Archival Research with High School Students and School History: An Example of Signature Pedagogy through Project- and Place-Based Learning

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Introduction

When people learn I teach history at an American school in China, they inevitably ask: whose history do you teach? This question often comes with the assumption students memorize a single authoritative narrative and its supporting facts. These assumptions reflect a banking model of education in which students deposit information and store it for later regurgitation.[1] History education can do better. It can equip students to think deeply about our world and how it came to be. The marketing office at my school narrates an optimistic view of school history as one might expect. We even have PowerPoint templates that feature clip art sketches of school icons like the redbrick water tower that was a favorite spot on a former campus and Frank "Unk" Cheney who helped the school survive during Japanese occupation. Shanghai American School (SAS) swag hints at a complex, rich history few students know.

History education can empower students to examine familiar contexts, including their school's branding and mascots. At its best, history education cultivates students' abilities to examine multiple perspectives, closely read and analyze sources, determine key themes, and to communicate them in clear, concise ways. Sam Wineburg has described historical thinking as an "unnatural act."[2] One way to foster historical thinking skills is place-based learning. The local community provides a familiar access point for students.[3] This approach can also curtail students' common misperception that history is complete when the final answer is recorded in textbook format, a reminder that "pedagogical practices often reflect textbook organization" as Nancy Quam-Wickham put it.[4] Primary sources have become an important pedagogical tool in secondary-level history courses in recent decades, encouraged by concept-based teaching standards and the use of document-based questions (DBQs) on external exams such as those used by Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses. To varying degrees these disrupt traditional "coverage models" of history education that Lendol Calder critiqued in his signature 2006 essay. Instead of coverage reliant on lectures and textbook readings, history education has slowly shifted in some ways to emphasize signature pedagogy in which beginning students learn "ways of being taught that require them to do, think, and value what practitioners in the field are doing, thinking, and valuing."[5] Yet, the signature pedagogy of archival research still often remains the preserve of graduate-level study. This approach can also thrive in high schools, especially when artificial restraints created by schedules and siloing of academic disciplines are removed. Nevertheless, accounts of archive-based teaching and related pedagogy at secondary and

2 Sam Wineburg, "Historical Thinking and Other Unnatural Acts," *Phi Delta Kappan* 80, no. 7 (1999): 488-99.

3 For related discussion see, Lauren Esposito, "Where to begin? Using place-based writing to connect students with their local communities," *The English Journal* 101:4 (March 2012): 70-76.

4 Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Reimagining the Introductory U.S. History Course," *The History Teacher* 49:4 (August 2016): 522.

5 Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006), 1361.

undergraduate levels remain scarce.[6] My recent experiences suggest it does not have to be this way.

Project-based learning (PBL) offers one avenue for exploring signature pedagogy in secondary history classrooms. The Buck Institute for Education defines PBL as "a teaching method in which students learn by actively engaging in real-world and personally meaningful projects."[7] We can better teach key transferrable skills by empowering high school students to do the hands-on work of historians. We can create space and time for personally meaningful and authentic archival research during which students develop historical thinking and transferable research and problem-solving skills by drawing from preserved historical sources about our schools and surrounding communities. This essay provides an overview of ways place-based learning related to school history was used in order to introduce the signature pedagogy of archival research to 13- and 14-year-old high school students. It provides an account of a 9-week unit enabled by an unusual level of creative interdisciplinary cooperation from the perspective of the history teacher with the hopes of providing inspiration for others. The article provides: (1) school context, (2) curricular planning context, (3) sourcing archival study, (4) teaching and learning, (5) exhibition, and (6) reflection. But, we will begin with the end in mind and work backwards. Let's begin with the exhibition.

Exhibition

Over 200 people were invited to our virtual school history museum in late May 2022. The day before the live exhibition, guests received a program including hyperlinks to preview "our final showcase of the Pudong Innovation Institute's inaugural year."[8] The 8-page guide represented ninth-grade students' choices for titles, descriptions, and images related to their exhibits depicting seven eras of school history. Each exhibit answered "What gets remembered?" based on what sources are available to historians and what those sources emphasize. The PBL goals for Asian History were to: (1) curate primary and secondary sources in a way that helps museum visitors understand the development of SAS in its historical context and (2) share findings in an accessible way to inform the public while analyzing strengths/limitations of available artifacts. Throughout the unit, we emphasized students' roles as curators, archivists, and museum designers. These roles helped reinforce authenticity of this PBL unit.[9] Success of this was evident in students' final presentations. Application of authentic historical thinking was complemented by interdisciplinary skills and content taught in science, English, and Design Technology. All of these skills were assessed through the interdisciplinary PBL's final product. Figure A uses Wiggins and McTighe's GRASPs method to illustrates ways interdisciplinary skills and content were synthesized through this history-focused PBL's final product.[10]

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6 Elizabeth S. Manley et al. "Teaching in the Archives: Engaging Students and Inverting Historical Methods Classes at The Historic New Orleans Collection," *The History Teacher* 53, no. 1 (November 2019): 70.

7 "What is project-based learning?" Buck Institute for Education, November 2022, https://www.pblworks.org/what-is-pbl.

8 Pudong Innovation Institute, "Shanghai American School Museum of History | What gets remembered?" (May 23-24, 2022), 2.

9 Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education identify "authentic work" as one of four core practices of PBL. The others are disciplinary content learning, student collaboration, and building an iterative culture. See Pam Grossman et al. *Core Practices for Project-Based Learning: A gude for Teachers and Leaders (Cambridge: Harvard Education Press, 2021).*

10 The Grade 9 I² curriculum includes four units of study. The PBL component of each unit tends to lean more heavily toward one or two subjects. In this way, students get a deep dive on skills related to multiple disciplines throughout the year while also experiencing authentic ways academic disciplines connect.

Goal	Create an immersive exhibit for your assigned decade that tells the story of SAS from multiple perspectives.
Role	You are a public history team of archivists, curators, designers, and guides at the Shanghai American School Museum of History.
Audience	the general public
Situation	Your grant has been accepted! Your proposal for a new exhibit about the history of SAS has been approved! Now get to work!
Product **P**erformance	immersive, mixed-media museum exhibit guided tour through exhibit

Skills & Content	Asian History:
	   • Curate primary and secondary sources in a way that helps museum visitors understand the development of SAS in its historical context
	   • Share findings in an accessible way to inform the public while analyzing strengths/limitations of available artifacts
	
	Design Tech. 9:
	   • Design an interactive and immersive museum experience, with specific consideration to User Experience (UX) and User Interface (UI)
	
	English 9:
	   • Write with a specific voice (diction, detail, imagery, syntax, tone):
	   • Present an account of an event or experience from the perspective of a fictional person that could have existed at SAS during assigned time period using historical sources.
	
