



## BHP Students Excel on NY Regents History Exam Oceanside High School, Long Island, NY

Oceanside High School is an American public secondary school located in Oceanside, New York. Teachers there found that students who had completed the Big History Project course the previous year, performed better on the New York State Global History and Geography Regents Exam than students who had not taken the course.

### Getting Ready for Regents

In New York State, students must pass Regents Examinations—statewide, standardized exams in core high school subjects—to graduate high school with a Regents Diploma. At the end of tenth grade, New York students take the Global History and Geography Regents Exam. At Oceanside High School, teachers found that the group of students who had taken the Big History Project course (BHP) the year before, as ninth graders, achieved a higher passing rate compared to the subset of students who had not.

For the June 2016 Global History and Geography Regents Exam, 89 percent of Oceanside High School tenth-grade students passed (432 out of 483 students). This group of 483 included Regents-level students, as well as those with disabilities, English Language learners (ENL), and other students with learning accommodations. This group also contained 96 former BHP students with a similar mix of learning levels and needs.

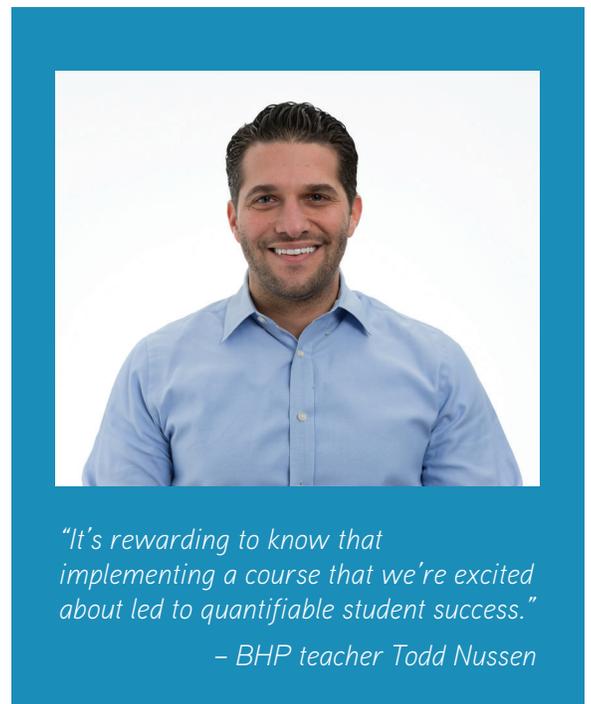
In the 2014/15 school year, these 96—who were then in the ninth grade—completed the year-long BHP course. The following school year, they progressed to tenth grade and the Global History II class. They were randomly assigned to one of twelve sections taught by one of six different teachers. At the end of the school year, all tenth graders sat for the Global History and Geography Regents Exam.

### High Expectations Met with Success

After the Regents Exam results came in, BHP teachers wanted to know: “How did the former BHP students’ exam performance compare to those who did not take BHP?” So with some confidence but also fingers crossed, they calculated the passing rate for the group of former BHP students.

“We were prepared with explanations like ‘It was only our first year teaching the course’ or ‘Give us a break, we’re the first school on Long Island to do this.’ But we didn’t have to use them,” said BHP teacher Jason Manning.

The results? BHP students had a 96 percent passing rate on the Regents Exam, outperforming their non-BHP peers by 7 percent.



*“It’s rewarding to know that implementing a course that we’re excited about led to quantifiable student success.”*

*– BHP teacher Todd Nussen*



## Engaging Course Builds Skills

Why did this happen? Mitch Bickman, Director of K-12 Social Studies for the Oceanside School District, believes that because the course narrative is more engaging to students, they are more motivated to learn. The course also offers more opportunities to hone literacy skills. “Students focus heavily on historical thinking skill and application of knowledge and are better prepared to authentically apply that learning across different mediums.”

Teacher Jason Manning believes the big difference is that in BHP, there’s teaching and learning that builds more than a fact base.

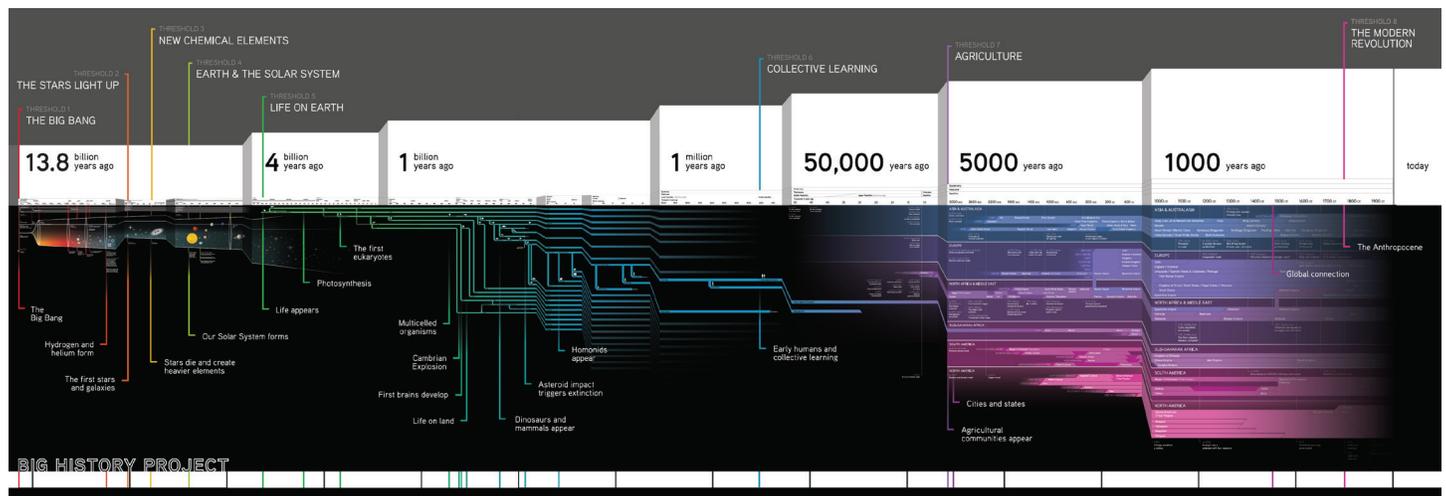
“I used to teach facts such as which Roman emperor built the Coliseum. Now we learn how to question, how to think about problems and critically consume information. Students walk away with an understanding of the conditions needed to build such a structure and the impact it had on history. These skills also improve the students’ writing, and even the smallest gains here can have a major impact on their scores.”

## Perfect Timing for More Rigorous Exam

This is a particularly important time to focus on curriculum efficacy as changes in the Regents Exam are ahead. In the next few years, the exam will be based solely on the tenth-grade Global History and Geography II content, and will focus more on skills and less on content recall.

Mitch Bickman is optimistic that Oceanside students will be ready for the more rigorous format.

“As of 2015/16, we’ve entirely replaced our Global History and Geography I course for ninth graders with Big History. This is a great opportunity for Big History teachers to share the academic benefits of this course with New York State social studies teachers, as many will now be thinking about ways to either modify or replace their Global History and Geography I course so that students develop the skills they need to pass [the Regents Exam]. Based on these results, we feel we made the right choice.”



Big History timeline

To learn more about Big History, visit us at: <http://course.bighistoryproject.com>

