reported due to data inconsistency. The issue of inconsistent data collection for the written responses was shared with OCIP staff.

4. How did students perform in ESOL U.S. History in 2012–2013?

Final Exam

Since written response scores were not recorded consistently by teachers, the total points on the final exam could not be used for analyses and reporting. However, teachers did give students their final exam grades after score conversion. Students with a grade of D or higher passed the final exams.

Table 5
Students Who Passed ESOL U.S. History Final Exams in 2012–2013

	Took ESOL U.S. History Final Exam in Semester 1			Took ESOL U.S. History Final Exam in Semester 2		
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed
Total	508	293	57.7	512	350	68.4
Grade Level						
9	248	141	56.9	252	177	70.2
10	175	90	51.4	175	103	58.9
11	70	51	72.9	82	69	84.1
12	15	11	73.3	3	NR	
ESOL Level						
No level defined	7	6	85.7	6	4	66.7
Level 1	17	6	35.3	19	13	68.4
Level 2	124	62	50.0	90	56	62.2
Level 3	161	85	52.8	145	97	66.9
Level 4	155	107	69.0	167	119	71.3
Level 5	36	23	63.9	65	47	72.3
Level 10*	8	4	50.0	20	14	70.0
Gender						
Female	242	131	54.1	243	155	63.8
Male	266	162	60.9	269	195	72.5
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	104	77	74.0	109	89	81.7
Black or African American	101	62	61.4	121	88	72.7
Hispanic/Latino	268	126	47.0	253	146	57.7
White	33	26	78.8	27	25	92.6
Two or More Races	2	NR		2	NR	
Services						
FARMS	316	161	50.9	328	210	64.0
Special Education	4	NR		12	6	50.0

*Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE codes Level 10 students as ESOL.

NR means not reported for a group with less than five students.

As shown in Table 5, 58% ($n = 293$) of the 508 students who took an ESOL U.S. History final exam in Semester 1 passed. Among grade levels, students in Grades 11 ($n = 51$) and 12 ($n = 11$) had the highest exam passing rates (73%). Of all ESOL levels (excluding no level defined), ESOL Level 4 students had the highest exam passing rate (69%, $n = 107$). Among ethnic groups, White students had the highest passing rate (79%, $n = 26$), while Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rate (47%, $n = 126$). About 51% of FARMS students ($n = 161$) passed the ESOL U.S. History Semester 1 exam. Exam passing rates for Semester 2 are also displayed in Table 5.

Course Performance

Table 6 illustrates the course passing rates for ESOL U.S. History by semester. Of 508 students who took an ESOL U.S. History course in Semester 1, 94% ($n = 476$) passed it. Among grade levels, Grade 11 (99%, $n = 69$) and Grade 12 (100%, $n = 15$) students had the highest course passing rates.

Table 6
Students Who Passed ESOL U.S. History Semester Courses in 2012–2013

	Took ESOL U.S. History Course in Semester 1			Took ESOL U.S. History Course in Semester 2		
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed
Total	508	476	93.7	512	469	91.6
Grade Level						
9	248	229	92.3	252	231	91.7
10	175	163	93.1	175	154	88.0
11	70	69	98.6	82	81	98.8
12	15	15	100.0	3	NR	
ESOL Level						
No level defined	7	7	100.0	6	4	66.7
Level 1	17	17	100.0	19	18	94.7
Level 2	124	112	90.3	90	79	87.8
Level 3	161	146	90.7	145	128	88.3
Level 4	155	151	97.4	167	160	95.8
Level 5	36	35	97.2	65	63	96.9
Level 10*	8	8	100.0	20	17	85.0
Gender						
Female	242	226	93.4	243	218	89.7
Male	266	250	94.0	269	251	93.3
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	104	102	98.1	109	106	97.2
Black or African American	101	100	99.0	121	118	97.5
Hispanic/Latino	268	242	90.3	253	217	85.8
White	33	30	90.9	27	26	96.3
Two or More Races	2	NR		2	NR	
Services						
FARMS	316	294	93.0	328	301	91.8
Special Education	4	NR		12	11	91.7

*Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE codes Level 10 students as ESOL.

NR means not reported for a group with less than five students.

Of all ESOL levels (excluding no level defined, $n = 7$ and Level 10, $n = 8$), ESOL Level 1 students, although the smallest number of students in a level, had the highest course passing rate (100%, $n = 17$). Among ethnic groups (excluding multiple race, $n = 2$), Black or African American students had the highest course passing rate (99%, $n = 100$), while Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rate (90%, $n = 242$). Over 93% of students receiving FARMS services ($n = 294$) passed the ESOL U.S. History course in Semester 1. Course passing rates for Semester 2 are also displayed in Table 6.

To summarize, more than 90% of students passed ESOL U.S. History semester courses, while only 58% to 68% of the students passed the final exams in Semester 1 and Semester 2. The course passing rate was higher than the final exam passing rate across all student groups. Students in Grades 11 and 12 had the highest passing rates for the final exams and the courses, compared to students in other grades. Among ethnic groups, Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rates for the final exams. It is important to keep in mind that results should be interpreted with caution when sample size is small.

5. How did students perform in ESOL Modern World History in 2012–2013?

Final Exam

Table 7 shows the final exam passing rates for ESOL Modern World History. Of 231 students who took the ESOL Modern World History final exam in Semester 1, 49% ($n = 114$) passed. Of all grade levels, Grade 9 students had the highest exam passing rate (54%, $n = 45$). Of all ESOL levels (excluding no level defined, $n = 4$ and Level 10, $n = 4$), ESOL Level 4 students had the highest exam passing rate (54%, $n = 23$). Among ethnic groups, Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rate (42%, $n = 59$). About 48% of students receiving FARMS services ($n = 66$) passed the ESOL Modern World History Semester 1 exam. Passing rates on the Semester 2 final exam were somewhat higher than Semester 1, and are also displayed in Table 7.

Table 7
Students Who Passed ESOL Modern World History Final Exams in 2012–2013

	Took ESOL Modern World History Final Exam Semester 1			Took ESOL Modern World History Final Exam Semester 2		
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed
Total	231	114	49.4	213	134	62.9
Grade Level						
9	83	45	54.2	100	62	62.0
10	88	40	45.5	85	50	58.8
11	31	14	45.2	26	21	80.8
12	29	15	51.7	2	NR	
ESOL Level						
No level defined	4	NR				
Level 1	10	3	30.0	11	8	72.7
Level 2	65	26	40.0	42	26	61.9
Level 3	66	35	53.0	79	43	54.4
Level 4	43	23	53.5	48	30	62.5
Level 5	37	19	51.4	30	26	86.7
Level 10*	6	4	66.7	3	NR	
Gender						
Female	98	40	40.8	96	58	60.4
Male	133	74	55.6	117	76	65.0
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	39	20	51.3	36	28	77.8
Black or African American	45	30	66.7	44	36	81.8
Hispanic/Latino	141	59	41.8	129	66	51.2
White	5	4	80.0	3	NR	
Two or More Races	1	NR		1	NR	
Services						
FARMS	137	66	48.2	158	97	61.4
Special Education	6	2	33.3	4	NR	

*Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE codes Level 10 students as ESOL.