	Science 9:
	   • Identify and apply the role of waves in technology.
	   • Evaluate the selection of technology and how information is stored and communicated.

Figure 1: The GRASPs overview used to introduce the unit PBL to students.

Historical thinking was honed during a series of History Labs and other work sessions throughout the unit. These skills were synthesized with learning in other academic disciplines. For instance, Design Technology skills taught by my colleague Jeff Bailey were at the forefront. Students had examined user experiences (UX) and user interfaces (UI) at various online museums.[11] In this context, students were empowered to make authentic choices as docents, curators, historians, and designers of our virtual school history museum. High school freshmen curated their exhibits and selected their ideal online platform. Our design thinking process encouraged ideation and prioritizing student choice, signature elements of PBL. Students opted for a variety of platforms including Prezi, PowerPoint, Artsteps, and Cospaces (See Figure E). Museum construction also created several teachable moments. This included an unexpected lesson on racialized elements of period music like "My Old Kentucky Home" and an invaluable lesson on paraphrasing and plagiarism. Twenty-four hours after the museum guide arrived to inboxes, 25 students became museum docents.

As docents of live tours for their virtual exhibits, high school freshmen capably fielded questions. Students provided an overview tour of their exhibit then managed Q&A sessions using the chat feature of Microsoft Teams. Audience members submitted questions. Students responded orally. Some questions were broad; others were quite specific. Some audience questions were answered easily while others required higher levels of reasoning

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11 I² design teacher Jeff Bailey created a 27-page Museum Guide to support students' guided inquiry of UX and UI at online museums. Case studies for online platforms were the National Museum of China (Beijing), National Museum of Korea (Seoul), Dali Theatre-Museum (Figueres, Spain), Rijksmuseum (Amsterdam), British Museum (London), Van Gough Museum (Amsterdam), National Museum of Computing (Bletchley Park, UK), History of Science Museum (Oxford), Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History (Washington, DC), and the Terracotta Warriors Museum (Xi'an).

and synthesis. The latter was undoubtedly a response to students' professionalism as historical researchers. A few examples of questions posed by visitors are included below.

> 1900-1909: "You mentioned many considerations for families choosing schools in 1900-1909 Shanghai. Do you think these concerns remain the same? Have any of them changed?"

> 1900-1909: "You seemed to consider the perspective of adults in the choices they made for their children. I am wondering if you might speak a bit more to what you learned about the experiences of students and what they may have thought of the schools they were attending."

> 1940-1944: "Some sources state that Unk and the board never got along. After Shanghai's condition started to normalize, the board replaced him, with no thanks for his efforts of maintaining education in Shanghai. What thoughts do you have on this situation? A SAS member had stated that Unk deserves a statue for his contributions. How do you think he should be honored?"

> 1945-1949: "Is there any record of SAS alumni who returned to the US, having gatherings for alumni in the US between 1950-1980?"

> 1970-1985: "You mention that SAS might not have been as successful as we remember as it most likely didn't have the resources necessary to meet it goals as stated. Apart from inferring this, do you have any other info that might support the idea that SAS might not have been as successful as we remember?"

Thirteen- and fourteen-year-old students capably navigated these complex questions showing that "doing history" is possible at the ninth-grade level.[12] While asking "what gets remembered?" students also had the wisdom to tell listeners that sometimes historians cannot answer our questions. Sometimes documents are not preserved. Sometimes things are not remembered.

School Context

Shanghai American School's history dates to 1912 in the dynamic context of twentieth-century Shanghai. This creates a rich opportunity for historical investigation. He Fang-yu of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences describes SAS as "an important symbol of Sino-American friendship."[13] The school's enrollment, curriculum, facilities, staff, and faculty offer many entry points to analyze continuity and change over time in China's commercial capital.

SAS's initial board of managers represented Protestant missionary boards. School founders wanted to provide an American-style education for children of American missionaries serving in what was then the Republic of China. SAS dormitories became home to children whose missionary parents undertook religiously-motivated humanitarian work in impoverished, rural regions of China.[14] The board soon expanded to include business leaders as the school welcomed children of industry. Standard Oil Company became a major supporter in 1920

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12 Use of the phrase "doing history" for this unit was first inspired by Carla Vecchiola, "Digging in the Digital Archives: Engaging Students in an Online American History Survey," *The History Teacher* 53:1 (November 2019): 107-134.

13 He Fang-yu. "'Take Care of Our Children' – Missionaries and Establishment of Shanghai American School (1896-1912) [何方昱, 传教士与上海美国学校的创办(1896-1912)], *Historical Review* 6:130 (2011).

14 Intellectual historian David A. Hollinger points to ways the experiences of "missionary cosmopolitans" in China made them more critical of racism, imperialism, and parochial religious views upon their return to the United States. He contends that "missionary-connected individuals and groups were prominent in efforts to end the mistreatment of people of non-European ancestry at home and abroad, and they opened the public ear to nonwhite voices within and beyond the United States." See David Hollinger, *Protestants Abroad: How Missionaries Tried to Change the World but Changed America* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017): 2.

while expanding its industrial footprint in East Asia.[15]

SAS moved to a picturesque redbrick campus in 1923. Its main building echoed features of Independence Hall in Philadelphia surrounded by a campus that included a lake and quadrangle reminiscent of an American college. SAS continued to grow until the 1940s when students and teachers were among those interned by Japanese invaders. School leaders, especially Frank "Unk" Cheney and the Rev. Val Sundt, worked to maintain educational opportunities during the Second Sino-Japanese War (concurrent with World War II) and Chinese Civil War.[16] This included renaming the school multiple times, relocating it to International Community Church, and even later operating from a concentration camp. Nevertheless, SAS closed its doors in 1950 as foreigners fled the port city following the Communist Party's victory in China's Civil War. SAS continued to exist only on paper until its "liquidation and dissolution" in March 1967.[17]

SAS re-opened in 1980 in line with Paramount Leader Deng Xiaoping's policies of Reform and Opening Up. The school was initially housed in the grounds of the U.S. Consulate in Shanghai. The reestablished SAS was a day school. It was a small, secular operation in keeping with revolutionary changes to American public education that occurred during SAS's closure. U.S. President Ronald Reagan visited in 1984. However, he was not the first high-ranking U.S. official to visit SAS students.

