TEACHING WITH PRIMARY SOURCES
AT CAL U

Level 2 primary source-based professional development

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR

In-classroom Teacher Professional Development

K-12 educators can earn Act 48 continuing education hours during their regularly scheduled classes in the convenience of their own classrooms. We are seeking K-12 educators from any discipline at any grade level to field test either a primary source-based lesson plan or learning activity and then electronically provide feedback to TPS staff about various aspects of the instructional event.

We have a variety of lesson plans and/or learning activities available to choose from. The lesson plans or activities have been developed by teachers who have gone through the Cal U TPS program or one of our partner TPS programs that belong to the nationwide TPS consortium.

The number of awarded Act 48 hours will vary according to the amount of time it takes to choose to, implement, and provide feedback about a particular instructional event.

Interested teachers will receive a list of approved sources for primary source-based lesson plans or learning activities; a list of feedback topics associated with the field testing experience; and, a link to a blog space where feedback can be recorded and shared with other educators who participate in field testing.

Teachers who are unfamiliar with blogging can provide feedback electronically using email instead. Email feedback will be posted on the blog space by TPS staff so others can read about lessons learned.

In general, we are hoping to capture and archive feedback that will help field testers and other educators benefit the most from implementing primary source-based instruction in the classroom.

This in-classroom professional development (ICPD) opportunity is designed to accommodate teachers’ busy schedules and give them the opportunity to earn Act 48 continuing education hours during the course of their regular workdays with a minimal amount of pre-class preparation and post-class follow-up.

For details, contact Donna Hoak via email at hoak@cup.edu or phone her at 724-938-6025.

FROM THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS

The Learning Page especially for teachers is designed to help educators use the American Memory Collections to teach history and culture. It offers tips and tricks, definitions and rationale for using primary sources, activities, discussions, lesson plans and suggestions for using the collections in classroom curriculum. The Library Program is digitizing historical Americana materials from the Library's holdings into online collections. There are currently more than 100 collections in the American Memory Historical Collections. These multimedia collections of photographs, manuscripts, rare books, maps, recorded sound, and moving pictures are grouped according to themes. There are many ways to search the collections, though finding exactly what you are looking for may take some digging and persistence. You can also go directly to the American Memory Collection Finder page, where the collections are grouped in a variety of categories. The main page of the Library of Congress has a search box (in the top right corner) that searches the entire Web site, excluding the online catalog of books. This is the easiest and most comprehensive way to search the Web site, but it may also return thousands of records for a single search. We recommend you use this search after trying the American Memory Collections search for your desired information. Have fun searching!

Teachers...
More than 10 million primary sources online.
ANNEMARIE SAYS!

NOVA scienceNOW
Billed as the companion website for a TV show on science breakthroughs & personalities, this website stands alone. Learn about a frog that freezes solid in winter & comes back to life in spring. Find out about newly discovered remains of a 3 foot tall human ancestor. Take a look at current and archive programs about hurricanes, robots, stem cells and lots more. A teacher’s guide and transcript are included. The show is hosted by Robert Krulwich & airs five times a year. http://www.pbs.org/nova/sciencenow

EDUCATIONAL SOCIAL MEDIA

The last two Educational Social Media columns dealt with the topic of blogging. Following a general overview and justification of using blogs in education was a separate column on setting up and posting a blog.

The technology will now shift from blogs to wikis. This column will provide an overview of wikis in education while February’s column will put that information to use. The most obvious question is, “What is a wiki?” Arriving in common language in 1995, Merriam-Webster Online defines a wiki as “a Web site that allows visitors to make changes, contributions, or corrections.” Some people visualize a wiki as a combination of a webpage and a word-processing document. Wikis are quite different from traditional web sites where only webmasters can control content. As with any word processing application, anybody can modify the content. The term “wiki” likely brings up a mental link to “Wikipedia”—the website where many of us arrive after a Google or Yahoo search. Wikipedia is an encyclopedia version of a wiki—but it is not the only one. The website, Educational Wikis, for example, provides a list of dozens of current wikis that serve educational ends. The list can be found by (1) going to http://educationalwikis.wikispaces.com and (2) clicking on the second link. It is recommended that wiki novices start here to get a sense of the educational applications of several wikis.

Paradoxically, the value of wikis is also their criticism. Critics have railed against using wikis in education since data that is presented as truth is not always peer-reviewed or referenced to a certain author. The flipside is that sharing of information is streamlined and extended far beyond the classroom. To explore additional reasons to incorporate wikis into your classroom, visit http://wik.ed.uiuc.edu/index.php/Wiki_in_a_K-12_classroom

RESEARCH AND CURRENT THINKING

This column discusses how primary sources can support student-centered leaning. Richard Shaull (1999) noted—in the introduction to Paulo Freire’s classic book, Pedagogy of the Oppressed—that “Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the younger generation into the logic of the present system and bring back conformity to it, or it is the practice of freedom—the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of the world” (p. 16). If education is to serve freedom or, at least, train students for positions and problems that do not yet exist, then it cannot be modeled after lower-level thinking that passively regurgitates given knowledge (e.g. factual recall, comprehension, etc.). Although it may be true that “creativity cannot be taught” (at least procedurally), providing an substantive framework that supports active student-centered learning is all together different. This is where Teaching with Primary Sources (TPS) comes into play, where educators’ lessons focus on raw and direct perspectives from the source. The pedagogy behind the TPS framework is inherently situated in active and constructive student-centered learning because primary source learning demands creativity and higher-level engagement (e.g. analysis, synthesis, evaluation). Primary sources, unlike secondary sources, are not reinterpretations or summaries; the context for parsing the primary source can only be understood from one’s given knowledge base. Often times, this base must be expanded. What is not known becomes obvious in the form of additional questions. This gives students the opportunity to socratically examine the lesson in more depth; new directions and interests are also naturally encouraged. Next month’s column will showcase current research on this very topic.

For more information, please contact:
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