NR means not reported for a group with less than five students.

Course Performance

Table 8 illustrates the course passing rates for ESOL Modern World History by semester. Of 231 students who took the ESOL Modern World History course in Semester 1, 92% ($n = 212$) passed. Among grade levels, Grade 12 students had highest course passing rates (100%, $n = 29$). Of all ESOL levels, ESOL Level 5 students had the highest course passing rate (100%, $n = 37$). Among ethnic groups, Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rate (87%, $n = 123$). About 93% of students receiving FARMS services ($n = 128$) passed the ESOL Modern World History course in Semester 1. Course passing rates for Semester 2 are also displayed in Table 8.

Table 8
Students Who Passed ESOL Modern World History Semester Courses in 2012–2013

	Took ESOL Modern World History Course Semester 1			Took ESOL Modern World History Course Semester 2		
	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed	<i>N</i>	<i>n</i> passed	% passed
Total	231	212	91.8	213	201	94.4
Grade Level						
9	83	76	91.6	100	97	97.0
10	88	77	87.5	85	76	89.4
11	31	30	96.8	26	26	100.0
12	29	29	100.0	2	NR	
ESOL Level						
No level defined	4	NR				
Level 1	10	9	90.0	11	11	100.0
Level 2	65	57	87.7	42	42	100.0
Level 3	66	60	90.9	79	69	87.3
Level 4	43	39	90.7	48	48	100.0
Level 5	37	37	100.0	30	29	96.7
Level 10*	6	6	100.0	3	NR	
Gender						
Female	98	90	91.8	96	91	94.8
Male	133	122	91.7	117	110	94.0
Race/Ethnicity						
Asian	39	39	100.0	36	36	100.0
Black or African American	45	44	97.8	44	44	100.0
Hispanic/Latino	141	123	87.2	129	117	90.7
White	5	5	100.0	3	NR	
Two or More Races	1	NR		1	NR	
Services						
FARMS**	137	128	93.4	158	151	95.6
Special Education	6	6	100.0	4	NR	

*Level 10 ESOL students include those who did not meet exit criteria but are not receiving ESOL services at the parents' request. MSDE codes Level 10 students as ESOL.
NR means not reported for a group with less than five students.

Results show that over the two semesters, 49% to 63% of students who took the ESOL Modern World History course passed the final exams, while over 90% of the students passed the semester course. Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rates for the final exams among racial/ethnic groups.

6. Did the course sequence contribute to student performance in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History?

To examine if the course sequence is a contributing factor in predicting student success in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses, four logistic regression models were used. The results for ESOL U.S. History are shown in Table 9, and the results for ESOL Modern World History are shown in Table 10.

In the first two analyses (Table 9), the probability of passing ESOL U.S. History was examined. English proficiency (2013 ACCESS overall scale scores) and whether a student previously took ESOL Modern World History, were used as two predictors for passing the ESOL U.S. History semester course with a grade of D or higher in Semester 1 and Semester 2. The results show that only the ACCESS scores were significant ($p \leq .000$), but the effect sizes were negligible in predicting course success. The explained variance as represented by Nagelkerke R Square was .202 for Semester 1 and .159 in Semester 2.

For the ESOL U.S. History Semester 1 course, Nagelkerke R^2 of .202 indicates that 20.2% of the variance in passing the course with D or higher could be explained by the variance in 2013 ACCESS overall scores and whether the students took ESOL Modern World History or not before 2012–2013. However, ACCESS overall scores played a more significant role compared to whether the students took ESOL Modern World History before 2012–2013. Further analyses showed that if ACCESS overall scores were used as the only predictor for the Semester 1 model, R^2 changed slightly from .202 to .184. For Semester 2, R^2 stayed the same with or without taking the Modern World History course before 2012–2013.

Table 9
Probability of Students Passing ESOL U.S History as Predicted by 2013 ACCESS Overall Scale Score and Having Taken ESOL Modern World History Course Prior to 2012–2013

Predictors for Passing Course	N	B	S.E.	Wald's	df	p	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)	Nagelkerke R^2
Passed U.S. History Semester 1	493							.202
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores		.047	.010	23.486	1	.000	1.048	
Previously took MWH		-.957	.562	2.897	1	.089	.384	
Constant		-14.140	3.622	15.242	1	.000	.000	
Passed U.S. History Semester 2	487							.159
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores		.043	.008	25.247	1	.000	1.044	
Previously took MWH		.057	.457	.016	1	.900	1.059	
Constant		-13.862	3.288	17.778	1	.000	.000	

Note. Passing a semester course means obtaining a course grade of D or higher. MWH = Modern World History.

In the second two analyses (Table 10), the probability of passing ESOL Modern World History was examined. English proficiency (2013 ACCESS overall scale scores) and whether a student took ESOL U.S. History before 2012–2013 were used as two predictors for passing the semester course with a grade of D or higher in Semesters 1 and 2. The results show that only the ACCESS scores were significant ($p \leq .000$) in predicting course success but neither of the odds ratios represent an effect size that would be meaningful in an educational setting. The explained variance as indicated by Nagelkerke R^2 was .241 and .308. Additional analyses showed that if ACCESS overall scores

were used as the only predictor, R^2 changed only slightly, from .241 to .232 for Semester 1 model, and from .308 to .300 for Semester 2.

Table 10
Probability of Students Passing ESOL Modern World History as Predicted by 2013 ACCESS Overall Scale Score and Having Taken ESOL U.S. History Course Prior to 2012–2013

Predictors for Passing Course	<i>N</i>	<i>B</i>	S.E.	Wald's	df	<i>P</i>	Exp(B) (Odds Ratio)	Nagelkerke R^2
Pass Modern World History Semester 1	222							.241
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores		.057	.016	13.308	1	.000	1.058	
Previously took USH		-.732	.812	.813	1	.367	.481	
Constant		-18.030	5.836	9.544	1	.002	.000	
Pass Modern World History Semester 2	211							.308
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores		.086	.022	15.719	1	.000	1.090	
Previously took USH		.801	.896	.801	1	.371	2.228	
Constant		-29.346	7.964	13.577	1	.000	.000	

Note. Passing a semester course means obtaining a course grade of D or higher. USH = U.S. History.

Tables E1 and E2 (Appendix E) show the results predicting course success with a grade of C or higher in ESOL U.S. and ESOL Modern World History by using the same four models described in Tables 10 and 11. The results are very similar to passing the course with a grade of D or higher.