SAS has hosted and educated influential people. U.S. Speaker of the House Joseph W. Byrnes of Tennessee was among "outstanding government leaders" who visited SAS in 1936.[18] In addition to political leaders, records of alumni and faculty experiences provide avenues for historical investigation. This includes the everyday routines of school life and extracurriculars as well as heartbreaking accounts from the 1940s. SAS welcomed refugee students from Kuling American School on Mt. Lu (Lushan) before SAS students and faculty were themselves sent to concentration camps, especially Chapei (Zhabei) Civil Assembly Center.[19] Not everything is bleak. SAS was a formative place for influential religious studies scholar Huston Smith and U.S. diplomats James Lilley and J. Stapleton Roy.[20] Newberry award-winning author Katherine Paterson published her first piece in *The Shanghai American*, the school's newspaper.[21] One benefit of being founded in 1912 is that SAS's rich history offers contemporary students with diverse backgrounds a common access point to analyze twentieth-century continuity and change while investigating a familiar place.

15 A student newspaper editorial celebrating contributions describes "fifty thousand dollars gold from the Standard Oil Company being the most notable." *S.A.S. Nooze* (November 1930).

16 Frank "Unk" Cheney (1881-1958) led a full life. He could be the subject of a graduate thesis. He died at age 77 while still teaching industrial arts at Dayton High School in Kentucky. He was born in Jamestown, New York, and went on to teach for 58 years including stints in Pennsylvania, California, Tennessee, and Kentucky in the U.S. and abroad in China, India, Turkey, and the Philippines. Cheney is said to have "adopted" 13 children—only 1 legally—during his lifetime. He also published several books and poems. His death in 1958 was front page news in Cincinnati. See, Tom Brennan, "True to His Purpose: Unk Cheney Bows Out on a Long, Exemplary Career as a Teacher," *Cincinnati Enquirer* (May 23, 1958).

17 Burke & Burke to Wallace C. Merwin of the National Council of Churches (March 8, 1967). Wallace C. Merwin of the National Council of Churches, Far Eastern Office, to Charles L. Boynton, (August 23, 1963), Charles L. Boynton papers, Box 7, Hoover Institution & Archives, Stanford University.

18 *The Columbian* [yearbook], Shanghai American School (1936): 176.

19 Kuling American School's most famous alumna was Pearl S. Buck, winner of the 1938 Nobel Prize for Literature. For firsthand accounts of these years see: George Wang and Betty Barr, *Shanghai Boy, Shanghai Girl: Lives in Parallel*. (Shanghai: Old China Hand Press, 2011). Sterling H. Whitener, *In the Shadow of the Pagoda* (CreateSpace Publishing, 2013). Paul Sheretz, ed. *Lushan Stories: Memoires of Kushan American School* (1989).

20Ambassador James Lilley, "Foreign Affairs Oral History Project." Interviewed by Charles Stuart Kennedy. The Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training. May 21, 1998. https://www.adst.org/OH%20TOCs/Lilley,%20James%20R.toc.pdf

21 Linda T. Jones, "Profile: Katherine Paterson," *Language Arts* 58:2 (February 1981): 189. Katherine Paterson, "Fighting the Long Defeat, the 2007 NSK Prize Lecture," *World Literature Today* 82:3 (May-June 2008): 20. Samuel J. Richards, "Terabithia Author Talks Writing Process and Recalls Schooldays at SAS," *The International Educator* (October 26, 2022).

Curricular Planning Context

Interdisciplinary PBL is a signature aspect of the Pudong Innovation Institute (I^2) at SAS.[22] The ninth-grade program brings together 3 required courses—Asian History, English, and integrated science—with an elective Design Technology course. This level of integration among high school faculty with higher levels of academic specialization is unusual. In I^2, each teacher brings specialist disciplinary knowledge and skills, a key aspect of "professional capital" needed for strong teacher agency.[23] With this foundation, the Grade 9 I^2 teaching team develops units collaboratively using backwards design planning popularized by Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe.[24] Their GRASPs acronym helps the I^2 faculty design a common PBL culminating task for each interdisciplinary unit capable of demonstrating students' mastery and transfer of key knowledge and skills.

Interdisciplinary connections are encouraged by shared philosophy and collaborative planning time. For instance, each I^2 unit features a shared conceptual lens, an approach shaped by the work of H. Lynn Erickson and Lois Lanning.[25] Teachers are also individually responsible for ensuring disciplinary learning standards and illustrative content are effectively planned for, taught, and assessed within the I^2 context. For instance, the freshmen history course is aligned to the 2013 *College, Career, and Civic Life (C3) Framework for Social Studies State Standards* published by the US National Council for the Social Studies.[26] Planning time is also used intentionally to maximize interdisciplinary connections. Renée Couturier, director of educational programing at SAS, advises school's embarking on similar programs to "Hire the most collaborative, the most flexible and adaptable, and the most committed teachers." Then, she encourages administrators to "trust your teachers."[27] This collaboration was also supported by the 6-12 technology coach, Annalee Higginbottom, who helped with logistics and also facilitated day-long planning meetings that occurred quarterly. This structure allowed the teaching team to focus on curricular development without anyone being distracted by facilitation tasks like monitoring time or taking minutes. The I^2 team not only plans lessons together. It also collaboratively allocates time.

I^2 operates in many ways as a dynamic school within a school by limiting artificial restraints typical in many schools. Schedule flexibility within the institute helps integrate subject-based content and skills. This may be novel for many high school programs. It is also among the most important logistical considerations for planning success. Meeting every other school day, I^2 operates in a 1:1 laptop environment and benefits from a purpose-built space with movable walls and furniture. I^2 operates on an independent schedule separate from the high school except for lunch. I^2 faculty allocate time each day based on instructional needs. This approach allows the teaching

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22 The SAS Pudong Innovation Institute benefits from lessons learned by our colleagues at Puxi campus. The Puxi I^2 was founded five years earlier. Its focus is art education, while Pudong's focus is design process. Pudong I2 faculty have been influenced by the work of Buck Institute, Stanford d.school, and the Project-based learning program at the University of Pennsylvania.

23 Andrea Nolan and Tebeje Molla, "Building Teacher Professional Capabilities through Transformative Learning," *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education* 49:4 (October 2020): 72. Molla and Nolan, "Teacher agency and professional practice," *Teachers and Teaching* 26:1 (2020): 67-87.

24 Grant Wiggins and Jay McTighe, *Understanding by Design* (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1998).

25 For an overview of conceptual lenses and illustrative content in curricula planning see, H. Lynn Erickson and Lois A. Lanning, *Transition to Concept-Based Curriculum and Instruction for the Thinking Classroom: How to Bring Content and Process Together* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2014). Lois A. Lanning, *Designing a Concept-Based Curriculum for English Language Arts: Meeting the Common Core with Intellectual Integrity, K-12* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, 2012).

