

Digital Textbook FAQs ^[1]

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What is the textbook about?

The textbook ^[2] covers all of North Carolina history, from the arrival of the first people some 12,000 years ago to the present. It addresses all objectives of the North Carolina Standard Course of Study for grade 8 social studies.

What is its audience?

The textbook is aimed at grade 8 and up. It is designed around the eighth-grade curriculum, and all resources are intended to be used by eighth-grade students. However, most of the resources are appropriate for high school and even college students, as well as for teachers' own background reading.

What makes this textbook different from printed textbooks?

LEARN NC's digital textbook isn't just a traditional textbook made available online. It's designed to be used in a nonlinear fashion, not just page by page. It puts primary sources front and center, using special web-based tools to guide and promote student inquiry. It also incorporates multimedia directly into the text in a way that (obviously) isn't possible in a print text.

What about lesson plans?

We're working on a general educator's guide that will provide teachers with structures and suggestions for classroom use. Many pages of the textbook have specific lesson plans associated with them; look for a heading "for teachers" in the right-hand column. But all of the primary sources include reading questions, and we encourage teachers to find models of classroom discussion that work for them.

Has the textbook been approved for adoption by the state?

No, because there's no need for formal adoption. Because our digital textbook is available free of charge on the web, schools don't have to buy anything. In that sense, although it's designed to replace a traditional textbook, the digital textbook is no different from any other free resources on the Web. Individual teachers can use part or all of the textbook as best meets their needs and those of their students.

What if my students don't all have laptops?

We recognize that one-laptop-per-child classrooms are rare, and so we've designed the textbook to be used in a variety of ways. Each primary source or article can be used independent of the others, so teachers can pick and choose what will work best in their classroom and schedule lab time, if necessary. In addition, many pages are available in PDF format for offline use.

Will teachers really use an online textbook?

Yes -- eventually. Online textbooks are already being used on college campuses, and we think that within the next five to ten years they will become commonplace in K–12 schools. As laptops and handhelds grow cheaper and paper grows more expensive, online textbooks will be an increasingly practical option.

In the meantime, we don't expect that teachers will stop using their printed textbooks -- not this year, anyway. LEARN NC's digital textbook is modular by design, so that teachers can choose individual resources to supplement what they already do in the classroom.

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