To sum up, the regression analyses showed that English language proficiency is a significant factor in passing the ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History courses, while the course sequence impact is negligible.

7. What was the process and criteria for placing ESOL students in required social studies courses in 2012–2013?

Response to School Practices Questionnaire

Social Studies Course Sequences Used in Schools. Among the 20 schools with completed questionnaires, most (14) reported that ESOL students first took U.S. History. Table 11 shows the number of schools using each of the sequences of social studies courses for students in the lower levels (ESOL levels 1, 2, and 3) of English language proficiency. U.S. History is the first course taken in both Sequence 1 and Sequence 3.

Table 11
Sequence of Social Studies Courses for ESOL Students in 20 MCPS High Schools Completing School-Level ESOL Social Studies Questionnaire, Spring 2013

Sequence of ESOL social studies courses most frequently used for ESOL Level 1, 2, and 3 students:	Number of schools
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	13
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	6
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	1
Other responses: First ESOL student takes U.S. Culture or Academic Language course, then one of the sequences above. Sequence count (4) included in count above of schools.	

Reasons for Course Sequence. School personnel were asked in the questionnaire to explain the reasons that their school put this sequence of required social studies courses in place for students with lower levels of English proficiency (Levels 1, 2, and 3). Responses varied with the particular sequence; the main themes reported by the respondents are shown in Table 12.

Table 12
Reasons Reported for Social Studies Course Sequence in 20 MCPS High Schools Completing School-Level ESOL Social Studies Questionnaire, Spring 2013

Usual sequence of ESOL social studies courses for ESOL Level 1, 2, and 3 students:	Reasons reported for using course sequence (number of respondents reported):
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as the non-ESOL social studies course sequence (2) • Builds on the U.S. Culture course, which is provided [in some schools] for low English proficient students (2) • U.S. History is easiest among the social studies courses in terms of language requirements (2) • U.S. History follows from middle school and provides a background for NSL (3)
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will be able to draw on their background knowledge to be successful in MWH (3) • Sequence was recommended by the ESOL Office (1) • Having NSL last gives students best chance to acquire language and content skills for HSA (3)
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having NSL last gives students the best chance to acquire language and content skills for HSA (1)

Factors Considered in Course Sequence Decisions. School personnel were asked to rate a set of factors according to how much each would be considered in determining the sequence of required social studies courses that students took. Table 13 shows the ratings for each of the factors by the respondents at 20 high schools.

Table 13
Ratings of Factors Considered in Deciding ESOL Students' Social Studies Course Sequence

	N	Always a factor		Sometimes a factor		Rarely a factor	
		n	%	n	%	n	%
ESOL level of student	18	11	61.1	6	33.3	1	5.6
Student's scheduling needs	19	9	47.4	7	36.8	3	15.8
Teacher recommendation	18	8	44.4	9	50.0	1	5.6
Student performance in previous course	18	8	44.4	8	44.4	2	11.1
New to U.S.	18	8	44.4	8	44.4	2	11.1
Grade level of student	18	6	33.3	10	55.6	2	11.1
Student preference	18	3	16.7	8	44.4	7	38.9
New to MCPS	18	2	11.1	12	66.7	4	22.2
Number of students	17	1	5.9	6	35.3	10	58.8
Country of origin	17	0	0.0	2	11.8	15	88.2

Note: N represents the number of schools with a survey response.

The factor considered more often than any others was the ESOL level of the student (61% of respondents indicated that it was always a factor). Over 40% of respondents indicated that student's schedule, teacher's recommendation, previous course performance, and being new to the United States were always a factor in decisions about social studies course sequence for ESOL students. Other factors that were added by the respondents (that were not included in the survey list) included:

- Age (named by 5 respondents)
- Credits from home country or other state (3)
- Reading level (2)
- Interrupted education (1)
- Special education needs (1)

Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses Judged by Respondents. Finally, respondents to the school practices questionnaire were asked to name the optimal sequence of required social studies courses that would best support the academic success of ESOL students. For ESOL students with the lowest level of proficiency (ESOL Levels 1 and 2), respondents were split nearly evenly between the benefit of starting with ESOL Modern World History (10 respondents—as indicated in Sequence 2) or with ESOL U.S. History (total of 9 respondents—as indicated in Sequences 1 and 3), as shown in Table 14.

Table 14
Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses for Level 1 and 2 ESOL Students Named by Respondents from 20 MCPS High Schools Completing School-Level ESOL Social Studies Questionnaire, Spring 2013 (N = 20)

Optimal sequence of ESOL social studies courses for ESOL Level 1 and 2 students:	Number of schools
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	7
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	10
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	2
I don't know	1
Additional responses: First ESOL student takes U.S. Culture or Academic Language course, then one of the sequences above. Sequence count (4) included in count above of schools.	

For Level 3 ESOL students, the reported optimal sequence shifted a bit, with slightly more respondents indicating that Sequence 1 (U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History) would be most beneficial. Table 15 shows the number of respondents choosing the sequences for this group of students.

Table 15
Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses for Level 3 ESOL Students Named by Respondents from 20 MCPS High Schools Completing School-Level ESOL Social Studies Questionnaire, Spring 2013 (N = 20)

Optimal sequence of ESOL social studies courses for ESOL Level 3 students:	Number of schools
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	9
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	7
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	2
Other responses: I don't know, or depends on student	2

Respondents were asked to indicate reasons for their choice of optimal sequences. Most frequently, respondents answered that the sequence works best with the language skills of the students. The reasons described by the respondents are shown below:

- Best match with English proficiency (6)
- Allows the best preparation for the NSL Government HSA (5)
- Material from Modern World History is more recognizable (2)
- Student's grade level (2)

Major Findings from School-level Questionnaire

Most schools (13) use the sequence U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History for ESOL Levels 1, 2, or 3 students. Reasons reported for using this sequence were that this is the

same as the non-ESOL social studies course sequence, that it builds on the U.S. Culture course (offered in some schools), and that U.S. History is easiest among the social studies courses in terms of language requirement.

Schools were split when asked to report the optimal sequence for the lowest ESOL levels (Levels 1 and 2): 10 schools would start with Modern World History and 9 schools would start with U.S. History. For Level 3 students, the response was only slightly different, but shifted to 11 schools choosing to start with U.S. History, and 7 schools indicating they would start with Modern World History for the ESOL Level 3 students. Reasons reported by most schools for their choice of the optimal sequence was that it provides the best match with English proficiency, and that it allows the best preparation for the NSL Government HSA.

8. What were teachers' views on the sequencing of the required social studies courses for ESOL students, and other factors that might affect ESOL student performance?

Teacher Survey Response

Table 16 summarizes the characteristics of the 31 teachers who responded to the teacher survey.