26 In addition to using C3, I^2 courses use the US Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts and Literacy (2010) and US Next Generation Science Standards (2013) for its required courses. The Design Technology elective draws from both the US National Core Arts Standards for media arts (2014) and the Australian Curriculum Assessment Reporting Authority (ACARA, 2015) standards for Design and Technologies.

27 Samuel J. Richards, "'Try it!' High School Transformed: Shanghai American School, Pudong develops interdisciplinary project-based learning institute," *The International Educator* (December 8, 2021).

team to maximize interdisciplinary synergy when planning.[28] This level of freedom and responsibility would likely shock most secondary teachers and be met by resistance from administrators. "Schools are one of the biggest push systems you can imagine. Here's the curriculum; we're pushing it on you. Here's the timetable; it gets pushed on you," according to Paul Magnuson, director of educational research at Leysin American School in Switzerland.[29] He calls for greater agility in lieu of what he calls "command and control models."[30] I² offers one such example to help educators imagine what this flexibility might look like. These command models extend beyond scheduling.

Efforts to supposedly "teacher proof" curricula often lead to unreasonable lists of proscribed content and onerous pacing guides that discourage design thinking.[31] By prioritizing critical thinking and historical understanding as the goal, history teachers can also avoid guilt associated with not having "covered" every topic on a curricular checklist—a tick box approach to history education that I believe does little to enhance long-term critical thinking and civic mindedness of students.[32] Authentic archival research offers one way to achieve this. After all, it is already supported by learning standards focused on conceptual understanding. The *C3 Framework* is the most prominent example of these among social studies educators. A resourceful and creative secondary level history program can flourish using this curricular framework.

Context also includes careful consideration of illustrative content. Embarking on archival research with high school students includes considering sensitive topics. Writing about what they called the "social studies rabbit hole," Mark Hemlsing, Daniel G. Krutka, and Annie McMahon Whitlock remind us that our work can "uncover myths and fantasies of historical actors" and "unsettle our knowledge and our relation to the world." Our field is an area where contexts are "disagreed upon, contested, or sometimes traumatic."[33] These are values of our work. They can also be pitfalls. High school students are not adults. If a topic is too sensitive or not age appropriate for students to engage with critically, it would not be useful illustrative content for our I² PBL. These considerations are familiar terrain for humanities teachers, especially when teaching literature or about world religions. Teachers and teaching teams must make determinations based on their context. In authoritarian China, studying certain topics can place teachers and students in jeopardy.[34] For this reason, our investigation of school history ended with 1985. This decision meant students would not encounter sources in which SAS alumni commented on pro-democracy protests and Beijing's violent crackdown in 1989 nor have to consider ways increasingly nationalist policies are changing international schools.[35] Even so, historians' signature pedagogy equips students to research

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28 Richards, *The International Educator* (December 8, 2021).

29 Tim Logan. "On Agile Education in Practice – A Conversation with Paul Magnuson," *Future Learning Design Podcast*. September 18, 2020. Podcast. Length in 31:24. https://www.peakchallenges.ch/news/tim_logan_future_learning_designs_podcast_conversation_with_paul_magnuson/

30 Logan.

31 "Teacher proof" curricula is used by Diane Moore, the founding faculty director of Religion and Public Life at Harvard Divinity School, to describe the proliferation mass-produced scripted teaching resources that squash creativity while negating the constant challenges of integrating theory and practice in unique contexts and ever-changing student populations. See, Diane L. Moore, *Overcoming Religious Illiteracy: A Cultural Studies Approach to the Study of Religion in Secondary Education* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007): 107.

32 For critiques of "coverage" models at the university level see Lendol Calder, "Uncoverage: Toward a Signature Pedagogy for the History Survey," *The Journal of American History* 92:4 (March 2006): 1358-1370. Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, "The End of the History Survey Course: The Rise and Fall of the Coverage Model." *The Journal of American History* 97:4 (2011): 1050-66. Nancy Quam-Wickham, "Reimagining the Introductory U.S. History Course," *The History Teacher* 49:4 (August 2016): 519-547.

33 Mark Helmsing, Danield G. Krutka, and Annie McMahon Withlock ed. *Keywords in the Social Studies: Concepts and Conversations*. Counterpoints: Studies in Criticality (New York: Peter Lang, 2018), xxii.

34 Peter Hessler, "A Teacher in China Learns the Limits of Free Expression: How had the country experienced so much social, economic, and educational change while its politics remained stagnant?" *New Yorker* (May 9, 2022), https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2022/05/16/a-teacher-in-china-learns-the-limits-of-free-expression.

35 See for example, Richard Kleinman, "Memories of China in the '30s: Americans who taught or studies in Shanghai get together to

effectively and to think critically when they discover new information and untaught topics—an inevitability since none of us can "cover" all historical events.

    This was the school context for launching a 9-week, history-focused unit emphasizing place-based learning in March 2022. "Memory" served as our conceptual lens complemented by the interdisciplinary essential question "What gets remembered?". Figures B and C provide an overview of illustrative content and disciplinary skills drawn from each subject during this unit. In addition, Figure B provides an overview of archival skills taught during a series of History Labs crucial to unit success. Finally, Figure A provided an overview of the interdisciplinary PBL component.

Illustrative Content				
English	Design	Science	Asian History	History Lab
Text: *The Joy Luck Club* by Amy Tan Narrative Point of View Diverse Narrative Structures Voice via diction, syntax, details Vocabulary Literary Elements Literary Devices	End User Design (UX) -aesthetics -appeal -appearance Usability -user satisfaction Accessibility -navigation -control -links Function -Speed -error tolerance User Interface Design (UI) -User Flow chart -Wireframing Virtual gallery space: AR/VR	Wave principles Different waves and how they work as an output: sound, heat, energy, light, etc. How wave behavior changes in different materials – loops back to creation of materials for different purposes Transfer of digital information	Rise of Modern China Fall of Qing Dynasty Republic of China Kuomintang Sino-Japanese War and United Front Civil War (Kuomintang v. Chinese Communist Party) Establishment of People's Republic -Cultural Revolution -Great Leap Forward -Reform and Opening Content assessment will be viva voce (Q1: description, knowledge; Q2: analysis, reasoning)	**Lab 1**: Practicing with 2 sample SAS sources; strengths & limitations of evidence **Lab 2**: Student groups investigate sources curated for assigned era; consider perspectives, strengths & limitations **Lab 3 Guest Speaker**: alumna Betty Barr Wang on theme "What gets remembered?"[36] **Lab 4**: Continue investigating teacher curated sources; draft paragraph summary for feedback; address "what gets remembered?" & identify missing perspectives **Lab 5**: Introduce in-house digital archive; students begin to explore **Lab 6**: Research time **Lab 7**: Student teams present 4 artifacts essential to telling school's story during their assigned era

Figure 2: Outline of illustrative content for each discipline during the "Memory" unit. These were aligned to standards for the respective academic disciplines.

