

What is the Demographic Transition Model?

BY DREW GROVER | October 13, 2014

This is post 1 of 6 in a series about the Demographic Transition Model – a fundamental concept in population education, which is covered in Social Studies courses, most notably AP Human Geography.

Beginning in the late 1700s, something remarkable happened: death rates declined. With new technologies in agriculture and production, and advancements in health and sanitation, a greater number of people lived through their adolescent years, increasing the average life expectancy and creating a new trajectory for population growth. This sudden change created a shift in understanding the correlation between birth and death rates, which up to that point had both been relatively equal, regardless of location. Over the past 300 years, population demographics have continued to evolve as a result of the relationship between the birth and death rates within a country. The observation and documentation of this global phenomenon has produced a model, the **Demographic Transition Model**, which helps explain and make sense of changes in population demographics. Using the Demographic Transition Model, demographers can better understand a country's current population growth based on its placement within one of five stages and then pass on that data to be used for addressing economic and social policies within a country and across nations.

What is the Demographic Transition Model?

The Demographic Transition Model (DTM) is based on historical population trends of two demographic characteristics – birth rate and death rate – to suggest that a country's total population growth rate cycles through stages as that country develops economically. Each stage is characterized by a specific relationship between birth rate (number of annual births per one