Table 16
Characteristics of 31 MCPS Teachers Completing ESOL Social Studies Survey,
Spring 2013 ($N = 31$)

		<i>n</i>	%
Number of years taught in MCPS	1 to 5 years	2	6.5
	6 to 9 years	9	29.0
	10 or more years	20	64.5
Number of years taught sheltered ESOL courses ($n = 30$)	1 to 5 years	14	46.7
	6 to 9 years	8	26.7
	10 or more years	8	26.7
Percentage of students designated ESOL in school where teaching	Less than 5% ESOL	3	9.7
	6% to 7% ESOL	8	25.8
	7% to 9% ESOL	7	22.6
	10% or more ESOL	13	41.9

Responding teachers were from 15 different high schools. Almost two thirds of the respondents had taught 10 years or more in MCPS (65%), and about half (53%) had taught sheltered ESOL courses for 6 years or more. Nearly two thirds of the responding teachers (65%) were teaching in schools where 7% or more of the students were enrolled in ESOL classes.

Teachers' Views of Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses. The teachers were asked to indicate the optimal sequence of social studies courses for ESOL students with different levels of English proficiency. Table 17 shows their responses for ESOL Levels 1 and 2 students. Of the 25 teachers who indicated an optimal sequence, most ($n = 15$) chose a sequence that teaches U.S. History first (Sequence 1 and 3) for students at ESOL Levels 1 or 2.

Table 17
Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses for Level 1 and 2 ESOL Students Named by Teachers
Completing ESOL Social Studies Survey, Spring 2013 ($N = 31$)

Optimal sequence of social studies courses for ESOL Level 1 and 2 students:	Number of respondents
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	6
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	10
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	9
Other responses:	
First take U.S. Culture or Academic Language (then one of the sequences above)	2
Level 1 students should not take social studies courses (but indicated sequence for Level 2)	2
Levels 1 and 2 students do not have linguistic ability to take social studies courses (no sequences indicated)	1
No response	5

Table 18 shows teachers' choices of optimal sequence for students at ESOL Level 3. Again, most of the respondents who indicated their choice of an optimal sequence ($n = 26$) chose sequences that teach U.S. History first (Sequence 1 or Sequence 3; $n = 17$), but nine teachers chose Sequence 2, which teaches Modern World History first.

Table 18
Optimal Sequence of Social Studies Courses for Level 3 ESOL Students Named by Teachers
Completing ESOL Social Studies Survey, Spring 2013

Optimal sequence of social studies courses for ESOL Level 3 students:	Number of respondents
Sequence 1: U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History	8
Sequence 2: Modern World History, U.S. History, and NSL Government	9
Sequence 3: U.S. History, Modern World History, and NSL Government	9
No response	5

As in the school-level survey, the teachers were asked to indicate reasons for their choice of optimal sequences. The most frequent response from teachers was that NSL Government should come later in the sequence so students have time to develop language and content skills that will help them succeed on the NSL Government HSA. The reasons described by the teachers are shown below:

- NSL Government needs to be later in course sequence (7 teachers)
- Material from Modern World History is more familiar, students from outside U.S. have some background knowledge (2 teachers)
- Students should take U.S. Culture course before social studies sequence (2 teachers)

- U.S. History is not as complex in concepts, content, and language as Modern World History (2 teachers)
- Starting with U.S. History is more linear and structured (1 teacher)
- If an ESOL student is able to follow the original sequence they would have peer group and build support network (1 teacher)

Teachers' Judgments of the Impact of the Course Sequence. Teachers were asked to judge the impact of the sequence of the social studies courses on several aspects of the ESOL students' social studies course experiences. Table 19 shows the teachers' responses.

Table 19
Ratings of the Impact of Social Studies Course Sequence on ESOL Students' Course Experience

	N	A major impact		A minor impact		No impact		I don't know/no answer	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Learning the content of the course	31	12	38.7	9	29.0	4	12.9	6	19.4
Completing the assignments	31	6	19.4	13	41.9	5	16.1	7	22.6
Passing the final exam	31	12	38.7	9	29.0	3	9.7	7	22.6
Overall performance in the course	31	12	38.7	9	29.0	4	12.9	6	19.4
Enrolling in honors and AP social studies courses	31	5	16.1	7	22.6	5	16.1	14	45.2
Performance on NSL HSA	31	15	48.4	4	12.9	1	3.2	11	35.5

Performance on the NSL Government HSA was the aspect on which the highest percentage of teachers judged whether the course sequence had a major impact (48%). Overall performance in the course, learning the content, and passing the final exam were judged to be impacted to a major degree by the sequence of courses by 39% of the responding teachers.

Teachers' Reports of Student Experiences in Social Studies Courses. Teachers were asked to respond to a series of items about the ESOL U.S. History course and the ESOL Modern World History course, with their perceptions of students' experience with the course. Table 20 shows their responses.

Table 20
Response to Survey Questions about ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History Courses
(*N* = 31)

	ESOL U.S. History		ESOL Modern World History		
	<i>n</i>	%*	<i>n</i>	%*	
Most ESOL students in this class have adequate language skills to succeed in class.	Strongly agree	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Agree	7	43.8	5	31.3
	Disagree	3	18.8	5	31.3
	Strongly disagree	6	37.5	6	37.5
	No experience in last 2 years	11		14	
	No response	4		1	
All, or nearly all, of the course material is new (i.e., not previously learned) for most ESOL students.	Strongly agree	9	56.3	8	50.0
	Agree	4	25.0	5	31.3
	Disagree	3	18.8	3	18.8
	Strongly disagree	0	0.0	0	0.0
	No experience in last 2 years	11		13	
	No response	4		2	
Most ESOL students in this course gain the course knowledge needed to pass the ESOL-adapted countywide final exam.	Strongly agree	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Agree	9	60.0	5	31.3
	Disagree	6	40.0	6	37.5
	Strongly disagree	0	0.0	5	31.3
	No experience in last 2 years	12		13	
	No response	4		2	
Most ESOL students are able to learn the course content within the timeframe of the course.	Strongly agree	0	0.0	0	0.0
	Agree	6	37.5	6	37.5
	Disagree	4	25.0	3	18.8
	Strongly disagree	6	37.5	7	43.8
	No experience in last 2 years	11		13	
	No response	4		2	

* Calculation of percentages did not include “No experience” and no response categories.

The numbers of surveyed teachers who had taught the specific courses were small, so caution is needed when examining response summaries. Two of the items elicited different levels of agreement from teachers of the two courses. As shown in Table 20, teachers who had taught ESOL U.S. History were more likely to agree that students in the course had adequate language skills to succeed in the course than were teachers who taught ESOL Modern World History (44% compared with 31%), and teachers who taught ESOL U.S. History were almost twice as likely as teachers who taught ESOL Modern World History to agree that most ESOL students in the course gain the course knowledge needed to pass the ESOL-adapted countywide final exam (60% compared with 31%). Thus, on these specific issues, teachers’ responses about students’ capacity to succeed in the ESOL social studies courses revealed more concerns about the ESOL Modern World History

course than the ESOL U.S. History course. Interestingly, the same percentage of teachers in the two courses agreed (81%) that all or nearly all of the course material is new and not previously learned in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History.