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reminisce about old times," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, October 18, 1990. Chan Ho-him and Eleanor Olcot, "China's international school sector threatened by Covid and crackdown," *Financial Times*, June 5, 2022.

36 Betty Barr Wang is a 1949 graduate of SAS. She is a well-known, long-time resident of Shanghai and author or co-author of several books including *Between Two Worlds: Lessons in Shanghai* (Hong Kong: Old China Hand Press, 2004) and *Shanghai Boy, Shanghai Girl: Lives in Parallel* (Shanghai: Old China Hand Press, 2011).

Disciplinary Skills				
English	Design	Science	Asian History	History Lab
Reading Skills: -Define Words in Context -Analyze character based on voice Writing Skills: Narrative Writing	Design Thinking User research User empathy Interaction design Visual communication Collaboration	Asking questions and defining problems Mathematics and computational thinking Engaging in argument from evidence Obtaining, evaluating and communicating information	C3 Dimension 3: Gathering and Evaluating Sources C3 Dimension 3: Develop claims using evidence C3 Dimension 4: communicating and critiquing conclusions	C3 Dimension 3: Gathering and Evaluating Sources C3 Dimension 3: Develop claims using evidence C3 Dimension 4: communicating and critiquing conclusions

Figure 3: Outline of disciplinary skills for the "Memory" unit. These were aligned to standards for the respective academic disciplines.

Sourcing Study

Place-based learning using archives requires access to a rich trove of sources. Most schools and towns do not maintain accessible local archives convenient for 13- and 14-year-olds. Curators and archivists might have nightmare visions of high school freshmen rummaging through historical documents. History educators planning a similar unit must consider several key questions. These questions are:
1. Do we have access to sufficient primary and secondary sources?
2. Can this illustrative content achieve our learning goals?
3. To what extent can we cultivate students' analytical thinking related to sensitive issues?
This makes developing an archive an essential first-step to determining viability of PBL using local history.

I[2] was fortunate in having a highly flexible schedule and plenty of historical sources. Firstly, the unusually flexible I2 scheduling model allowed faculty to structure 3 days during which students did not have history class. As the history teacher, I used this time to gather primary and secondary sources. Secondly, past alumni had the foresight to preserve school memorabilia in various well-resourced institutions that willingly scanned and digitized files for our use. These were supplemented by some historical documents available locally along with two published histories, and tranches of unindexed photographs and documents in the school marketing office[37]. With support from our technology coach, I established a digital archive of more than 900 sources.

Archival research using place-based learning requires consideration of context. SAS offers a unique vantage point. Most schools and communities do! I previously worked at Boonsboro High School in rural Appalachian Maryland. There, I could envision a similar interdisciplinary unit that would rely on local—rather than school—history. It could still use memory as the conceptual lens paired with the essential question "What gets remembered?" but draw from different illustrative content. For instance, sources might focus on the National Road (US Rt. 40) or memorialization at nearby Antietam Battlefield[38]. In southwestern Pennsylvania, Trinity Area

37 This endeavor was possible with assistance from archivist Martha Smalley at Yale Divinity School; former SAS marketing guru Kevin Lynch; SAS staff Mina Hsiao and Melissa Szarowicz; Steve Harnsberger of Kuling American School Association; and the U.S. Department of State, especially Consul-General James Heller in Shanghai and Mark E. Ulfers and Beatrice Cameron in the Office of Overseas Schools. Published histories include Phoebe White Wentworth and Angie Mills, *Fair is the Name: The Story of Shanghai American School*, 1912-1950 (Los Angeles: Shanghai American School Association, 1997). Angie Mills, *A Story of the Shanghai American School, 1912-2008* (Chicago: Shanghai American School Association, 2008).

38 Two recent studies to help get started could be: Emilie Amt, *Black Antietam: African Americans and the Civil War in Sharpsburg* (History Press, 2022). Roger Pickenpaugh, *America's First Interstate: The National Road, 1806-1853* (Kent State University Press, 2020).

School District includes President Ulysses S. Grant's repeated visits to the region as part of its curriculum. On several occasions Grant stayed with relatives at a mansion that now forms a wing of the district's high school[39]. Place-based learning is an invitation for teachers to discover what's local.

No matter one's context, time will be a significant start-up consideration. Even at the university level, "the most substantial challenges facing history instructors who want to move beyond coverage [models of teaching] may be logistical" according to Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker[40]. Gathering useful primary and secondary sources will energize and inspire many history educators. This is an essential ingredient for success. It is important to note that many history teachers face impediments such as high-stakes testing, crowded classrooms, restrictive school schedules, and siloed academic departments that might hinder levels of creativity. Flexible pedagogical models like I[2] unlock the magic of what can be.

Teaching and Learning

Introducing authentic archival research empowers students to "do" history rather than receive it in textbook form. History education still dedicates significant instructional time to textbooks. During this interdisciplinary PBL unit, research skills were taught during a series of labs. These 45 to 60-minute sessions were in addition to students' study of 20th century China occurring in Asian History class, enabled by flexible interdisciplinary scheduling. (See Figure B above.) During History Lab 1, I introduced the lab concept with all students using the same four teacher-selected sources. These sources were selected to establish a common experience—like a writers' workshop anchor text—to reference as students embarked on increasingly independent archival research. This initial lab included a mixture of independent thinking, small-group discussion, and teacher "think alouds" to model thinking like a historian. This was supported by a lab sheet with guiding questions focused on strengths and limitations of sources, an approach inspired by a DBQ activity developed by Stanford History Education Group (See Appendix I).[41] The introductory lab used two visual and two text-based sources. The culminating work for lab 1 was an open-ended question in which each student submitted a response using our interdisciplinary I[2] writing format of Claim-Evidence-Reasoning. The prompt asked students to compare our school in 2022 to our school in 1912. Students submitted typed responses then received formative feedback before our next class and lab. Students' writing indicated a range of abilities. All struggled to be concise. Typical submissions included lengthy descriptions of sources leading to some analytical conclusions. Here is a sample submission from one ninth grade girl.