Teachers were asked to add comments related to the questions shown in Table 20. Fifteen teachers provided additional comments. All of the comments were concerned with the difficult content level of the courses, and the inadequate language skills and background knowledge that the students bring to the classes. Several teachers noted that they use modified materials and lots of scaffolding in class so the students are able to learn the material covered in class, but they cannot cover all the content that will be included on the final exam.

Challenges in ESOL Social Studies Instruction. The greatest challenges reported by the teachers in ESOL social studies instruction are displayed in Table 21. Of the 31 teachers responding to the survey, 28 named at least one challenge; many named more than one.

Table 21
Greatest Challenges in Social Studies Instruction for ESOL Students Named by Teachers
Completing ESOL Social Studies Survey, Spring 2013 ($N = 28$)

Challenge	<i>n</i>	%
Lack of English language skills, academic vocabulary	12	42.9
Inappropriate materials; adapted texts and resources are needed	6	21.4
Multiple ESOL levels in same class	5	17.9
Students lack background knowledge	4	14.3
Complex, difficult curricula	3	10.7
Insufficient time to cover material	3	10.7
Unfamiliar exam format	3	10.7

Note. Respondents could name multiple challenges so percentages add to more than 100.

Many of the teachers viewed the lack of language skills as the greatest challenge for instructing ESOL students in social studies. Several teachers commented that the curriculum is complex, vocabulary-heavy, and requires lots of reading. One teacher noted the difficulty of “encouraging language acquisition without ‘dumbing down’ the content.”

Teachers were asked what they believed were the most pressing needs to support ESOL students’ success in social studies classes. In addition to naming the issues covered in the questions above (language needs, background knowledge), teachers identified these needs:

- Modified curricula and appropriate resources, including resources for differentiation (5 teachers)
- Flexibility in content coverage; ESOL students need more time to grasp the material and time frame does not allow full coverage of entire curriculum (2 teachers)

Teachers’ Suggested Ways to Optimize ESOL Students’ Social Studies Learning. Similarly, when teachers were asked what would help optimize ESOL students’ success in social studies courses, the largest number of teachers named adapted curriculum and modified materials. Table 22 displays the suggestions provided most frequently by 25 teachers who responded.

Table 22
Ways to Optimize ESOL Students' Social Studies Learning Named by Teachers Completing ESOL Social Studies Survey, Spring 2013

Suggested ways to optimize learning	Number of respondents (N = 25)	%
Develop curricula adapted to ESOL needs	10	40.0
Allow ESOL students to take modified Unit Tests; offer a variety of types of assessments; adapt tests for ESOL needs	5	20.0
Provide professional development and time for collaboration	4	16.0
Schedule students according to individual needs	2	8.0
Limit class size	2	8.0

The suggestions named most frequently were adapted curricula and materials, as well as modified tests. Several teachers (4) suggested that professional development and time for collaboration would be helpful. Two teachers noted their belief that ESOL students' schedules need to be created individually, according to language and academic needs, rather than according to standard course schedule. Teachers provided a number of additional suggestions for consideration:

- Have students stay with the same teacher from semester to semester and, ideally, from year to year (1 respondent)
- More access to computers; a tablet or laptop for each student would be very helpful (1)
- Field trips; many of the ESOL students missed the field trips that other students had in kindergarten through Grade 8 (1)

Major Findings from the Teacher Survey

Responses from the teachers revealed no clear preference for an optimal sequence of social studies courses. When identifying reasons for their choice of an optimal sequence, the most frequently named reason was that NSL Government needs to be later in the course sequence so that the student is better prepared for the HSA. Teachers' judgments about student success and learning were somewhat more positive toward the U.S. History course, with larger percentages of teachers agreeing that students had adequate language skills to succeed in the class, and that most ESOL students in the course gain the course knowledge needed to pass the final exams adapted for the ESOL students.

The greatest challenges cited by teachers were:

- Inadequate English language skills
- Multiple ESOL levels in the same class
- Inadequate and inappropriate texts and resources

When asked for "ways to optimize ESOL students' social studies performance" the suggestion put forth by the largest number of teachers was to develop curricula and assessments adapted to the needs of ESOL students.

Conclusion

Learning social studies in secondary school is challenging for many ESOL students (Pahl, 2007). Many of them have not had prior exposure to a U.S.-based social studies curriculum and lack an understanding of the cultural context of the social studies curriculum. In addition, social studies lessons require literacy skills, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, interpreting tables, charts, and maps, and synthesizing information (Szpara & Ahmad, 2007).

Most of the students taking the two courses were in ESOL Levels 2, 3, or 4, and were assessed on ACCESS to be at developing or expanding proficiency levels. In general, students who took ESOL Modern World History were at lower MCPS ESOL levels than those who took ESOL U.S. History. The results in this study show that twice as many students were enrolled in ESOL U.S. History as in ESOL Modern World History in the 2012–2013 school year. It is possible that when ESOL students are first enrolled in ESOL U.S. History, and take ESOL Modern World History later in their high school careers, some of the students may have improved their English language skills enough to enroll in the regular (non-sheltered) Modern World History course.

About 49% to 68% of students who took ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History passed the final exams, while more than 90% of the students passed the semester courses. The final exams only account for 25% of a student’s final course grade, so passing the course also depends on classwork, homework, projects, and classroom participation. Among all racial/ethnic groups, Hispanic/Latino students had the lowest passing rates for the final exams and semester courses. An achievement gap was observed between Hispanic/Latino and White or Asian students.

Overall English language proficiency as indicated by the ACCESS scale score was a significant predictor of course success in ESOL U.S. History and ESOL Modern World History. After controlling for English language proficiency, the course sequence was not significant in predicting course success. The ACCESS scale scores explained more variance of course success in ESOL Modern World History than in ESOL U.S. History; this may mean that English language proficiency plays a more important role in ESOL Modern World History than in ESOL U.S. History.

The finding that English language proficiency plays a key role in ESOL students’ success in social studies courses is consistent with the feedback received from school personnel involved in students’ course placement, as well as teachers of the ESOL social studies courses. The factor considered more than others in determining sequence of courses was a student’s ESOL level. According to the teacher’s survey, the sequence most frequently used for ESOL Levels 1, 2, or 3 students, was U.S. History, NSL Government, and Modern World History. Schools using this sequence reported that this course sequence logically followed the middle school courses and that the U.S. History course contained less challenging English language requirements than other social studies courses.

Teachers also reported that the greatest challenges in the ESOL social studies courses were language-related, including inadequate skills, multiple ESOL levels in the same class, and inadequate and inappropriate texts and resources. The number one suggestion from teachers on “ways to optimize ESOL students’ social studies performance” was to develop curricula adapted to the language needs of ESOL students. Based on teachers’ feedback, course sequencing is a

secondary issue. The primary issue is language readiness. If curricula can be adapted based on student English language proficiency level, course sequence will not matter too much, according to teachers.

When placing students in different ESOL courses, teachers considered factors such as student's ESOL level and schedule, teacher's recommendations, previous course performance, entrance time to the U.S., student's age, reading level and education in their home countries, as well as their special education needs.

Some ESOL students have had quality schooling in their country, while others have had only sporadic schooling in their home country (Dutro, et al., 2008). For ESOL students, English may require more intensive and targeted instruction. Many MCPS teachers surveyed in the study viewed lack of language skills as the greatest challenge for instructing ESOL students in social studies.

Szpara and Ahmad (2007) proposed best practices in ESOL social studies instruction: 1) creating a socially supportive classroom; 2) providing explicit instruction in academic strategies necessary for successful comprehension of complex content; and 3) increasing the accessibility of complex content knowledge by reducing cognitive load without reducing content. MCPS teachers surveyed in this study also believed the most pressing needs to support ESOL students' success in social studies classes included student language needs, background knowledge, modified curricula, appropriate resources for differentiation, and flexibility in content coverage.

In summary, there is no conclusive evidence to support or discredit the current recommended course sequence for ESOL social studies, in which a student takes ESOL Modern World History before ESOL U.S. History. However, there is some evidence to show that student English proficiency level is a more important predictor for success in the courses than the course sequence.

Limitations

Due to the non-experimental nature of the study, it is not possible to draw a causal relationship between course sequence and student performance. Because of inconsistency of the data for the open-ended questions, the open-ended questions were excluded from the analyses. In addition, teacher survey results need to be interpreted with caution due to low response rate (52%).

Recommendations

Based on the study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Continue to provide flexibility for schools to determine the optimal course sequence in ESOL social studies.
- Address ESOL students' language needs by providing appropriate resources for differentiation and flexibility in content coverage.
- Use different course (or section) codes to distinguish sheltered ESOL social studies courses from the regular social studies courses in high school in order to better monitor student progress.
- Examine and revise test items with discrimination coefficients below .20 on ESOL U.S. and Modern World History final exams.
- Simplify the final exam score conversion rules so scores can be recorded consistently and human coding errors can be reduced.

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Appendix A

Guidelines for the High School ESOL Instructional Pathways

Table A1
Guidelines for the High School ESOL Instructional Pathways—Operational Version

Entering as ESOL Level 1 students (Entering)	Entering as ESOL Level 2 students (Emerging)	Entering as ESOL Level 3 students (Developing)	Entering as ESOL Level 4 students (Expanding)	Entering as ESOL Level 5 students (Bridging)
ESOL 1	ESOL 2	ESOL 3	ESOL 4	ESOL 5
ESOL 1	ESOL 2	Sheltered Read 180 or Read 180	Read 180 or English 9 or English 10	Appropriate English course or TOEFL Prep or EMAIL
<i>Other required course</i>	Reading Advantage & Read About	Sheltered Read 180 or Read 180 or Developmental Reading	Read 180 or ESOL Multimedia Arts Literacy (EMAL)	<i>Other required course</i>
Sheltered Algebra 1 or appropriate math course	Algebra 1 or appropriate math course	Appropriate math course	Appropriate math course	Appropriate math course
Academic Language (math, science, & social studies based)	Sheltered Matter and Energy or appropriate science course	Biology or appropriate science course	Biology or appropriate science course	Appropriate science course
<i>Other required course</i>	Sheltered Modern World or appropriate history course	U.S. History or appropriate history course	U.S. History or National, State, & Local Government (as appropriate)	Appropriate social studies course

Source: February 13, 2012, by Division of ESOL/Bilingual programs, MCPS.

Note. The ESOL courses suggested in this document are recommended for the development of English language proficiency. The table does not include all courses required for graduation. Courses that appear in bold may be taught by ESOL teachers on an ESOL allocation as resources permit.

- ❖ These pathways are for ESOL students with previous schooling. Modify these instructional pathways to adjust for the needs of ESOL students with interrupted schooling enrolled in METS or ESOL students with special education needs. Courses do not need to follow this sequence but ESOL 1 and 2 courses should run as a double period.
- ❖ The appropriate content course should be selected that is appropriate for the ESOL student based on the student’s previous credits and grade level. Consider placing ESOL students in AP and Honors classes when appropriate.
- ❖ Sheltered content courses should be scheduled for ESOL 1 through ESOL 3 students when possible.

Appendix B

Description of High School ESOL Courses

ESOL LEVEL 1 A/B Course Code: 1201/1211 (0.5 credit)

This course is designed to teach English as a new language to ESOL students at the *Entering* English language proficiency level. The language domains of reading, writing, listening, and speaking are integrated into thematic units as students acquire and practice oral and written language in an academic context. Instruction initially focuses on high-frequency vocabulary development and oral fluency to facilitate the development of social language, basic literacy and writing across the curriculum. A general introduction to American culture is provided. This course meets for a double period every day.

ESOL LEVEL 1 ELECTIVE A/B Course Code: 1217/1218 (0.5 credit)

This companion course for ESOL LEVEL 1 A/B is designed to continue teaching *Entering* level ESOL students. Students continue developing listening, speaking, reading and writing skills to facilitate acquisition of English as a new language for social and academic purposes.

ESOL LEVEL 2 A/B Course Code: 1202/1212 (0.5 credit)

This course is designed to teach English as a new language to ESOL students at the *Emerging* English language proficiency level. Newly acquired vocabulary is incorporated into more complex structures, in both oral and written language, focusing on functional and academic skills. Language structures are presented in the context of literary and expository text, as students explore themes and concepts connected to various content areas.

ESOL LEVEL 3 A/B Course Code: 1203/1213 (0.5 credit)

This course is designed to teach English as a new language to ESOL students at the *Developing* English language proficiency level. Students review the language structures taught at level 1 and 2 with emphasis on developing fluency, more sustained, complex oral and written communication. Students continue to expand their vocabulary, and acquire greater precision in the use of grammatical forms. Students hone their academic literacy skills for comprehension and effective writing, by reading and responding to narrative and expository text.

ESOL LEVEL 4 A/B Course Code: 1204/1214 (0.5 credit)

This course is designed to teach English as a new language to ESOL students at the *Expanding* English language proficiency level. Instruction focuses on the development of linguistic complexity in speaking and writing and advanced listening comprehension. Through expanded reading, students study elements of literary style and analyze various literary and expository texts to improve reading comprehension and interpretation skills.