Sample Student Submission following History Lab 1

> The difference of Shanghai American School(SAS) now and SAS in 1912 is shown by their different perspective and views regarding religion. A comparison of a school ruled under Christian and a more opened community for learning is presented. Back in 1912, one united religion is shown. From a summary of the meeting for the establishment of SAS, Source A, recorded evidence proving that Christians were leading the foundation of Shanghai American School. According to this source, under the catalogue of "Members of the original committee that worked to establish a school in Shanghai", all the people being mentioned all owned the honorary style "the Rev.", which stands for the "the reverend". The title stands for clergy and were frequently used by Christian priests and ministers. Which means, the leading people who founded SAS were all believed in Christianity. To add on, from the architectural

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39Barbara Miller, "Grant's local connection displayed on Trinity wall," Observer-Reporter (Washington, Pennsylvania), February 14, 2016. Samuel J. Richards, "A Forgotten Muhlenberg School: Trinity Hall in Washington, Pennsylvania," Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies 87:2 (Spring 2020): 259, 268.

40 Joel M. Sipress and David J. Voelker, "From Learning History to Doing History" in *Exploring Signature Pedagogies: Approaches to Teaching Disciplinary Habits of Mind*, ed. Regan A.R. Gurung, Nancy L. Chick, and Aeron Haynie (Sterling, Virginia: Stylus, 2009), 30.

41 Stanford History Education Group. "Evaluating Sources." August 26, 2021. https://sheg.stanford.edu/history-lessons/evaluating-sources.

style of SAS, Source B, the point mentioned can be further proven. In source B, a picture of the old SAS campus existed from 1912-1923, it has several similarities to Christian churches - they both have arched, neatly arranged windows covering the subject of the building; both have pointed triangular designs at the eaves; both have projections on the roof. And, in the middle eaves, SAS used to have two cross designs. The cross has a special religious significance to Christianity and is a representative symbol of Christianity. Thus, it is clear that Shanghai American School had a strong Christian existence. In 2022, however, Shanghai American School become more nuanced in the area of religious affiliation. Today's Shanghai American School has changed considerably from its once recognizable Christian architecture and all-Christian school leaders. Instead of a heavily Christian building, the 2022 Shanghai American School has a new, modern architecture with bold, curved roof shapes that highlight the school's innovative, generous style. And, the SAS student handbook clearly states: "Groups/individuals with the following characteristics (real or perceived) are protected from discrimination based upon these characteristics: gender, sexual orientation, sexual identity, religion, ethnicity or national origin, race, disability, age, color, or marital status." Unlike the SAS of the 1910s, the SAS now promotes more freedom and openness to religious beliefs. While SAS in 1912 promotes a unity for religion, modern SAS becomes more inclusive. It emphasizes that no one should be discriminated against for having religious beliefs and everyone has the right to choose. In the 110 years since 1912, as the years have changed and the times have evolved, the Shanghai American School has undergone tremendous changes from its former pursuit of uniformity to its current open, liberal system.

This formative writing helped me calibrate work for lab 2. Together with previous DBQ assessment data from Asian History class, writing samples also provided a data point for our teaching team to finalize student PBL groups as "public history teams," a moniker used to promote learning in an authentic, real-world scenario. Students were assigned to one of seven public history teams with three to four members in each. Team rosters were announced during an I² community meeting, reinforcing the importance of our interdisciplinary approach.

Students first met as public history teams during History Lab 2. This was a key moment to review the 7 Norms of Collaboration.[42] Additionally, students were reintroduced to the concept of historical periodization and began investigating their assigned era of school history. All history teams received a folder of 8 to 12 sources for this (see Figure D). I curated these folders to include a combination of visual and text-based sources as well as both primary and secondary sources. The goal was to create an encouraging, exciting, and helpful environment without overwhelming students. This was mostly successful. However, I would introduce only 4 or 5 sources during this lab with future cohorts. Source A in all teams' folders was purposefully chosen to provide an overview of key themes for their assigned era. This was especially important since several students fixated on identifying misleading or biased sources during lab 1. No sources were chosen to mislead or trick students. This would have squandered precious time! Collectively, each PBL team analyzed sources and made notes using a shared lab guide document accessible on Microsoft One Drive. Groups then submitted a summary paragraph at the end of the lab (see Appendix II). Summary paragraphs provided another opportunity for formative feedback as part of guided inquiry. Feedback was a regular component after each lab. Once students developed competence and confidence, the I² faculty generated excitement and unveiled the 900-plus document "SAS Digital Archive" during lab 5.

Students' historical thinking became more sophisticated during the seven labs and subsequent project worktime. Students were sometimes frustrated. They also celebrated breakthroughs. I was impressed by the depth of historical thought cultivated by this approach. Two excerpts from students provide evidence of this.

- Student 1 was investigating reasons why some Americans in Shanghai did not like Ms. Jewell's School and wanted to form a new American school circa 1910. He was clarifying use of the slang term *holy roller*.
  - "I wrote Ms. Jewell as a fundamentalist Episcopalian because of some information coming from multiple perspectives that seemed to indicate that she was both a fundamentalist (Holy Roller)

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42 I² uses the 7 Norms of Collaboration developed by Adaptive Schools. During this first meeting, students shared lists of "gifts" and "needs" with their 2 to 3 partners.

and an Episcopalian… But seeing as fundamentalist Episcopalians are apparently not prevalent, does 'Holy Roller' imply a denomination, such as the Methodists?"
- Student 2 explains how she obtained a Mandarin-language source from a Chinese university database.
    - "I searched up Shanghai American School in Chinese in a database used between Chinese universities. It required an account to access and I managed to find a professor who teaches at Shanghai Normal University to download and sent the paper to me 😊"

Students improved historical thinking was likely accelerated by I^2's interdisciplinary approach. I generally led History Labs while also teaching about 20th century China in my Asian History class. However, all I2 faculty participated in many of our History Labs. My science colleague, Amanda Young, was especially good at setting expectations and leading goal setting related to student collaboration. Students received written and spoken feedback and mentoring from not only Asian History class, but also during Michael Crachiolo's English lessons where they read memoir excerpts along with historical and contemporary fiction.[43] In Design Technology students considered relevant user experiences in museums and in science they examined the role of waves in digitizing and creating accessible archival sources. Co-teaching strategies such as "one teach, one assist" and "parallel teaching" also helped guide students during labs. These techniques reinforced interdisciplinary connections and helped inform collective scheduling decisions when allotting time to classes, History Labs, and other I^2 activities during this unit. These structures proved resilient when authorities shuttered schoolhouses throughout Shanghai on March 14 as part of China's dynamic 0 Covid policy. We adapted. Our PBL meant to culminate in an in-person museum adapted to a virtual environment as our school term continued online for the remainder of the academic year.