ESOL LEVEL 5 A/B Course Code: 1205/1215 (0.5 credit)

This course is designed to teach English as a new language to ESOL students at the *Bridging* English language proficiency level. Students increase their language development and cultural knowledge as they refine strategies for critical analysis by studying texts from a variety of genres and time periods. In their essays, research papers, and discourse, students demonstrate their command of English by analyzing, evaluating, justifying and drawing conclusions about literature and expository text.

Appendix C

2013 ACCESS Overall English Proficiency Level and MCPS ESOL Level

Table C1
2013 ACCESS Overall English Proficiency Level for Students Who Took ESOL U.S. History Semester 1 Course in 2012–2013 by Their MCPS ESOL Levels

MCPS ESOL	ACCESS 2013 Overall English Proficiency Levels Semester 1 (N = 493)											
	Entering		Emerging		Developing		Expanding		Bridging		Reaching	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Level 1 (n = 17)	1	5.9	4	23.5	11	64.7	1	5.9	0	0.0	0	0.0
Level 2 (n = 122)	2	1.6	25	20.5	48	39.3	37	30.3	10	8.2	0	0.0
Level 3 (n = 157)	1	0.6	19	12.1	74	47.1	53	33.8	10	6.4	0	0.0
Level 4 (n = 153)	0	0.0	1	0.7	23	15.0	57	37.3	45	29.4	27	17.6
Level 5 (n = 36)	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	2.8	11	30.6	12	33.3	12	33.3
Level 10 (n = 8)	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	12.5	2	25.0	3	37.5	2	25.0
Total (N = 493)	4	0.8	49	9.9	158	32.0	161	32.7	80	16.2	41	8.3

Table C2
2013 ACCESS Overall English Proficiency Level for Students Who Took ESOL U.S. History Semester 2 Course in 2012–2013 by Their MCPS ESOL Levels

MCPS ESOL	ACCESS 2013 Overall English Proficiency Levels Semester 2 (N = 487)											
	Entering		Emerging		Developing		Expanding		Bridging		Reaching	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Level 1 (n = 17)	1	5.9	3	17.6	11	64.7	2	11.8	0	0.0	0	0.0
Level 2 (n = 84)	1	1.2	15	17.9	28	33.3	30	35.7	10	11.9	0	0.0
Level 3 (n = 139)	1	0.7	16	11.5	59	42.4	46	33.1	15	10.8	2	1.4
Level 4 (n = 165)	0	0.0	6	3.6	38	23.0	44	26.7	49	29.7	28	17.0
Level 5 (n = 62)	0	0.0	1	1.6	4	6.5	27	43.5	16	25.8	14	22.6
Level 10 (n = 20)	0	0.0	2	10.0	2	10.0	7	35.0	8	40.0	1	5.0
Total (N = 487)	3	0.6	43	8.8	142	29.2	156	32.0	98	20.1	45	9.2

Table C3
2013 ACCESS Overall English Proficiency Level for Students Who Took ESOL Modern World History Semester 1 Course in 2012–2013 by Their MCPS ESOL Levels

MCPS ESOL	ACCESS 2013 Overall English Proficiency Levels Semester 1 (N = 222)											
	Entering		Emerging		Developing		Expanding		Bridging		Reaching	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Level 1 (n = 10)	0	0.0	3	30.0	4	40.0	3	30.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Level 2 (n = 63)	1	1.6	26	41.3	22	34.9	8	12.7	6	9.5	0	0.0
Level 3 (n = 65)	0	0.0	12	18.5	27	41.5	21	32.3	5	7.7	0	0.0
Level 4 (n = 42)	0	0.0	1	2.4	12	28.6	16	38.1	12	28.6	1	2.4
Level 5 (n = 36)	1	2.8	2	5.6	6	16.7	13	36.1	9	25.0	5	13.9
Level 10 (n = 6)	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	50.0	1	16.7	2	33.3	0	0.0
Total (N = 222)	2	0.9	44	19.8	74	33.3	62	27.9	34	15.3	6	2.7

Table C4
2013 ACCESS Overall English Proficiency Level for Students Who Took ESOL Modern World History Semester 2 Course in 2012–2013 by Their MCPS ESOL Levels

MCPS ESOL	ACCESS 2013 Overall English Proficiency Levels Semester 2 (N = 211)											
	Entering		Emerging		Developing		Expanding		Bridging		Reaching	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Level 1 (n = 11)	0	0.0	2	18.2	6	54.5	2	18.2	1	9.1	0	0.0
Level 2 (n = 42)	0	0.0	9	21.4	17	40.5	10	23.8	6	14.3	0	0.0
Level 3 (n = 78)	1	1.3	21	26.9	35	44.9	14	17.9	7	9.0	0	0.0
Level 4 (n = 47)	0	0.0	3	6.4	16	34.0	17	36.2	9	19.1	2	4.3
Level 5 (n = 30)	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	10.0	17	56.7	5	16.7	5	16.7
Level 10 (n = 3)	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	33.3	0	0.0	2	66.7	0	0.0
Total (N = 211)	1	0.5	35	16.6	78	37.0	60	28.4	30	14.2	7	3.3

Table C5
2013 ACCESS Scale Scores for Students Taking ESOL U.S. History and
Modern World History by Semester

ACCESS Scale Score	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
U.S. History Semester 1					
ListeningSS2013	494	136	487	396	39
SpeakingSS2013	493	266	428	372	37
ReadingSS2013	494	208	468	377	28
WritingSS2013	494	251	455	406	22
ComprehensionSS2013	494	186	465	383	28
OralSS2013	493	222	458	384	32
LiteracySS2013	494	230	453	391	23
OverallSS2013	493	233	446	389	23
U.S. History Semester 2					
ListeningSS2013	487	136	487	397	39
SpeakingSS2013	489	182	428	376	39
ReadingSS2013	489	208	468	379	28
WritingSS2013	489	251	455	406	24
ComprehensionSS2013	487	186	468	384	28
OralSS2013	487	222	458	387	32
LiteracySS2013	489	230	457	392	23
OverallSS2013	487	233	457	391	24
Modern World History Semester 1					
ListeningSS2013	222	301	487	388	33
SpeakingSS2013	222	297	428	369	40
ReadingSS2013	222	297	444	370	25
WritingSS2013	222	327	461	400	22
ComprehensionSS2013	222	313	453	376	25
OralSS2013	222	310	446	379	32
LiteracySS2013	222	324	438	385	21
OverallSS2013	222	329	438	383	23
Modern World History Semester 2					
ListeningSS2013	211	282	473	386	33
SpeakingSS2013	211	183	428	364	39
ReadingSS2013	211	313	444	370	24
WritingSS2013	211	327	461	400	22
ComprehensionSS2013	211	325	453	375	24
OralSS2013	211	270	444	375	32
LiteracySS2013	211	324	439	385	21
OverallSS2013	211	329	438	382	22

Appendix D

Psychometric Properties of ESOL U.S. History A and Modern World History Final Exams in Semester 1(A) and Semester 2(B)

As shown by Cronbach's Alpha (Table D1), the test reliability is 0.86 for ESOL U.S. History A final exam based on 45 multiple-choice items, and .83 for ESOL Modern World History A final exam based on 40 multiple choice items. The reliability of the ESOL social studies final exams ranged from 0.82 to 0.86 which was above the acceptable standard.

Table D1
Test Reliability of ESOL Social Studies Final Exams
Based on Multiple Choice Questions

	Multiple Choice Test Items	Reliability Cronbach's Alpha
ESOL US History A	45	.86
ESOL US History B	35	.86
ESOL Modern World History A	40	.83
ESOL Modern World History B	35	.82

Table D2
Item Difficulties and Discrimination for ESOL U.S. History Final Exams

Test Items	ESOL U.S. History A Final Exam		ESOL U.S. History B Final Exam	
	Difficulty (% correct)	Discrimination (p-biserial)	Difficulty (% correct)	Discrimination (p-biserial)
1	74	.36	81	.34
2	78	.26	76	.49
3	63	.29	63	.47
4	49	.44	52	.47
5	66	.55	54	.45
6	58	.16	41	.45
7	46	.33	46	.29
8	69	.46	42	.37
9	54	.54	81	.42
10	41	.37	70	.52
11	62	.38	45	.37
12	38	.21	41	.28
13	42	.15	44	.38
14	38	.31	63	.36
15	71	.37	65	.38
16	66	.43	60	.45
17	82	.42	76	.47
18	60	.48	68	.50
19	55	.41	36	.16
20	58	.52	56	.37
21	36	.35	67	.44
22	55	.49	66	.46
23	57	.41	68	.47
24	54	.21	65	.42
25	66	.49	62	.43
26	31	.27	75	.46
27	41	.29	70	.47
28	59	.28	54	.49
29	62	.40	58	.47
30	67	.39	72	.47
31	48	.32	57	.52
32	51	.37	44	.43
33	53	.41	76	.54
34	29	.45	73	.44
35	72	.25	18	.17
36	46	.45		
37	75	.41		
38	56	.40		
39	57	.38		
40	55	.37		
41	68	.53		
42	63	.40		
43	48	.42		
44	36	.22		
45	36	.35		

Table D3
Item Difficulty and Discrimination for ESOL Modern World History Final Exams

Test Items	ESOL Modern World History A Final Exam		ESOL Modern World History B Final Exam	
	Difficulty (% correct)	Discrimination (p-biserial)	Difficulty (% correct)	Discrimination (p-biserial)
1	53	.28	51	.37
2	45	.30	60	.33
3	63	.46	73	.39
4	58	.43	77	.38
5	52	.38	35	.38
6	66	.42	26	.20
7	55	.40	67	.20
8	61	.42	44	.34
9	37	.37	44	.48
10	47	.50	50	.42
11	40	.16	37	.37
12	49	.47	49	.41
13	35	.16	47	.29
14	48	.42	68	.42
15	66	.41	54	.45
16	32	.15	52	.50
17	49	.58	48	.31
18	26	.29	55	.35
19	65	.48	36	.31
20	45	.18	54	.40
21	42	.46	50	.39
22	44	.37	69	.28
23	75	.44	45	.35
24	73	.46	53	.48
25	27	.09	62	.46
26	47	.20	45	.44
27	52	.45	62	.44
28	28	.34	62	.47
29	42	.42	57	.51
30	32	.10	40	.38
31	42	.29	61	.48
32	37	.38	26	-.02
33	45	.48	25	.35
34	45	.23	72	.35
35	48	.38	41	.36
36	80	.33		
37	46	.47		
38	35	.36		
39	61	.56		
40	57	.43		

Table D4
Scoring Guidelines for Written Responses on ESOL Social Studies Final Exams

Final Exams	Exam Weight	Level	Points	Convert to Percent
ESOL U.S. History A	31%	4	9–10	90–100%
		3	8.5	85%
		2	7.5	75%
		1	6.5	65%
		0	0–5.5	0–55%
ESOL U.S. History B	41%	4	8	90–100%
		3	7	87.5%
		2	6	75%
		1	5	62.5%
		0	0–4	0–50%
ESOL Modern World History A*	43%	3	14–15	93–100%
		2	11–13	73–87%
		1	8–10	53–67%
		0	0–7	0–47%
ESOL Modern World History B	46%	4	9–10	90–100%
		3	8	80%
		2	7	70%
		1	6	60%
		0	0–5	0–50%

*Lower-level ESOL students are recommended for Modern World History A first in their social studies sequence; therefore, the scoring guidelines only are provided up to Level 3.

Appendix E

Course Sequence and Probability of Obtaining a Course Grade of C or Higher

Table E1
Probability of Obtaining a Course Grade of C or higher in ESOL U.S. History with 2013 ACCESS Overall Scale Score and ESOL Modern World History Experience Prior to 2012–2013

Predictors of obtaining a course grade of C or higher	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald's</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P</i>	<i>Exp(B) (Odds Ration)</i>	<i>Nagelkerke R Square</i>
C or + in USH S1 Course							.155
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores	.037	.006	42.658	1	.000	1.038	
Took MWH before 2012–2013	.104	.246	.179	1	.672	1.110	
Constant	-13.184	2.209	35.617	1	.000	.000	
C or + in USH S2 Course							.121
2013 ACCESS	.030	.006	28.785	1	.000	1.030	
Took MWH before 2012–2013	-.316	.272	1.358	1	.244	.729	
Constant	-9.908	2.167	20.914	1	.000	.000	

Note. USH = U.S. History; S1 = Semester 1; MWH = Modern World History; S2 = Semester 2.

Table E2
Probability of Obtaining a Course Grade of C or Higher in ESOL Modern World History with 2013 ACCESS Overall Scale Score and ESOL U.S. History Experience Prior to 2012–2013

Predictors of obtaining a course grade of C or higher	<i>B</i>	<i>S.E.</i>	<i>Wald's</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>P value</i>	<i>Exp(B) (Odds Ration)</i>	<i>Nagelkerke R Square</i>
C or + in MWH S1 Course							.295
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores	.055	.010	30.813	1	.000	1.056	
Took USH before 2012–2013	-.131	.420	.096	1	.756	.878	
Constant	-19.376	3.774	26.356	1	.000	.000	
C or + in MWH S2 Course							.235
2013 ACCESS Overall Scores	.047	.009	25.879	1	.000	1.048	
Took USH before 2012–2013	-.199	.467	.182	1	.670	.819	
Constant	-16.712	3.592	21.649	1	.000	.000	

Note. USH = U.S. History; S1 = Semester 1; MWH = Modern World History; S2 = Semester 2.