Reflection

During our final class session on June 1, students provided feedback related to our interdisciplinary unit. I^2 faculty consistently collect student feedback at the end of each unit in order to improve future PBL units. It is also an opportunity for teachers to model ways we use collaboration and design thinking, skills we regularly expect of students. Our unit reflections usually last a little over one hour. They begin with students thinking independently about specific prompts. They record thoughts on post-it notes which they later place on the glass walls. Teachers then look for patterns, group post-its accordingly, and prepare follow-up questions to seek clarification or more detail during an I^2 community meeting. In this instance, covid policies in China meant our reflection was completed via Microsoft Teams. We used the chat feature to collect students' responses then facilitated discussion. We asked students four questions related to the PBL unit. These were:
1. What helped you complete your response to the unit question "What gets remembered?"
2. What was <u>not</u> helpful or did <u>not</u> work?
3. For your teachers, what suggestions might you have for this unit?
4. For you, what learning will you remember from this unit?

Many students mentioned History Labs in their feedback.

Coaching and mentoring students to "do" history rather than study it proved essential. 15 of 25 freshmen specifically named "feedback" as helping them complete the PBL. Teachers implementing archival PBL must plan for this. Our interdisciplinary teaching team provided feedback during small-group and one-on-one conversations as well as via comments in interactive online documents. The frequency of feedback and coaching was made possible by interdisciplinary collaboration and exceeded what would normally occur during a research assignment in one of my more traditional history courses. That was another benefit of our interdisciplinary approach. However, 3 students still said there were not enough opportunities to receive teacher feedback. 7 students specifically named sources and History Labs as helpful to their success. Even so, improvements can be made.

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43 Text sources included Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club: A Novel* (G.P. Putnam Sons, 1989); Ruth Hill Barr and Betty Barr, *Ruth's Record: The Diary of An American in Japanese-Occupied Shanghai, 1941-1945* (Hong Kong: Earnshaw Books, 2016).

Students suggested changes to pacing of historical research. Three students felt initial History Labs moved too quickly. In the words of one, "we were kind of rushing them but the one about how to analyze sources was great." I agree with his assessment. I used initial labs to introduce baseline skills using common sources. My hope to provide a common reference point for all public history teams unintentionally slowed students' investigation. There were few occasions during which these anchor texts proved useful. Students' investigations required a range of research methods as they discovered vastly different sources and circumstances ranging from newspapers to personal scrapbooks, memoirs, and government documents between 1900 and the 1980s from both China and the United States. There was also a range of writing styles among documents, most of which were in English and some in Mandarin Chinese. This made independent problem-solving, mini-lessons, and teacher mentoring essential. In the future, it might be worth introducing students' PBL groups immediately rather than using anchor texts.

High school students expressed frustrations like ones we might overhear in a café during the American Historical Association's annual meeting. This is an indicator that we achieved PBL authenticity. The most common frustration was having too many or too few sources. One boy wrote that he will remember "what it's like to sift through a mass amount of information, finding and using the relevant information, while disregarding the irrelevant, or at least the not as relevant (in order to save time)." This was the first time during which students did not have someone else telling them which historical sources mattered. Students also celebrated breakthroughs like the discovery of an especially important or difficult to obtain source. This resonates with Canadian archivist Michael Eamon's criticism that, "the most significant problem with the use of pre-packaged selections of documents for the effective teaching of history, however, is that they fail to create the heuristic experience of archival research."[44] In short: they are inauthentic. Feedback from I² students showed that 13- and 14-year-olds had come to understand elements of historical methodology by engaging in authentic research. Another student summarized the most helpful steps as: "looking through them [sources], getting to know and further feel how it is to live within our [assigned] time period, then slowly figured out what gets remembered."

Archival research connected to place-based learning offers something more than prepackaged primary source readers and DBQs. Schools and school systems willing to embrace agility and reduce push systems can leverage place-based learning in creative ways to empower students to do history rather than merely read about it. While archive-based learning remains mostly the preserve of graduate level history education, this experience shows signature pedagogy can thrive in high school. Ninth grade students are capable of authentic historical research.

44 Michael Eamon, "A 'Genuine Relationship with the Actual': New Perspectives on Primary Sources, History, and the Internet in the Classroom," *The History Teacher* 39:3 (May 2006): 303.
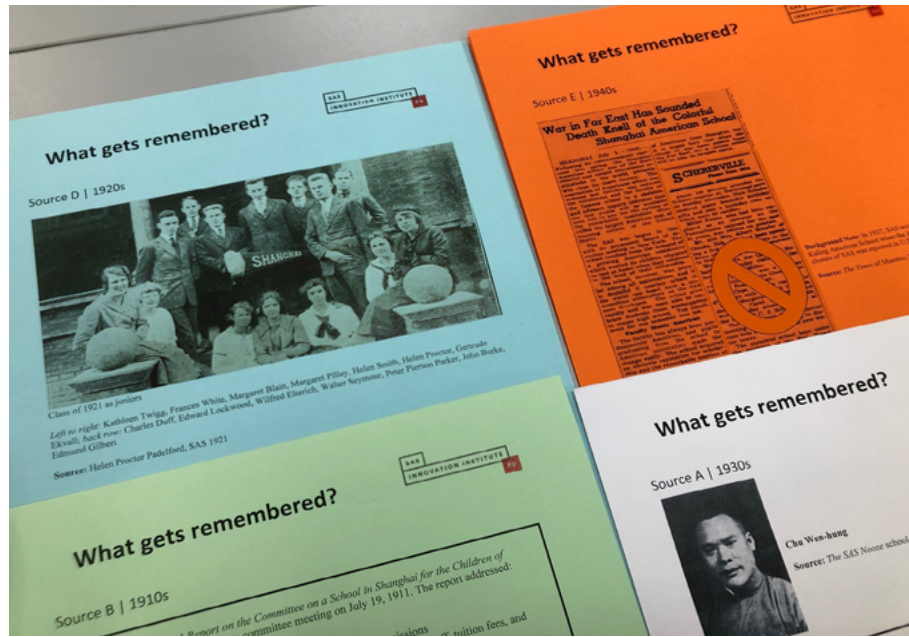
Figure 4: Examples of curated sources aligned to eras of school history. Source A in each collection was designed to give student groups an overview of their assigned era.
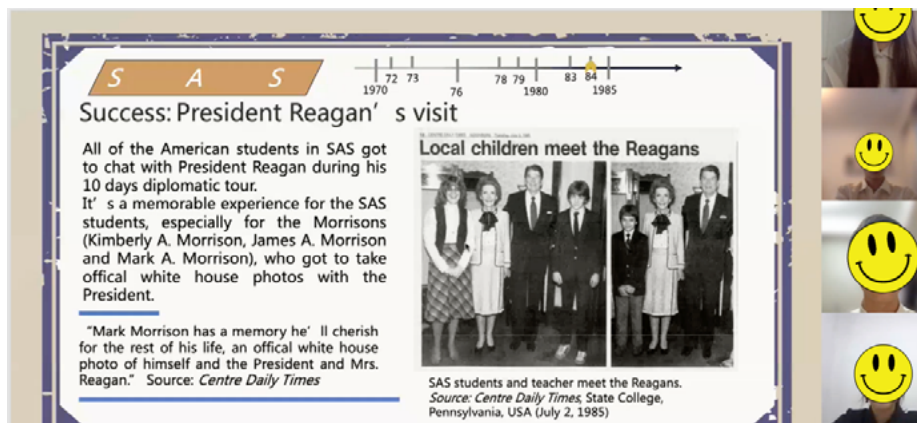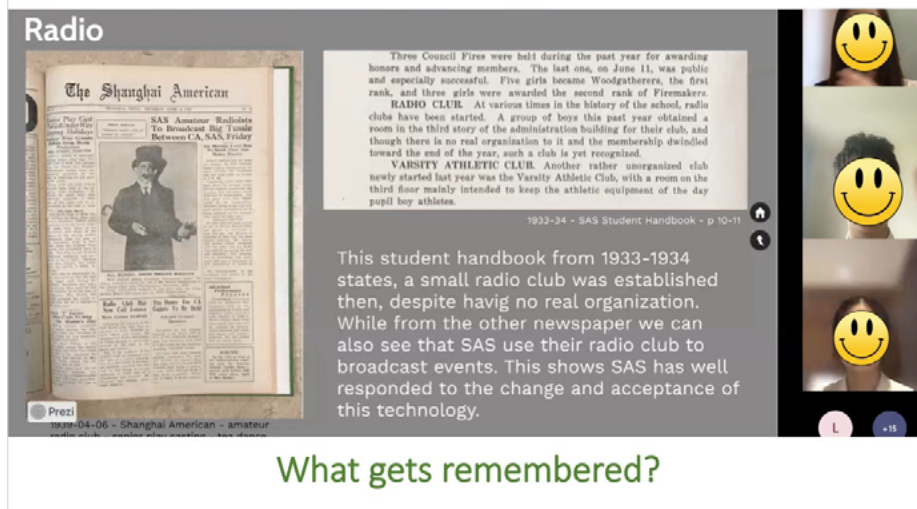
Figure 5: Screenshots from guided tours of exhibits designed by 3 public history teams representing 1930-1939, 1940-44, and 1970-1985.

Appendix I: Organizer used to facilitate History Lab 1.

Name: _____

I² History Lab: Evaluating and Interpreting Sources

Historical Question: In what ways was Shanghai American School of 1912 different from the Shanghai American School of today?

Source A: Excerpts from *Report on the Committee on a School in Shanghai for the Children of Missionaries* (July 11, 1911)

Strengths (What about the source makes it good evidence for answering this historical question?)

Limitations (What about the source might limit its usefulness as evidence for answering the historical question?)

Source B: An image of the first SAS campus.

Strengths	Limitations

Source C: Excerpt from a 1961 letter by Ed Lockwood (SAS 1921) to Charles Boynton

Strengths	Limitations

Page Break

Source D: A map showing locations of SAS between 1912 and 1945

Strengths	Limitations

Claim • Evidence • Reasoning

Using these sources and your own knowledge, in what ways was Shanghai American School of 1912 different from the Shanghai American School of today?

	Above Expectations	Meeting Expectations	Approaching Expectations	Needs Improvement
CLAIM	The paragraph presents a strong **claim**/thesis that clearly responds to the prompt and provides a line of reasoning for argument(s) to follow. 4	The paragraph presents a claim/thesis relevant to the prompt that attempts to provide a line of reasoning for argument(s) to follow. 3.5	The paragraph attempts to present a claim/thesis that is relevant to the prompt; may be unclear, nonspecific, or mostly a restatement of the prompt. 3	The paragraph does not present a claim/thesis that is relevant to the prompt. 2
EVIDENCE	The thesis/claim is supported by specific and highly relevant historical **evidence**. Evidence used demonstrates strong understanding of historical content studied. 12	The thesis/claim is supported by mostly relevant evidence, with some specificity. Evidence used demonstrates understanding of historical content studied. 10	The thesis/claim is supported by somewhat relevant evidence but may be noticeably vague. Evidence used demonstrates some understanding of historical content studied. 8	The thesis/claim is not supported with sufficient evidence to create an argument relevant to the prompt, or evidence is noticeably inaccurate. Evidence used demonstrates weak understanding of historical content studied. 6
REASONING *examples* - significance - comparison and contrast - continuity and change - causation - observations about human nature, etc.	Analysis of evidence gives multiple **reasons** for how the evidence supports the thesis/claim and includes interesting critical insight going beyond a superficial narrative. 10	Analysis of evidence gives reasons for how evidence supports the thesis/claim. Further development and/or depth is needed in places. 8.5	Attempts to connect evidence to the thesis/claim but is noticeably descriptive rather than analytical. 7	Paragraph is descriptive to the point where the thesis/claim is unsupported. 6

Appendix II: Organizer used to facilitate History Lab 2.

Names: _____
I² History Lab 2: Initial Impressions of Historical Period

Initial Impressions of Your Historical Periodization

Our Assigned Historical Period is: _____

Based on Source A, what gets remembered? List key themes or ideas that seem important to narrating the history of SAS during your assigned era.

-
-
-
-

What technology was present during this era? *Text and visual clues provide key evidence.*

-
-
-
-

Corroboration: Do the sources agree? If not, why?

These documents all agree about…

These documents all disagree about…

Page Break

Wonderings: What are you left wondering?

Some things we are wondering:

A document/perspective we might need is...

Summarizing Your Current Thinking

Directions: Craft <u>one concise paragraph</u> for the prompt below.

Based on your current knowledge and sources, describe SAS during your assigned historical era...

Insert summary here. Be sure to begin with a clear topic sentence.